Commissioned Game 1 — Richard Garfield

Sibling Rivalry
A game for 2 or more players Players are siblings trying to bother one another. If they go too overboard, a parent will step in and punish them. As players score points, they advance on the score track. The object of the game is to be the first player to cross the finish line on the score track.

Rules

Equipment, and Starting the Game

Sibling Rivalry has a playboard, with two parts: the challenge board and the score track. The challenge board is made up of a grid of five challenge tracks numbered with dice, 2–6. The score track is the track with a start and finish, marked with little devils and little angels in some of the squares. Each player has two matching pawns (for example, two dimes.) One pawn progresses from start to finish on the score track, as a player successfully torments their siblings; the other pawn makes challenges on the challenge board. The first pawn will be the challenge pawn; the second the scoring pawn.You also need five dice to play. Select a player to go first.

On Your Turn

At the start of your turn, if your challenge pawn is on the challenge track, remove it and score the number of points in that square by advancing your scoring pawn. *Example: If your challenge pawn was 4 squares along the number two challenge track, on the square labeled "steady stare," you score 3 points.* Of course, on the first turn you won't have any pawns on any track.

During your turn, you roll the five dice and advance your challenge pawn along one of the tracks, one square for each of the track's number you roll. *Example: you roll 2,2,3,5,6—if you are advancing along the number two track you can advance your challenge pawn 2 squares. If you are advancing on the number three track, you can advance your pawn one square. If you are advancing on the number four track, you cannot advance your pawn at all.* All the 1s you roll are set aside and you may choose to roll again or stop. If you roll again, roll all the dice but your 1s. Continue the process of re-rolling, advancing your scoring pawn, setting the 1s aside until either you choose to stop or you accumulate three (or more) 1s.

You are restricted on which tracks you can advance. When the challenge board is clear you must advance on the number two track. If the board has challenge pawns on it, you can advance in any track with a pawn in it, in an attempt to outdo your sibling, or escalate one track higher. *Example: There is a pawn on the number three track, and a pawn on the number four track. You can advance your challenge pawn in tracks number three, four, or escalate to track number five.*

You may change the track you are advancing during the course of your turn. After advancing along a track you may remove your pawn after a roll and begin advancing along another track. *Example: The board has a challenge pawn in the number four track in the third square, marked "chin." You can only choose to advance your pawn on the number four track, challenging your sibling's tickle, or escalate to the number five track. You roll 1, 2, 4, 6, 6, and advance your challenge pawn one square along the number four track. You then re-roll four dice (you are not allowed to re-roll the dice that rolled the 1), and you roll 1, 5, 5, 5. You may choose to remove your challenge pawn from the number four track and advance 3 along the number five track.*

Ending Your Turn

If you accumulated three (or more) 1s, Mom or Dad has caught you in the act and you move backwards on the score track one square for each 1 you ended your turn with. You also remove your challenge pawn.

If you choose to end your turn and have the only pawn on your challenge track, you leave it there and hope that it is still there at the start of your next turn, so you can score the points for that square.

If you choose to end your turn and are the most advanced pawn along the track you were challenging, remove the other pawn and leave yours there. You may score your pawn if you are still there at the start of your next turn.

If you choose to end your turn and you were tied with or behind another pawn in the track you chose, remove your challenge pawn, because you have not outdone your sibling.

If you manage to advance a challenge pawn to the last square on a track, remove all pawns in that track, score the square, and take another turn.

Scoring

When you advance your scoring pawn:

If you land on another player's pawn move backwards until you are on a free space (or slide off the scoring chart entirely!).

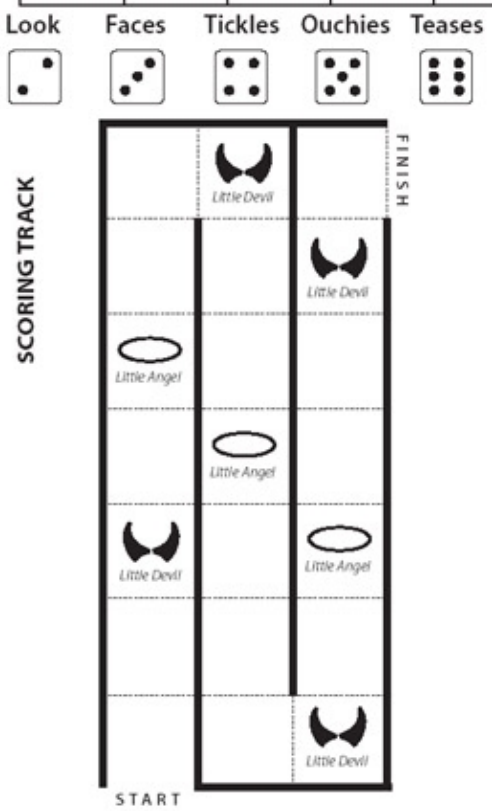
If your scoring pawn isn't on the board yet, ignore backwards movement. Similarly, if you must move your pawn backwards and reach the end of the track, remove your scoring pawn and ignore the excess backward movement.

If your pawn is on "Little Angel," you have somehow gotten into your parent's good graces. It takes four 1s to catch you!

f your pawn is on "Little Devil," your parents have developed a heightened suspicion of you. It takes only two 1s to catch you.

If you advance your scoring pawn past the finish, you have won the game!

Look	Faces	Tickles	Ouchies	Teases
Stop looking at me! **6 & SCORE!**	*Stop making faces!* **7 & SCORE!**	*Hahahahaha!* **8 & SCORE!**	*Ouwf Quit it!* **9 & SCORE!**	*MOM! Is it true?* **10 & SCORE!**
Narrow Gaze 5	*Eyelids Back* 6	*Pin and Use Head* 7	*Machine Gun Jabs* 8	*You were adopted* 9
Smirk 4	*Bug Eyes* 5	*Under Arm* 6	*Charley Horse* 7	*I saw bugs crawling in your nose while you slept* 8
Steady Stare 3	*Moron Face* 4	*Sides* 5	*Hair Pull* 6	*I spat in that* 7
Direct Look 2	*Pig Nose* 3	*Chin* 4	*Pinch* 5	*Weird… I got the looks AND the brains* 6
Sidelong Glance 2	*Tongue Out* 3	*Foot* 4	*Prod* 5	*Your underwear is showing* 6
Looking Near 2	*Kissyface* 3	*Pretend Tickle* 4	*Pretend Punch* 5	*Duhhh!* 6



Design Notes

Richard Garfield

Sibling Rivalry

Stage 1: General Constraints

The first thing I did was consider the constraints of the project, which included the audience and equipment. The audience I understood to be adults but not necessarily game players. As a result, I was leaning toward a light game, but not one without strategy. In terms of equipment, I had some pages in a book. There was the offer to include die cut counters, but I knew that is a pain both for the publisher and the book owner, so I rejected that option. I decided to limit myself to the use of game materials that people commonly have available (dice, counters, standard decks of cards, writing paper, and so forth). I would use the pages for rules and perhaps a simple board, which could either be copied or perhaps played with inside the book.

Stage 2: Concept

I am constantly toying with game design concepts and game motifs, using them to make little games for my own enjoyment and growth. I only attempt to publish a very small percentage of these games. This means that typically I have a lot of ideas to draw on when I am given a commissioned project.

> **Motif:** One idea I had been mulling over was a game of Sibling Rivalry, with kids trying to bother one another, while not getting caught (or while getting someone else in trouble). I had been thinking of it as a card game with a specialized deck, or a board game with an elaborate board that included all sorts of environments in which the kids might bother each other (back of the car, in front of the TV, at school.) In order to use this motif, I would have to cut back on use of this specialized equipment. I found the flavor fun though, and appropriate for a project like this, so I toyed with ways to address these changes.
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> **Mechanics:** I have been interested in press-your-luck mechanics for a while, and have designed a few games based on them.These games are characterized by the choice to keep going or bank your profit. The classic press-your-luck game is Can't Stop, by Sid Sackson. Another example is Six Man Zonk, which was marketed as Cosmic Wimpout. I have used the core mechanic in several of my own games, my favorite being a game I call Gonzo. In Gonzo, players roll five dice, count a particular result—say, 4s—and set aside the 1s, and choose whether to re-roll or bank. If the player ever accumulated three 1s, they lost their turn. I like this mechanic because it always feels like you can get lucky and come back.

Once I had both these concepts in my head—the motif of sibling rivalry, and the game mechanic of Gonzo—I realized I had a combination that probably worked. The idea of my trying to do more and more outrageous things to my sibling while risking getting caught (three 1s), was an appealing idea for a game.

Stage 3: First Prototype

The earliest version I playtested was called "But She Started It!" designed specifically for two players. I tried to make it so that someone "started it"; the player who got caught by mom or dad was in trouble. If the player who got caught wasn't the player who started it, then the victory was especially sweet (that is, worth a lot of points). The game had no board, and players alternated rolling five dice until someone rolled a 2, which indicated that they had "started it." This original design was very similar to the final version, except there was no scoring track, players scored many more points (four 3s were worth 12 points, not the final game's 4 points), and there was a bonus for "starting it" and not getting caught.

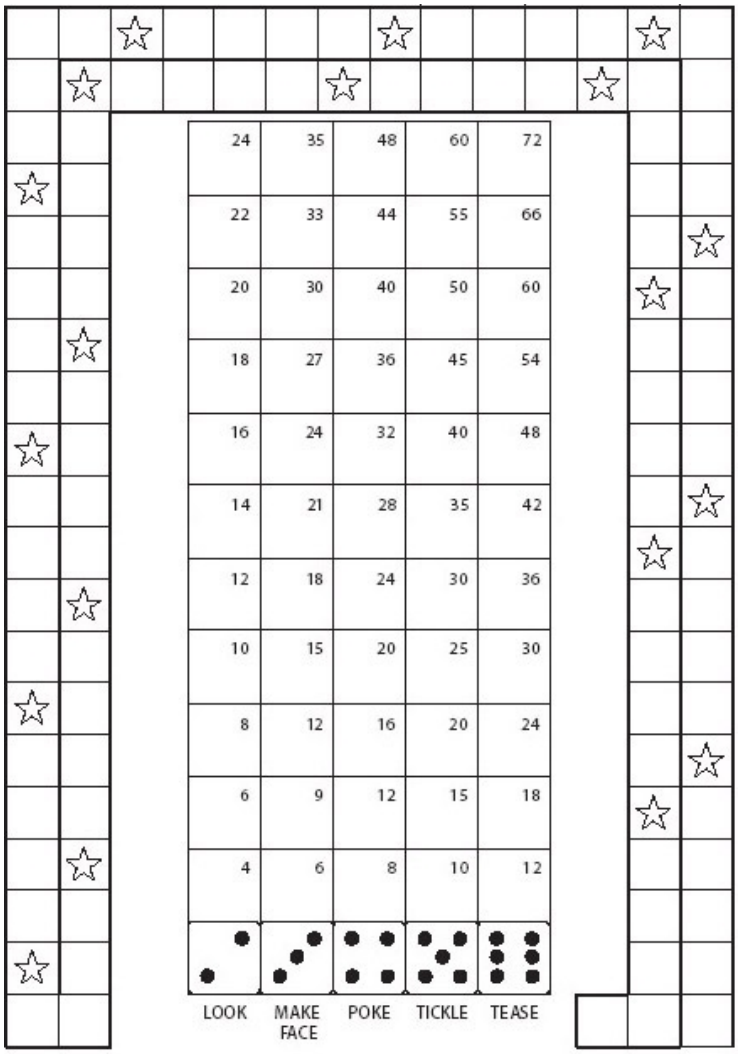
It was quickly apparent that "starting it," though a neat game mechanic in principle, required too many rules: it made the game far more complex for only a little play value. Keeping track of points was also a pain, involving a lot of addition and subtraction. This observation led to the construction of a

board, which served both to keep track of the score and the current challenge.

Stage 4: Evolution

There were many elements that evolved along somewhat independent tracks:

Evolution of Challenge Board



I've included the design of an early board for reference. Once a board is added to a game, some things become more natural than others. For example, it became natural to give points from the challenge board, because players could write the points on the board. This method was less obvious than "the total number of pips" that I was using before. For a while, I didn't want the challenge tracks to be finite, but obviously they had to be finite: physically if not logically. So the question arose, how big a challenge track is there and what happens when a player reaches the top? Eventually I settled on seven squares (down from an initial ten). With ten squares, if people hardly ever reach the top, then the board is needlessly crowded. Typically, with seven squares someone would reach the top during the course of a game, but not always, so it seemed like a good length. Originally I had a kind of lame rule that when you reached the top you could beat another player at the top. This rule was analogous to the original game in which you could always beat the previous player if you got lucky enough. The rule kept the game as close as possible to the original boardless version. With the use of a board I believed that the natural rule was to reward the player who made it to the end with a bonus: an immediate victory plus an additional turn seemed to be a pretty good idea. In particular, this rule makes it so that a player can win on any turn if they are lucky enough, which has a wild feel to it.

Evolution of Scoring Track

The scoring track shrank in size throughout development process, which not only made the scoring more simple, it also allowed the score track to acquire a special play function. For example, the rule that a player must slide backward when the player lands on another player's pawn is a real irritation when the track is 100+ squares long. Sliding back is so minor an idea, and it happens so seldom that it really isn't worth the space the rule takes up. As the board shrank, however, this rule became interesting, in that it would often modify how conservatively a player would play on the challenge board. Similarly, on the smaller track the Little Angel and Little Devil squares affected strategy and play on the challenge board in an interesting way. On the long track it would just be too annoying and difficult to aim for a particular square.

Evolution of Scoring

The system of scoring started out quite cumbersome: a player would have to add the total of all the pips rolled and add or subtract that from their current score. I really wanted to make the scoring simple, so I tried using the opposite extreme: one point received for winning a round, regardless of what number was rolled. As expected, this system was simpler—but also a bit dry. Players were motivated to press their luck, as the higher the number they rolled the less chance they had of being beaten—and losing their point. In the end I settled on a solution somewhere in between, with fixed points for the first three ranks, and points ramping up slowly after that.

Evolution of Number of Players

My philosophy was that as a two-player game, maybe it could be adapted naturally to accommodate three or more players. Playtesting showed that at these numbers the game worked surprisingly well. I am not even sure if there were ever changes made to the game to accommodate groups of more than two players—just changes made to the way I generalized the rules. For example, with two players, I thought that when one player was caught by Mom or Dad, the round would end. With more than two players, it worked best if just the player that was caught was punished and the round continued, until the challenge board was clear.

Evolution of Play Ergonomics

Play ergonomics is how I view the mechanical process of playing: what is awkward, what is too complex, which manipulations take too much time or spawn too many mistakes. An example of a change to the play ergonomics is advancing your pawn along the challenge track during the course of a turn, and removing it if you haven't passed your opponent's pawn. Originally, you only placed the pawn on the board if you beat the other player's pawn, so we could make the rule that a challenge track only ever has one pawn on it.This change didn't affect the game in any way other than allowing players not to mentally keep a tally of their turn's result. It is a very natural outcome but it didn't actually occur to me until about halfway through development, when some players started doing it as a matter of course.

Richard Garfield

Richard Garfield was designing and tinkering with games and game design as a kid, a hobby that stuck with him through his schooling and early career. He earned a doctorate in Mathematics from the University of Pennsylvania, intending to live the life of an academic mathematician. Richard's first published game, Magic: The Gathering, was a game that allowed players to choose their own cards, in effect sharing the role of game designer with the players. The phenomenal success of Magic allowed him to become a full-time game designer. Now he studies and designs games ranging from party games to the trading card game, a genre of paper game that he created.
