

A Garden Affaire

Content Module by Heidi McDonald which shipped with The World of Lexica, December, 2014

The World of Lexica

This game, made for Amplify Education and released in December, 2014, is a 3d adventure game in which the player takes the form of a Curioso, and journeys through a magical Library that's in peril. The way the player saves the Library is by reading (progress measured by technical checks under the hood), by playing mini-games designed to increase specific language arts skills, and by going on adventures and quests with various book characters from classical literature.

Content Modules

In addition to the main path narrative, mini-games and side quests, The World of Lexica also contains discoverable playable stories placed throughout the world. These were created with our Scriptus tool, which shipped with Lexica and allows players to build and share their own stories with other students in their class in addition to finding pre-developed Scriptus stories in the world to play through.

Objectives for A Garden Affair

- Produce an entertaining content module, discoverable in the world.
- Introduce students to the world of Victorian England, in which many of the books in Lexica take place.
- Introduce students to a story of the type that Jane Austen might build in Scriptus.
- Write some actual romance content in a game, since I've done tons of conference lectures about romance in games!
- Create a story that focuses on a female protagonist, with multiple endings in which the protagonist retains her agency, no matter the ending.
- Create fail states and success states, with the expectation that the player will want to explore all the available story options.

Your Arrival

You've taken the bold step of crashing Lord Stanley Tennyson Archibald's spring garden party. Greet the family without getting found out, and then make your way over to Bottomley for refreshments before the other guests arrive. If you are asked by anyone about who you are and why you're there, you'd better lie and say you're there with Rufus (a nearby guest), or you can get outed as a crasher and get kicked out of the party!

All characters have comments and rumors to tell you, as you wind your way through a colorful English garden maze.

Characters and objects you encounter:

- Lord Stanley Tennyson Archibald, noble and owner of this grand estate. He will be announcing the engagement of his daughter, Parissa, at the end of the party.
- Lady Winifred Archibald, wife of Lord Archibald and lady of the manor. She wants very much to throw an entertaining and scandal-free party, and for her daughter Parissa to marry someone who will take good care of her.
- Parissa Archibald, eldest daughter of Lord and Lady Archibald, whose engagement is to be announced at the end of the party today.

- Arabella Archibald, youngest daughter of Lord and Lady Archibald, who is very jealous of all the attention her older sister is receiving.
- GrandMuhMah, Lord Archibald's elderly mother, who misses nothing as she observes the party from a balcony.
- Emma Woodhouse, lady from a neighboring estate who is dear friends with Parissa Archibald. Emma tells you to keep an eye out for scandals, explaining that a scandal is "anything embarrassing or out of the ordinary; bad behavior, a party crasher, or like last year, when Lavinia's chapeau fell apart in front of everyone."
- Bottomley, the dutiful butler, who has served the Archibald family faithfully for 15 years. You learn that he is secretly in love with Parissa but knows it can never happen because he is a servant and she is nobility.
- Rufus, a gentleman from a neighboring estate, who is very shy and seems to be making a pig of himself at the refreshments table.
- A cage of colorful tropical birds, owned by Lady Archibald and proudly on display. One of the birds, however, seems to be molting.
- A wishing well, which right now contains a note thrown in by someone secretly in love with Parissa and wishing to be with her, and in future scenes will contain the wishes of various party guests.

Once you have encountered all these characters, you may speak to Bottomley, the butler, to continue the story.

More Guests Arrive

Now, the rest of the guests have arrived at the party. In mingling with them, you begin to meet Parissa's suitors. Unfortunately, Parissa has lost her croquet mallet, right before the game, and if she is without one when it's time to play, it could be a scandal! Fan the flames of a different scandal, somewhere at the party, while helping Parissa find the missing mallet before the guest of honor at the party is embarrassed by scandal.

New characters and objects you encounter:

- Lavinia, cousin of the Archibalds. At last year's party, her hat fell apart in front of everyone, and people talk about it to this day.
- Lady Margaret, friend of the Archibalds. She is catty and a massive gossip. She can usually give you the lowdown on everyone else.
- Miss Elizabeth, the younger sister of Sir Uppington-Downs. Sweet and naïve, she is secretly in love with the brutish Rufus, who she admittedly doesn't know very well.
- Dame Mary, the pitiable, daft spinster who spends the entire party talking to the birds in the birdcage.
- Professor Smegley, an addle-brained but kindly old widower who is vying for Parissa's affections. Retired from the university, he can keep the girl in comfort, and will probably die while she is still young enough to re-marry, leaving her all his wealth.
- Colonel Brisket, the haughty young military officer. He is mean-spirited and selfish, has a gambling problem, and only wants to marry Parissa because of Lord Archibald's money.
- Sir Uppington-Downs, a gentleman from a nearby estate, who is attending the party with his younger sister, Elizabeth.

Scandals you might cause:

- incite Rufus' bad behavior.
 - You have a choice to incite Rufus' bad behavior:
 - Tell him Elizabeth is in love with him, he tries to approach her, and throws up on her from nerves and overeating, and Rufus, Sir Uppington-Downs and Elizabeth must all leave the party. Elizabeth is very disappointed that Rufus is apparently not the gentleman she thought.
 - Tell him you heard Sir Uppington-Downs saying nasty things about him. Uppington agrees he said that he believes Rufus may have over-indulged himself, and doubts that anyone in attendance would disagree. Rufus punches Uppington in the nose, causing a bloody nose. Rufus is asked to leave, Uppington leaves to take care of his nose, and Elizabeth assists, being very disappointed that Rufus is apparently not the gentleman she thought.
- Trick everyone into thinking Lavinia's hat fell apart again.
 - You have a choice about how to cause this scandal:
 - You can ask crazy old Dame Mary to reach into the bird cage for you, and scatter some feathers on the ground behind Lavinia. Lady Margaret correctly notices that the feathers are not the same color as Lavinia's hat. You:
 - Distract everyone with the fact that Rufus just threw up. Miss Elizabeth is horrified, and runs off, and Sir Uppington-Downs runs after her. Rufus goes to lie down.
 - Say that you were only playing a joke. Lord Archibald is not amused and throws you out of the party.
 - Blame it on Dame Mary. People laugh it off.
- Ask Lord Archibald for permission to make an announcement. You:
 - Announce that you're a party crasher. GrandMuhMah is greatly amused, but, Lord Archibald has you escorted out of the party.
 - Announce that Parissa has lost her croquet mallet. Archibald is upset that you have embarrassed his daughter at their party, and you are thrown out.
 - Announce that Bottomley is in love with Parissa. Archibald, horrified, asks if this is true. Bottomley admits his love for Parissa, and Archibald fires Bottomley and ends the party.

Re-Gathering the Party

You search to find Parissa's croquet mallet in the bushes nearby, hidden there by her jealous little sister, Arabella. Parissa reminds Arabella that after today, she will be engaged, then married, and then all the attention will go to Arabella. Arabella feels sad that she did something to embarrass her sister, and apologizes.

Lord Archibald announces that after such a scandal, he wants to waste no further time announcing his daughter's engagement. You, as a newcomer, are the only objective person at the party, so Lord Archibald asks you to investigate which suitor would be the best for his daughter. During your investigation, you learn the true motives behind the suitors and that Parissa is upset that others must make this important decision for her.

When you are ready to continue, Lord Archibald asks you who you think is worthy of marrying his daughter. Depending on your answer, there are three separate endings:

- **Parissa and Professor Smegley**. Smegley is old enough to be Parissa's grandfather, but he is kind and will at least try to be a good husband to her. When he dies, he will leave her everything, and she will have enough youth and financial freedom to do whatever she pleases. Parissa is somewhat satisfied with this.
- **Parissa and Colonel Brisket**. Brisket is mean-spirited and awful, and this will mean that Parissa has a terrible life, and might even get bumped off as long as Brisket gets her father's money. Parissa can't believe you've betrayed her this way, but, GrandMuhMah and Emma begin secretly hatching a plan to pack Parissa off to America so that the wedding can never take place.
- **Parissa's Choice**. You tell Lord Archibald that Parissa deserves to choose for herself who she should marry. Parissa explains that she'd sooner marry the butler than either of these two men. Bottomley uses this as his grand moment to confess his love in front of everyone, and proposes very sweetly. Archibald is furious and vows to cut them off if Parissa agrees...only to have GrandMuhMah step forward to cause the biggest scandal of all: the money and the estate are actually HERS, and if Archibald refuses Parissa her own choice in this matter, he'll be left penniless. Professor Smegley wishes the couple well, as Lavinia comes over to comfort him after being jilted. The story ends with Archibald congratulating the couple, and telling Bottomley to put down his tray, since he can't have a son-in-law serving cocktails – that would be simply scandalous. Parissa gets her own choice, but there's a hint that once the grandmother dies, she may pay a price for this choice.