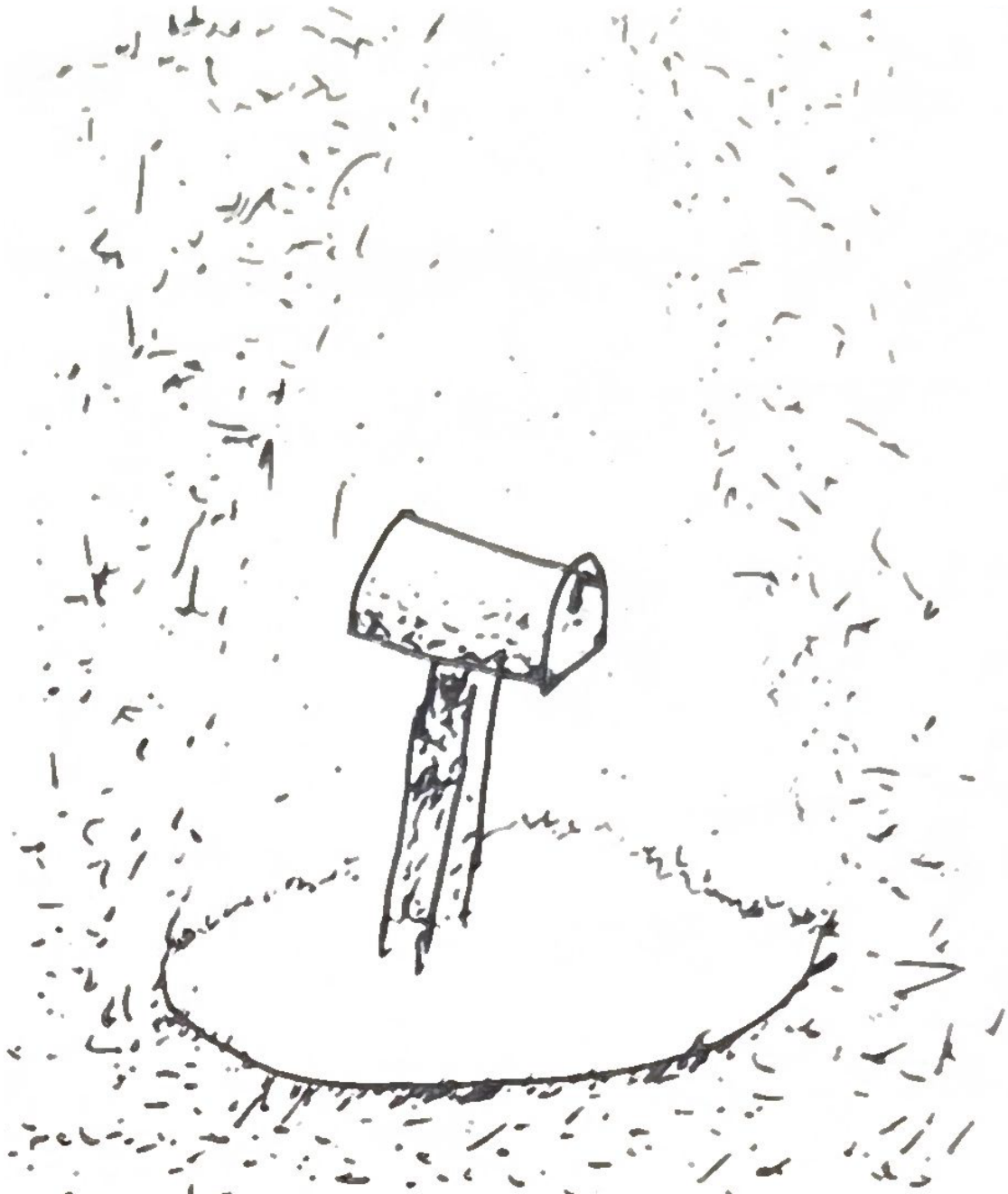


A Letter You Should Ignore

A two-player cautionary tale about the horrors of desperation and the ones who take advantage of them

A Letter LARP by Charles Heger



What Is This Game?

This game explores the unhealthy power dynamics of one person wanting to be loved and a malevolent character willing to feed into that desire with a supernatural twist. This game is asking for one player to play an emotionally vulnerable character who just had their heartbroken and the other wanting to control them.

This game is intended to be played by mailing physical letters back and forth, however, there are adjusted rules for playing in-person or by email on the last page.

Decide who will be The Heartbroken and who will be The Admirer, each taking their respective playbook and keeping the contents secret from the other.

Both players will need to have stamps, paper, envelopes, writing utensils, highlighter, and a notepad to keep track of some game elements as well as details about your character (as it can be easy to forget details when it can be days or weeks between letters). The Heartbroken will have to fill out the paper dating profile and send a copy to The Admirer before play starts as well.

Once setup is done, play begins with The Admirer sending the first letter to The Heartbroken. From then, play continues as the two send letters back and forth. Your only limitation is your allocated stamps (make sure you are up to date on your countries mailing regulation to know if a letter you send only needs one, two, or more stamps depending on its weight and size).

Your playbooks will tell you how this game ends.

Calibration Tools

Also known as “Safety Tools”, these are practices each group can decide to use or not when dealing with subjects that can cause unwanted emotions and mental harm outside of the scope of the game. Now, both players should be well aware that this game explores an abusive relationship and should be primed about what situation can come up (such as Love Bombing). I can't decide which are best for your play experience, the internet has multiple suggestions that might be a good fit for your group, such as Content Warnings or Lines/Veils.

What I do suggest is to check in with each other throughout the months of play. Call each other on the phone and just make sure you both understand that you're just playing characters and that you as a person are a different being than the ones writing the letter. Play video games online. Start a book club together. Just do anything with each other outside of this game to help keep a healthy reminder of who your friend really is (it's also nice to stay in touch too).



The Heartbroken

You've had your heart shattered, stomped, ruined. You cried out to the unfair universe. Begging for someone to take away this pain. Regrettably, you were heard.

You will be playing the part of someone who recently had been devastated emotionally and left vulnerable. The details about who you are, your past, personality, and so on is left for you to come up with on your own. But, while you have lots of freedom to create your character, in order for them to work in this game, your character must:

- Be deeply curious, to a fault
- Desperately wants to be loved
- Feels like they are alone in the world

If you would like help knowing more about your character, below are some questions to help know your history and current emotional state:

Who broke your heart and how? Are they still alive? Why was it your fault they left you? When did they do it and what shitty thing did they do to make it worse? Why is no one in your life able to help you or are you not letting them help? What are your insecurities? What can someone say that will make you feel enchanted by them? What are some red flags you think you can fix in someone?



Once you have a grasp on your character, fill out the paper dating application and send a copy to The Admirer when you're done (this can be done digitally). The more you write, the better. Once sent, you wait for the first letter to arrive and then play begins

Dating Application: Name (pronouns), Date of Birth, Gender, City you are currently in, Sexuality, Romance Type, Occupation, Likes/Dislike, what you're hoping for from a relationship, and a freeform bio to write a few sentences or paragraphs about yourself.

Gameplay

The game ends if you have gone more than 2 months without sending mail or if you admit to being in love with your admirer. If the game ends by you admitting to love, then your admirer will write to you at least one more time.

Your admirer may highlight questions in their letters. If you see this, then you feel compelled to answer truthfully and with "sufficient details". If a question is highlighted AND circled heavily in ink on the following letter, then that means you did not give enough sufficient details last time and you feel compelled to answer again.

You begin the game with either 5 or 10 stamps. You are allowed to send your Admirer your own extra stamps in mail if you like. If you feel like you would know when your character has fallen in love, then you start with 10 stamps and ignore the next Passion/Caution mechanic below (you also have no way to gain any more stamps). Otherwise, you begin with 5 stamps and continue to read below:

If you choose to start with 5 stamps then you also will keep track of your Passion and Caution. The number range is from 0-9 and can not go above or below this range. You can have a notepad to help track these numbers or write them on the bottom of your received letters from your admirer. You can NOT be compelled to discuss these numbers. If you run out of stamps and wish to write a letter, decrease Caution by 1 and gain a stamp.

- Passion begins at 0. After reading a letter, judge how it made you feel. If you felt moved and had butterflies in your stomach, then increase Passion by 1. If you felt especially moved or swept off your feet, then you can increase Passion by 2 instead and gain a stamp. Otherwise, no change to Passion
- Caution begins at 9. After each letter you receive, decrease Caution by 1. If the letter made you feel disgusted or unease, then do not decrease your Caution.
- If Passion is ever equal to or greater than Caution, then your heart has fallen in love with The Admirer.

Life Events (Optional)

If you ever have trouble thinking of something to write to your admirer about, here are some tables to generate events that have happened in your life since the last time you wrote:

(author note: these list are not in bullet point list to keep it within the page count)

Family: 1) A pet passed away/was adopted, 2) a loved one is getting divorced/married, 3) family member had a medical emergency, 4) you learned an awful secret about a loved one, 5) a baby was born into the family, 6) there was an altercation at the last family reunion

World Event: 1) A mass tragedy happened, 2) an influential person mysteriously disappeared, 3) war was declared, 4) a major election is happening, 5) a new wonderful/dystopian tech was just revealed, 6) breaking news from The Olympic games!

Local Events: 1) went to a festival, 2) you saw a movie and had an awful/meh/great time, 3) embarrassed yourself at a party, 4) went camping/hiking, 5) volunteered your time, 6) had a spiritual moment

Work: 1) You got a promotion!, 2) You were fired and it was bullshit/deserved, 3) you witnessed a coworker do something unethical, 4) you did something unethical at work, 5) you started a small business/took on another job, 6) you quit your job

Relationship: 1) You meet a new friend/love interest, 2) a friend asked you out on a date, 3) you ran into an ex, 4) your best friend moved away to another city, 5) you got stood up on a date, 6) you got into a big fight with a close friend

Miscellaneous: 1) You are being harassed online/were doxed, 2) something expensive broke, 3) your insurance isn't covering something important, 4) you feel like you're being stalked/watched, 5) you fell for a scam, 6) you saw a shooting star

The Admirer

You have been cursed for decades to never age or die. Trapped and alone in ruins. Your loved ones, if they're still alive, have forgotten about you. You can only escape this torment by passing this curse on to another. Once every few years your jailer brings you the information of a desperate soul that is compatible for a transfer, this is your Mark. At first you resisted, not wanting to put others through this hell, but time has changed you.

The game ends if the mark (aka The Heartbroken) admits to being in love with you, but if you love them back, then the curse stays on you until another year when you get a different mark. Either way, you must write to them one more time (even if you ran out of stamps). Explain the curse you have passed onto them or how you failed to curse them and how that makes you feel. The game also ends if it has been more than two months since you received a letter from you mark. No more letters. Quietly end the game. You have lost your chance, for now.

To flesh out the details of how you were cursed, Roll or pick the details of your situation:

- Your Prison is: 1) An overgrown cabin in the woods, 2) in an abandoned basement in the city, 3) on locked apartment at the top of a skyscraper, 4) a shack in a desert, 5) a small island off the coast, 6) a boarded up home/shop in a small town
- Your Jailer is: 1) A bunch of insects, 2) a bird, 3) small mammal(s), 4) a large mammal, 5) an amphibian, 6) something person shaped
- You Were Imprisoned in the Year: 2020, 2010, 1999, 1990, 1975, 1939
- How Were You Cursed? (Feel free to even combine some together!): 1) You admitted your love to the last haunt, 2) your ex was a powerful sorcerer, 3) you lost a bet with a spirit, 4) you were tricked by a fae, 5) you practiced magic . . . poorly, 6) you can't remember

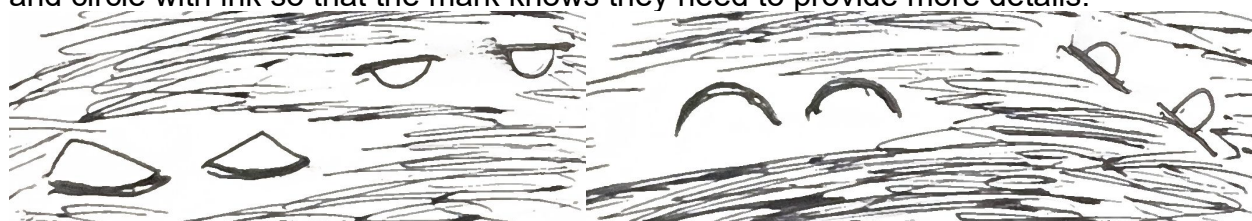
While cursed you do not age, get sick, or die. It is physically and soulfully agonizing for you to lie. You are never allowed to leave the confinement of your prison. Everyone who knew you forgets. No one can perceive your prison. You have a silent jailer who only brings you information about your marks and handles your letters.

Gameplay

You begin the game with ten stamps. You can only gain more stamps by convincing your mark to give you more. You can mail your own stamps to your mark if you like.

You can use a stamp (burn it, rip it up, stick it in a box for the rest of the game) to tell a single lie or to Compel your mark. Write down this lie somewhere like a notepad so that you can remember it. If you're able to move the curse onto the mark, tell them what your lies were.

When you Compel, use a highlighter to highlight up to three questions in your letter. Your mark must answer truthfully and to a level of detail you are satisfied with. If you aren't satisfied with their details, in your next letter write the question again, highlight it, and circle with ink so that the mark knows they need to provide more details.



In-Person Version

Instead of playing this game with real letters between each other, you can simulate this in-person with a few changes. Set up your play area with two chairs facing away from each other. If you have a curtain or small barrier to put up between the chairs, even better! Something that stops vision but still lets the two players hear one another.

During set up, both players take a moment to create their characters in their heads, taking notes as needed. The Heartbroken can should still fill out the paper dating profile. When they are done, they should say so and close their eyes. Then The Admirer can stand up, walk over, and grab the paper. When they get the paper they should take a long look at The Heartbroken, study them. Try to understand the physical embodiment of The Heartbroken. When done, they go back to their seat and study the paper.

The game begins when The Admirer speaks their first “letter” to The Heartbroken.

Instead of stamps, each person is given a stopwatch. Each player is given 15 minutes on their timer. Whenever a player speaks, they start their stopwatch and stop their timer when they are finished speaking. Players should speak as if they are writing a letter or reading a letter they have made (“Dear Elizabeth, I hope this letter finds ...”). Time is not lost if clarification is needed. Either player can “give” the other player minutes from their timer. A player can also choose to voluntarily let their stopwatch keep ticking down, even if they’re not speaking or listening to the other player (aka, intentionally letting their time run out).

When The Admirer must normally spend stamps to do special things, they take a minute off their time instead for each stamp they would have spent. When they wish to compel, they say, “I compel you, [Question here]” or some other phrase that makes it obvious to The Heartbroken that they must answer truthfully in the next reply.

The game ends if The Heartbroken admits their love for The Admirer or if time runs out on either stopwatch.

Other Alternative Playstyles

It should be fairly simple to adapt this to email or “instant message” only play as well. You are still mimicking the act of sending mail out. Each message takes one “stamp” to send with especially long messages taking two “stamps”. Between messages, each player should wait at least a few days between replies. Besides the game ending by admitting love, it also ends if The Heartbroken doesn’t send a message within one month of their last one.