Humans think Gravelings are harbingers of death, stealing human souls for their mischievous purposes. Gravelings are so misunderstood. For one, Gravelings have no use for human souls. For two, the job isn’t just about death.

1.) Describe the story arc for your game. What happens in the beginning, middle, and end? Is there a central dilemma or crisis that the player character has to overcome?

Upon the start of the game, the player (a nameless Graveling lackey) finds himself trapped in a cellar with a family of three – Alice Bailey, the neurotic super mom who longs to return to New Jersey; Denial (Big D to all his friends) Bailey, the chain smoking jolly Dad with a slight gambling addiction; and Mary-Ann, a toddler. The player has the freedom to move around and examine things, but the NPCs remain non responsive. Opening the cellar door reveals a giant twister barreling down on the small Missouri town. Oops.

The player finds himself transported back to the Central Graveling Office. It seems he has inadvertently (and catastrophically!) set off a series of chain events that have altered the course of history. As the sole entity responsible, Graveling must set the course right. The only problem – the cellar door cannot simply be shut. It’s too dangerous. Gravelings must ensure they are never seen by humans, at least not those who could be believed, or it may have grave consequences for all Graveling kind.

Fortunately Gravelings can jump forward and backward in time, and always know what will be each person’s moment of death. (It’s a job skill that comes in handy, really). Graveling must scuttle back and forth in time to “fix” the timeline. Or, at least alter it in some other way that
achieves the desired outcome. Of course, Graveling is only responsible for one element of the timeline – ensure Mary Ann moves to California upon reaching adulthood. Graveling Head Office says she needs to be there for the next major earthquake. Don't ask why, that's Graveling Head Office prerogative.

Gravelings may interact with objects. But Gravelings know, sometimes small changes have drastic causal effect relationships. If a Graveling helps Daniel die too early, Mary Ann may rebel without a father figure. Spare him, and the inevitable divorce between Big D and Alice may side track Mary Ann’s studies.

2.) What is the role of the player character in the game? Does the player play multiple characters? If so, what is the relationship between the multiple characters?

The player embodies a single nameless Graveling. He or she interacts mainly with objects in the world, picking them up and dropping them in different times which effects what the NPCs can do. If the player jumps too far forward, or backward, he finds himself back at the central office where Graveling NPC gives suggestions as to what the graveling can do.

The player follows Mary Ann Bailey through her young life, and performs actions to influence her decisions. The two characters never interact directly.

3.) Describe each location that will appear in your game. Draw a map showing how the locations relate to each other (boxes and lines are fine for the map).

Location 1: The Missouri Cellar (Mary Ann’s Age: 3)

The Missouri cellar has three characters: Big D, Alice and Mary-Ann. There is a cellar door. The player cannot return to this location after they leave.

Location 2: Garage (Mary Ann's Age: 6)

Big D is working on the car. The hood is up and he's tinkering with the engine. Next to him is a set of tools, and a burger lunch with fries. A bike with pink streamers rests by a garden hose.

Death Options:
* Honking the car startles Big D. He jumps, hit's his head on the hood of the car which comes crashing down on him.

Location 3: Back Yard/Playhouse (Mary Ann’s Age: 7)

The back yard is well kept and has a sprinkling of trees. To the left is a utility shed and to the right is a small playhouse with blue and green shingles. Mary Ann and a local boy, Wes, are inside.

Location 4: Mary-Ann’s Room (Mary Ann’s Age: 8)
Purple and white balloon wallpaper, and an array of stuffed teddy bears arranged according to size. The bed is made (and perfect for jumping on). But jump too much and someone might hear you.

If Mary Ann’s dad has passed, the room is scattered and in disarray.

Location 5: Kitchen (Mary Ann’s Age: 11)

Alice is mutilating vegetables by the sink and marinating some sort of animal flesh, perhaps poultry. Mary Ann is working on homework on the kitchen table. A kitchen island separates the two.

Location 6: School (Mary Ann’s Age: 14)

The hallway of Mary Ann's middle school (she's in 8th grade). There are lockers with books, and a school lunch. There's a water fountain (great for splashing) and a fire alarm (great for pulling).

Death Option:
* Splash water in the hall and pull the fire alarm. When one of the students rushes out, they will slip on the water and slide careening down the hallway and down the stairs. Random, but death always is.

Location 7: Backyard/Playhouse (Mary Ann’s Age: 16)

The backyard is a bit overgrown, but nothing too noticeable. To the left is a utility shed and to the right is an old playhouse with dull gray walls and faded blue shingles.

If Wes and Mary Ann kissed before, there is the initials “MAW & WLT” carved into the old plastic table.

Location 8: Graduation (Mary Ann's Age: 18)

High school graduations, are high school graduations. Everyone is dressed in maroon and white cap and gowns and sitting on a row of ascending bleachers. Fortunately, Graveling recognizes a pair of shoes.

If Big D died, Mary Ann is absent … or is she? If Big D is still alive, Alice and Big D are also present in the audience.

Death Option:
* Tie Wes’s shoe laces to the bleachers and give him a sharp pinch. Wes jumps and falls, hitting his head on the ground below.
4.) What are the significant objects in your game? What role do they play in the game?

- The locket that contains both Big D’s and Alice’s picture. (The pictures can be removed from the locket).
- School books
- Big Mac Cheeseburgers (These can be removed, but they become moldy when you jump through time)
- Shoe laces
- Fire Alarm

The goal state can be reached in one of the three following conditions

(1) The Boyfriend breaks up with Mary Ann at college graduation.
   - Take locket from bedroom
   - Remove Mom & Dad's picture
   - Give locket to Mary Ann in the back yard
   - Do not interrupt boy from kissing Mary Ann in the back yard (do not kill him)
   - Kill boyfriend at graduation

(2) Mary Ann gets into a west coast school
- Do not kill dad early on in the game
- Take the school books from Mary Ann's locker
- Place them in her room at a young age
- Put locket in boyfriend's locker

(3) Alice goes crazy
- Get caught by Alice jumping on the bed
- Remove Alice's picture from the locket
- Leave moldy hamburger for her
- Give locket to Alice at graduation.

5.) What is the role of non-player characters (NPCs) in your game? Can the player talk with NPCs? If so, how will dialog be implemented (topic keywords, conversation dialogs, etc.)? Do NPCs move around and take action or are they primarily conversational? If NPCs move around and take actions, what do they do?

There are two types of NPCs in the game.
(1) Humans. Humans don’t interact directly with Gravelings. A graveling must be careful not to be seen or heard, otherwise, the game is over.
(2) Gravelings. For the most part they ignore the player character, but occasional berate the player and throw in a few obstacles.

The main NPCs are
Daniel “Big D” Bailey is a car mechanic who enjoys wood working and is smarter than he looks. He lived in Missouri his whole life, and has seen several large twisters in his time. He's always told Alice never to fear the twister, for the fear will be what kills you. His natural death is at 52, after years of not fearing the big mac with fries.

Alice Walker Bailey came to Missouri to spend the summer with her sister when she meet Daniel. They married quickly due to a change in circumstance, but she's never felt at home with the rustic life style and violent weather patterns. She regrets the choices she's made, but is never able to admit it inwardly or outwardly. Her natural death is at the age of 65 from hypertension.

Wes is the, dull, dimwitted and uninteresting love interest of Mary Ann. He’s timid and shy and needs a lot of “help”. His natural death is at 32 after an altercation with a drunk driver, after they are both stopped at a red light.

Mary Ann Bailey is the daughter of Daniel and Alice.

6.) What prior stories, story genres, or games will your game reference? If so, how will you leverage the player's prior knowledge in your design?

The term “gravelings” comes directly from Dead Like Me (a showtime production), but the concept of daemon like reapers bringing about mayhem and destruction is common to many cultures. The language used both in graveling dialogs and in descriptions should set the tone of
mischief with a sense of dark humor so the player can get a sense of what kinds of actions are allowed.

In the first scene, Alice and Daniel are too distracted by the tornado to notice graveling, so they do not interact with the graveling. But by attempting to interact with the NPCs, the player will receive warnings about how gravelings should interact with humans so he can understand their role in the human world without breaking from the story.

7.) How will player interaction be integrated into the story structure? Will the player be uncovering a story that already happened? Will the player have an impact on the plot (and if so, how)? What will be the relationship between story and discourse in your game? In describing the interactive story structure of your game, use terminology from the readings from the first half of the class.

The player character will be driving the narrative. They will not be uncovering plot but setting it into motion via a chain of events. Thus it is an enacting story. It is also an example of an enabling story, since gravelings or grim reaper like creatures exists in many cultures. Thus the player character has a knowledge base to draw upon, which helps them discover how to act.

The order of the discourse is set by the player character who chooses when to jump forward and when to jump backwards. When the player jumps backwards, they can “undo” character deaths, but items that were removed remain absent from the scene. Thus the focalization of the story world is largely in the hands of the player.

Additionally, this is an internal/ontological game play. The player character has a single avatar, a nameless graveling, and follows the life of a single NPC. The choices the player makes creates a branching in the game’s story line, though these branches can always be undone by returning to the decision point and selecting a different option.

Gravelings can be either good or evil; sparing those from their fate or taking twisted pleasure in their ultimate demise. This is part of the piada play. There is no explicit “good” or “bad” end condition. Their are multiple ways to achieve the same Ludus state – Mary Ann's move. The game continues to be played until such a state is reached.