

# **Interactive Storytelling**

# Overview

- Look at interactive storytelling at different levels
  - Low-level nuts & bolts
  - Common interactive patterns / structure
  - Ways interactivity can be used

# Why?

- Computer games are pervasive
  - Almost everybody games
  - From Sudoku to eSports
- Interactive stories require different skills than traditional creative writing
- Interesting to learn about how to make them

# Let's Try One

- Let's play a simple interactive story
  - Brevity Quest
    - By Chris Longhurst
    - <http://o.ooli.ca/BrevityQuest>
    - Fantasy story
    - Experiment in brevity

# Observations

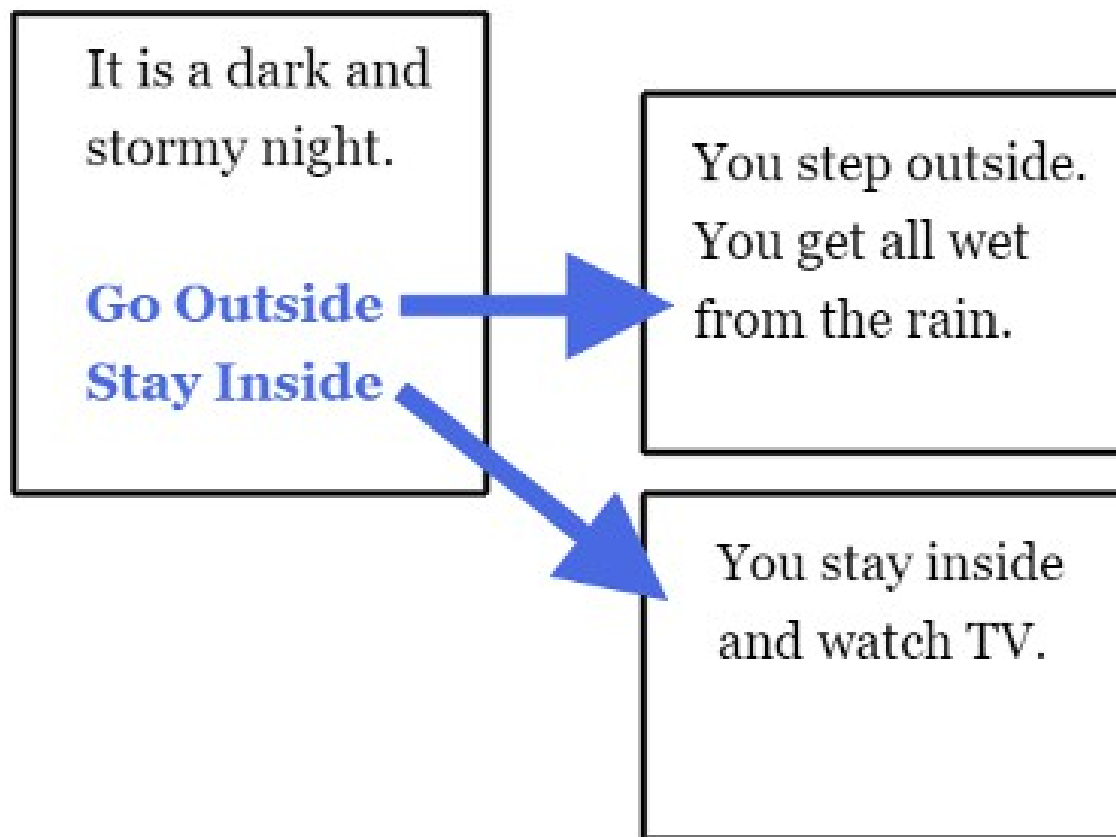
- Very little text
  - Just a few words
  - Barely qualifies as a story by conventional measures
- Still a compelling experience
  - Because of interactivity

# Twine

- How to make interactive stories?
- We'll use a tool called Twine
  - Choice-based interactive fiction
  - Specializes in text not graphics
    - Allows you to focus on interactivity without distractions
  - <http://twinery.org/>

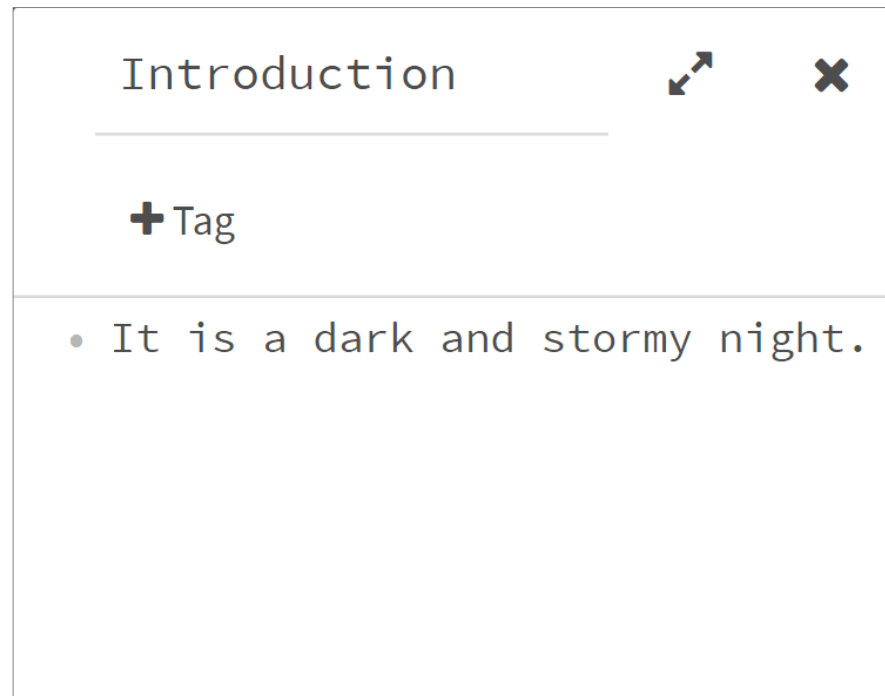
# Twine model

- Different passages (screens) with choices going to other passages
- Similar to CYOA books



# Demo

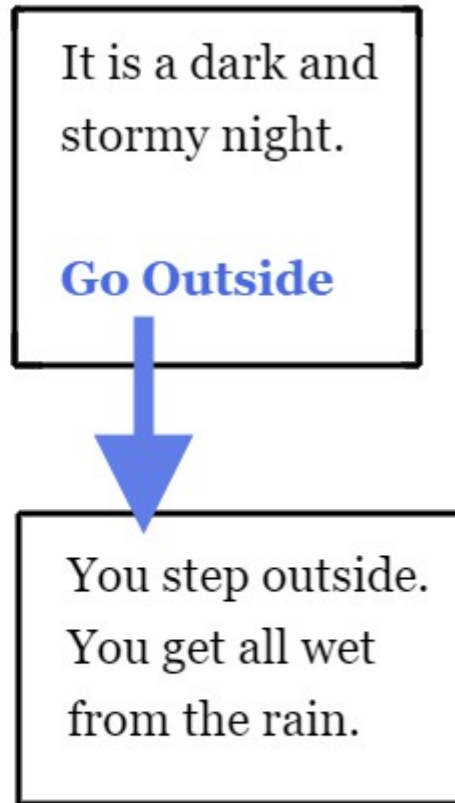
- Create passage
- Set title (doesn't appear)
- Fill text
- Play it





# Choices

- Choice syntax



# Choices

- Choice syntax



It is a dark and stormy night.  
**Go Outside**

You step outside.  
You get all wet  
from the rain.

# Choices

- Choice syntax

Introduction ↗ ✕

---

+ Tag

---

- It is a dark and stormy night.

It is a dark and stormy night.

**Go Outside**



Outside ↗ ✕

---

+ Tag

---

- You step outside. You get all wet from the rain.

You step outside.  
You get all wet  
from the rain.

# Choices

- Choice syntax

```
Introduction ↗ ✕  
+ Tag  
• It is a dark and stormy night.  
• [[Go Outside->Outside]]
```



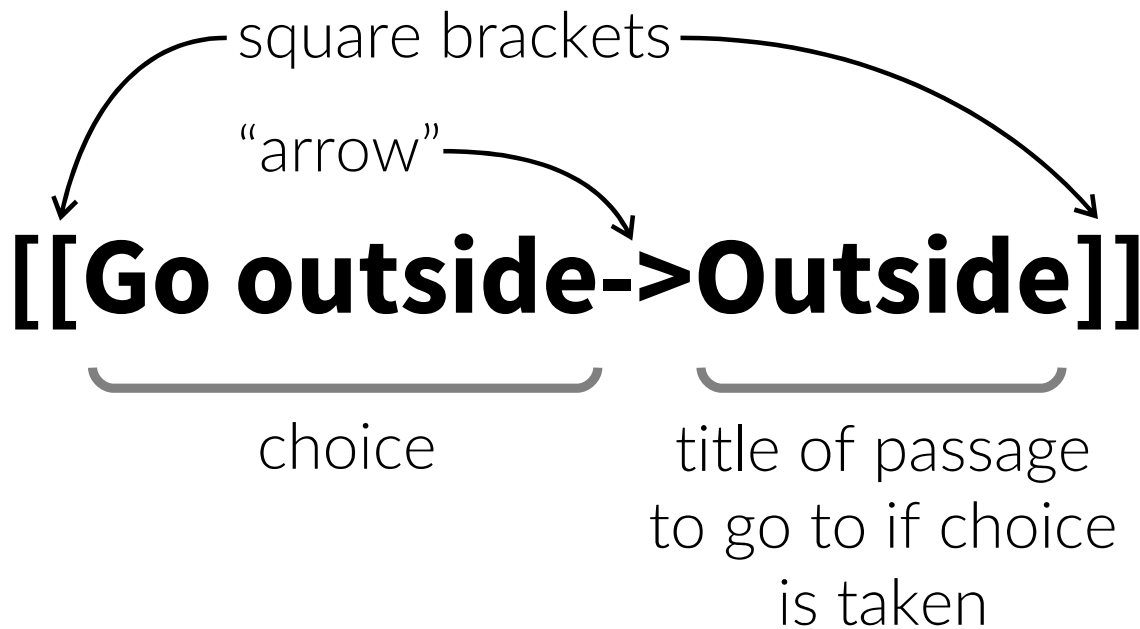
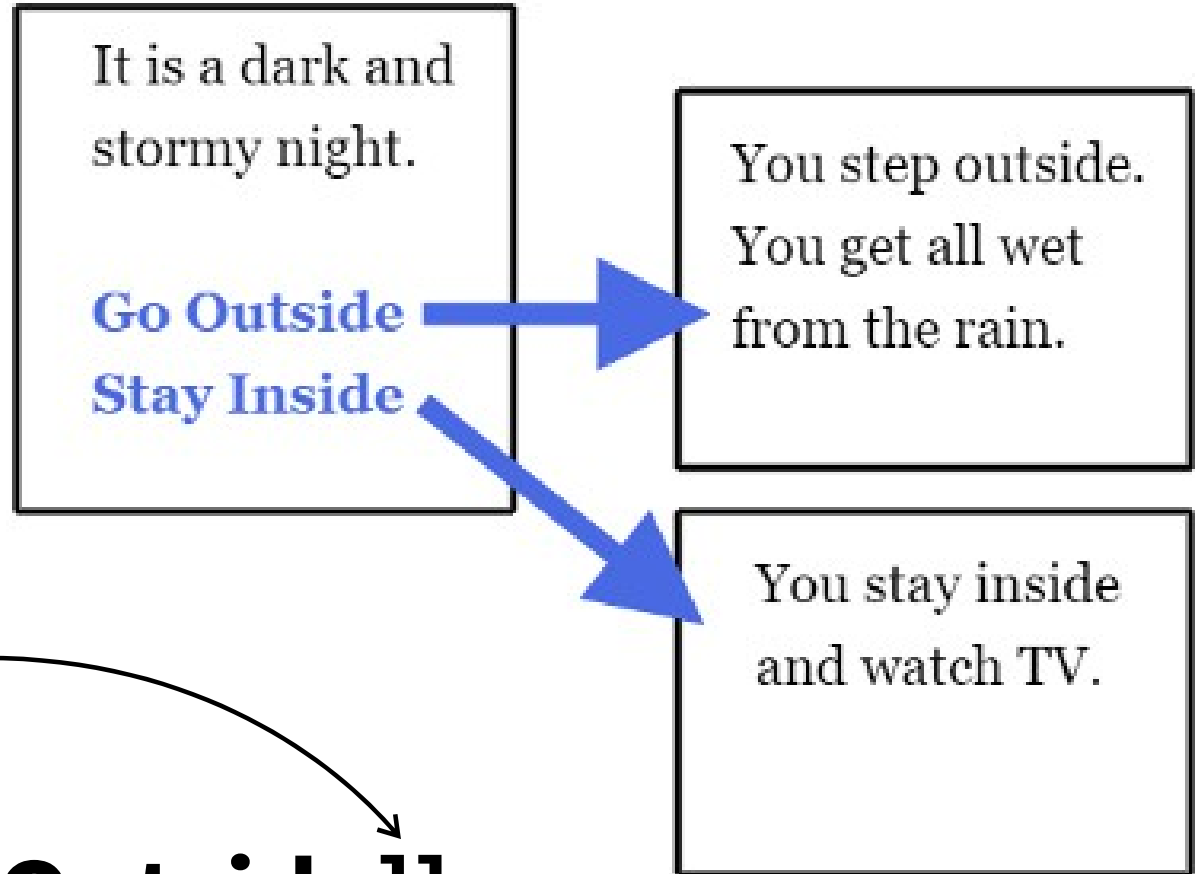
```
Outside ↗ ✕  
+ Tag  
• You step outside. You get all wet  
  from the rain.
```

It is a dark and  
stormy night.  
**Go Outside**

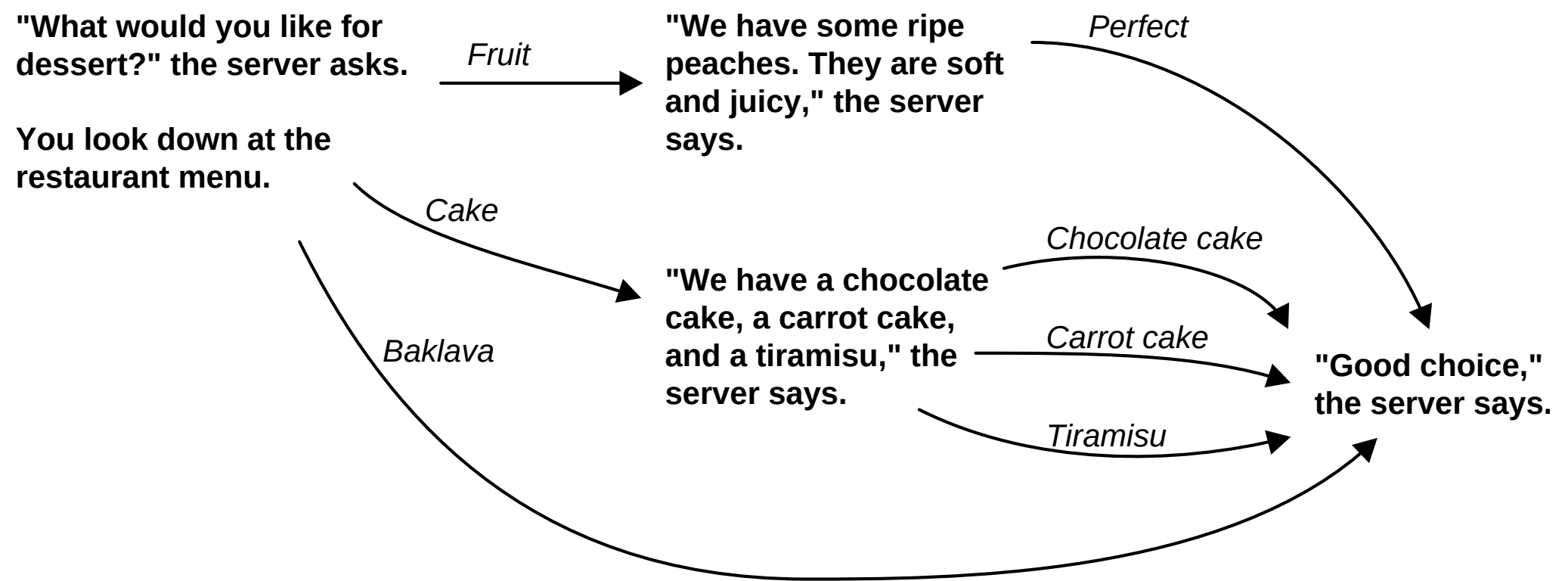


You step outside.  
You get all wet  
from the rain.

- Make another passage with an alternate choice on your own



# Make a Conversation

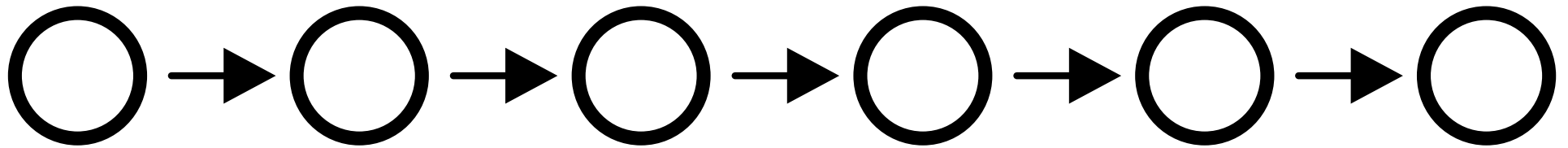


# Choice-Based Patterns

- Patterns you might encounter when making your interactive stories

# Linear

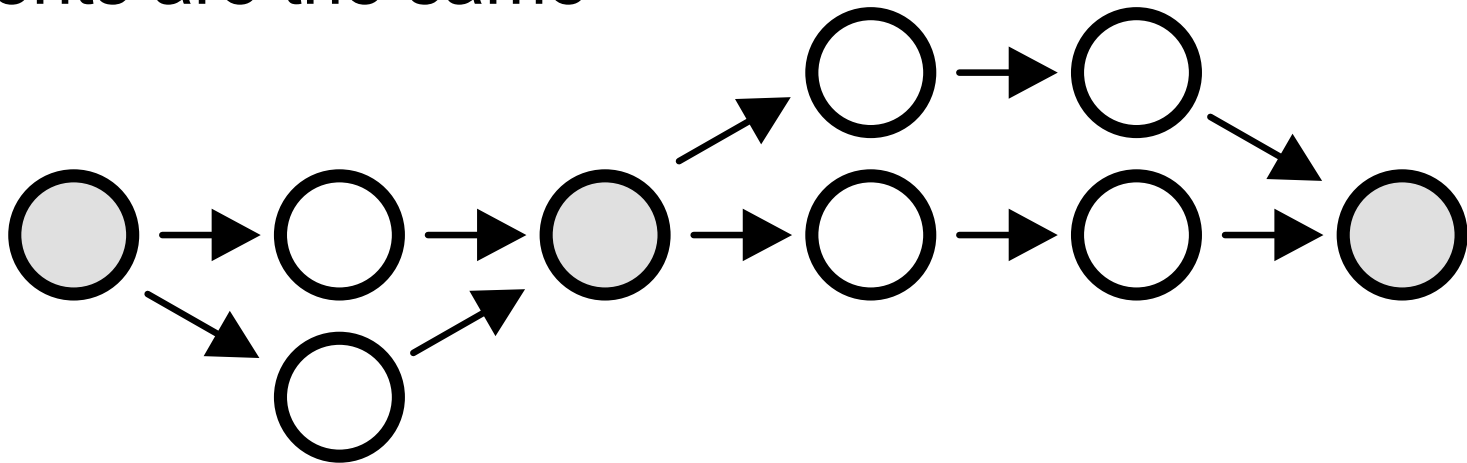
- Not very interactive



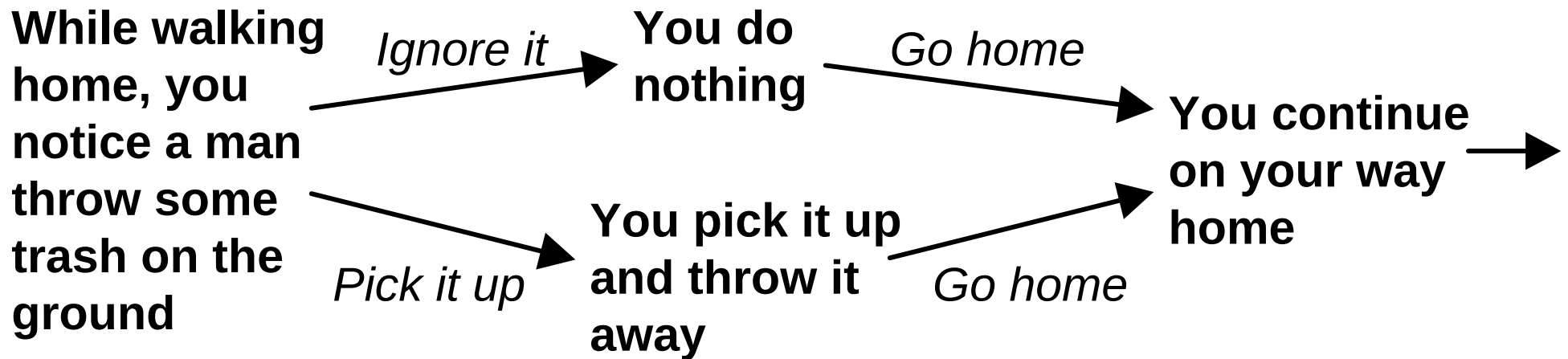


# Linear

- Can have choices, but still hit plot points
  - Affects feel and interpretation of events even if events are the same



# Linear: Same Events, Different Interpretation



I saw a man throw some trash on the ground.

**I did nothing.**

I continued on my way home.

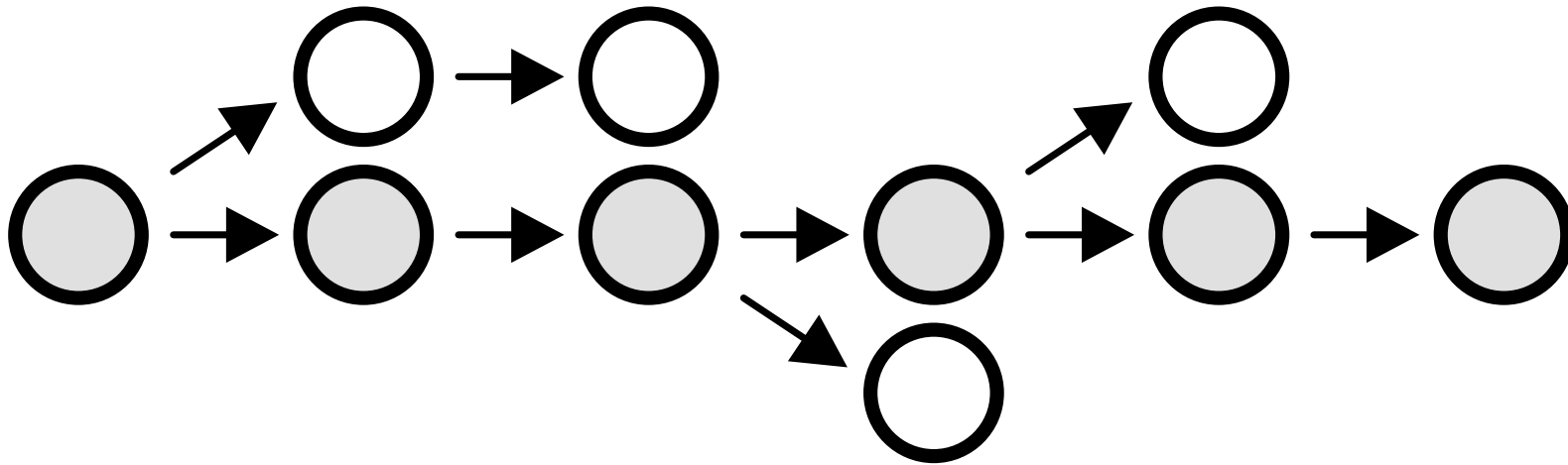
I saw a man throw some trash on the ground.

**I picked it up and threw it away.**

I continued on my way home.

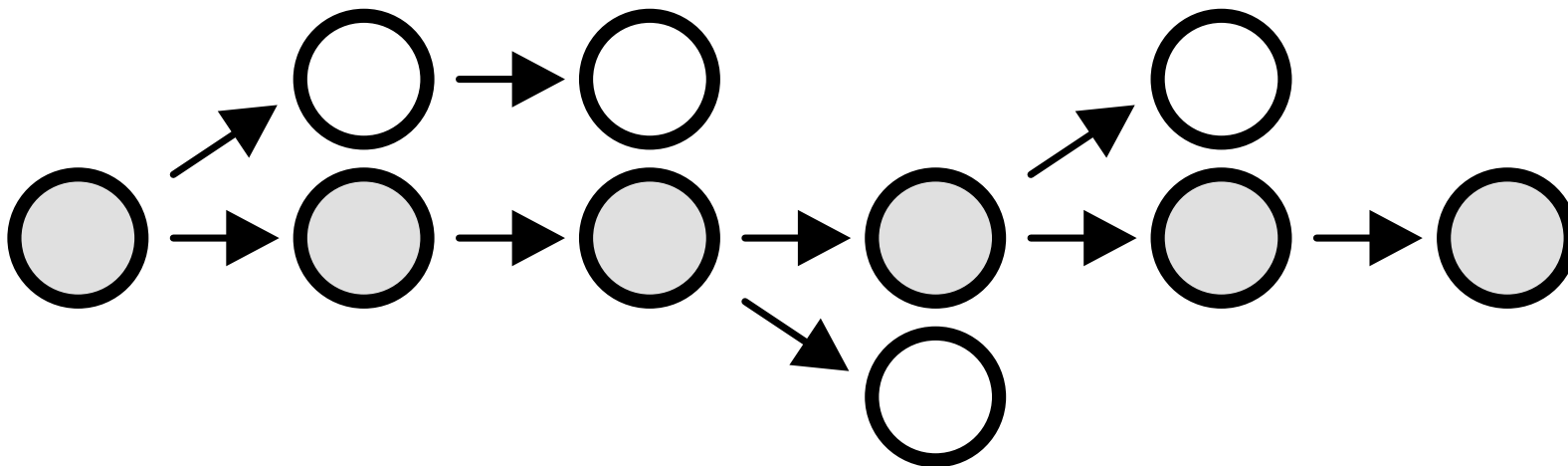
# Gauntlet

- One path to get to end
  - Choose wrong, and game ends



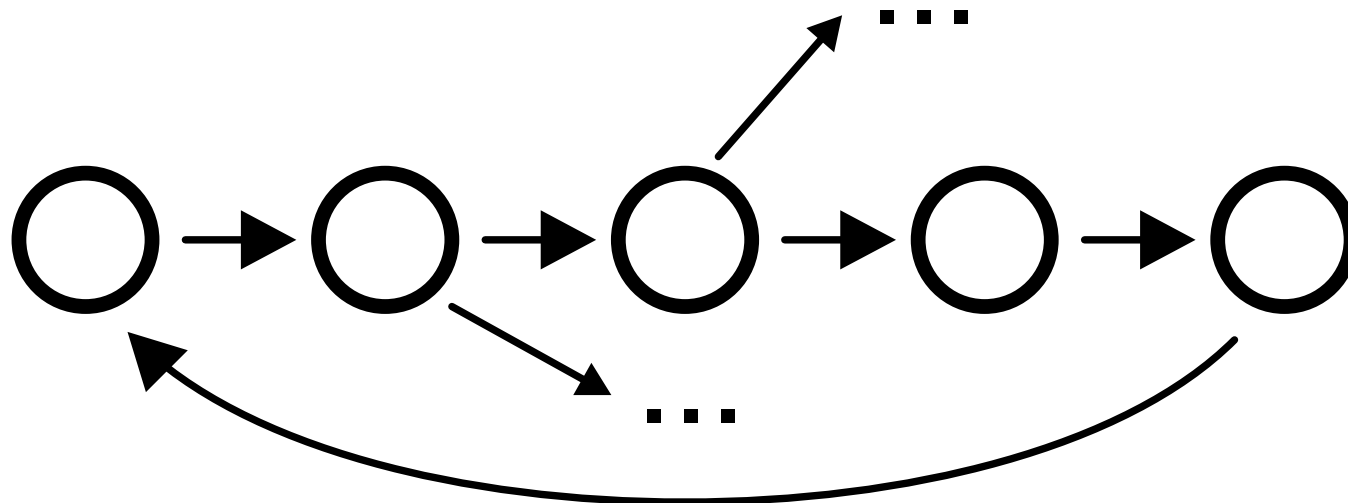
# Gauntlet

- Example:
  - <http://o.ooli.ca/interactivestorytelling/BombDefusal.html>
- When game ends, player must restart
  - Frustrating
  - Player must memorize correct path to get to end
  - Alternative: Go back to where wrong choice made



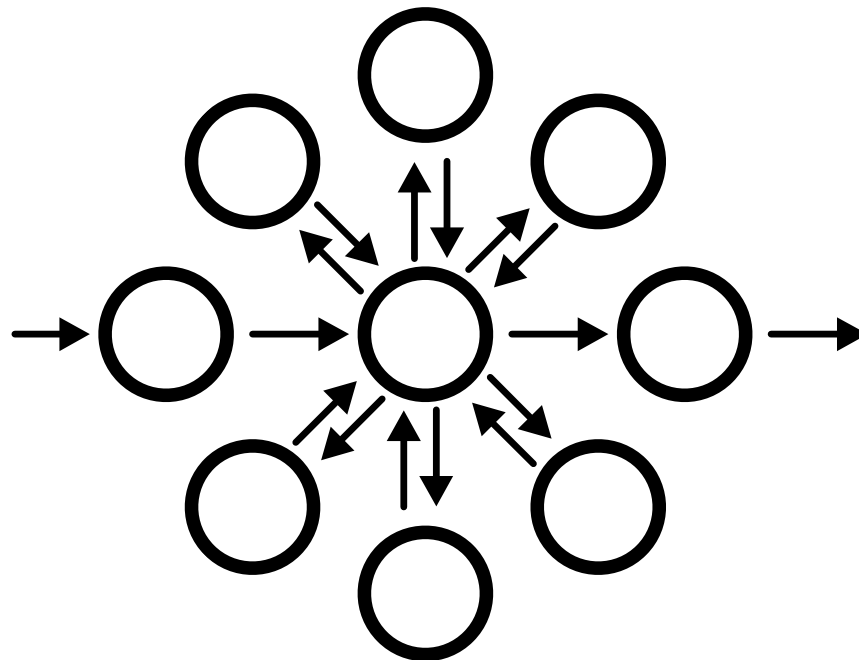
# Loops

- Makes a game longer
- Content and choices repeat
  - Player can explore choices more deeply
- Can have a mix of small loops and big loops



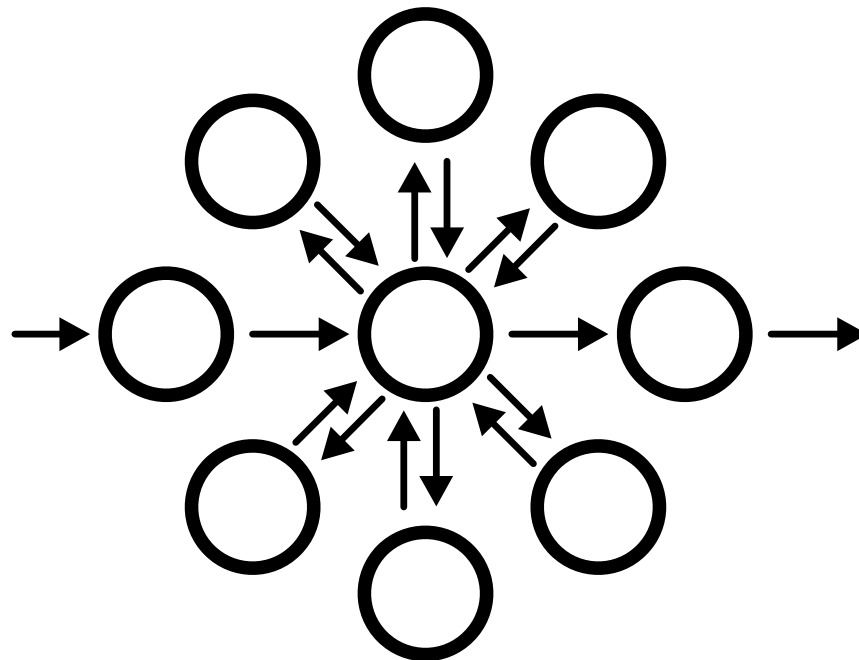
# Hub and Spoke

- One central hub
  - Lots of choices offered
  - Many choices loop back to central hub
- Good for optional content, conversations



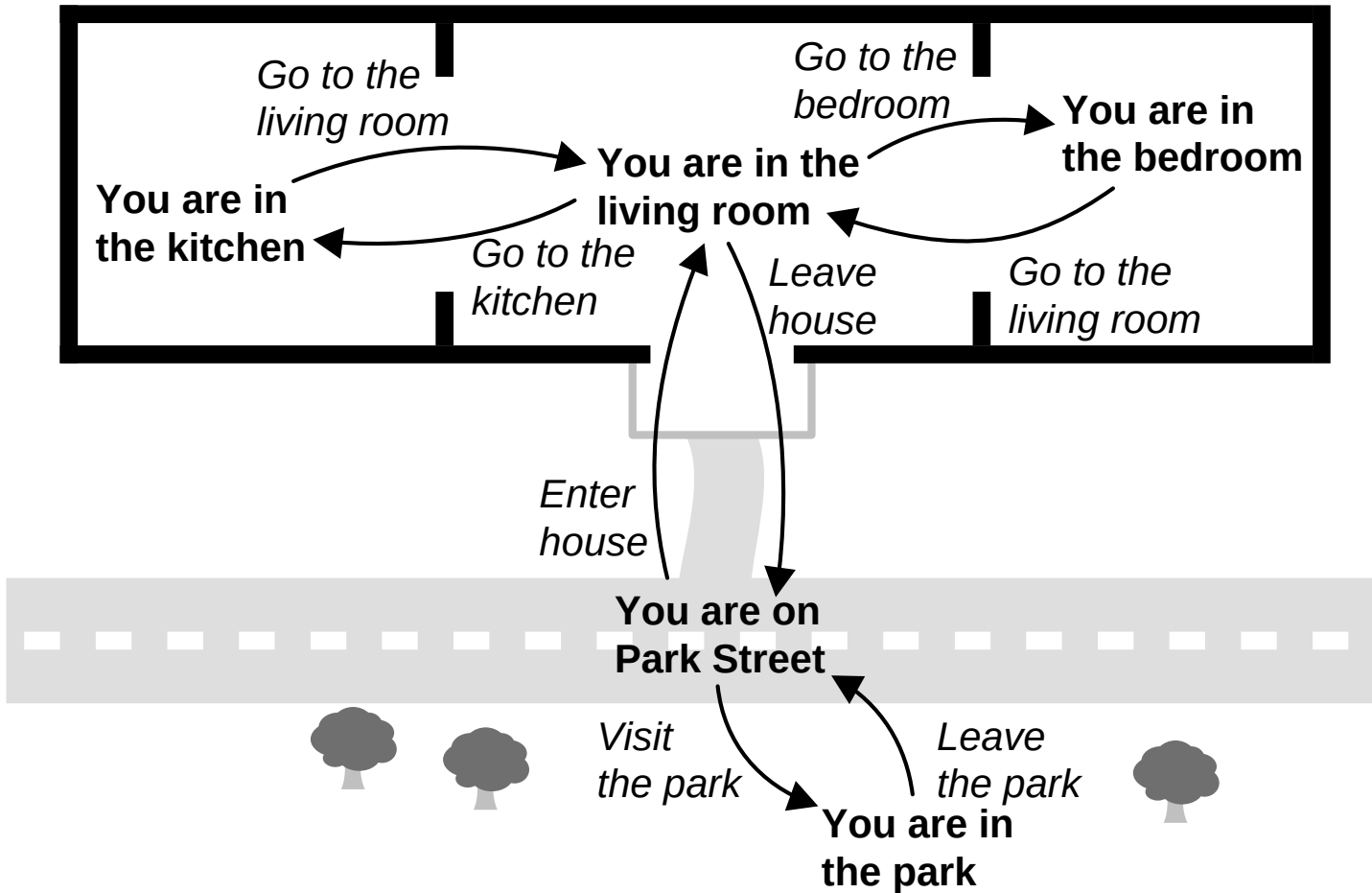
# Hub and Spoke

- Example:
  - <http://o.ooli.ca/interactivestorytelling/CryingBaby.html>



# Map

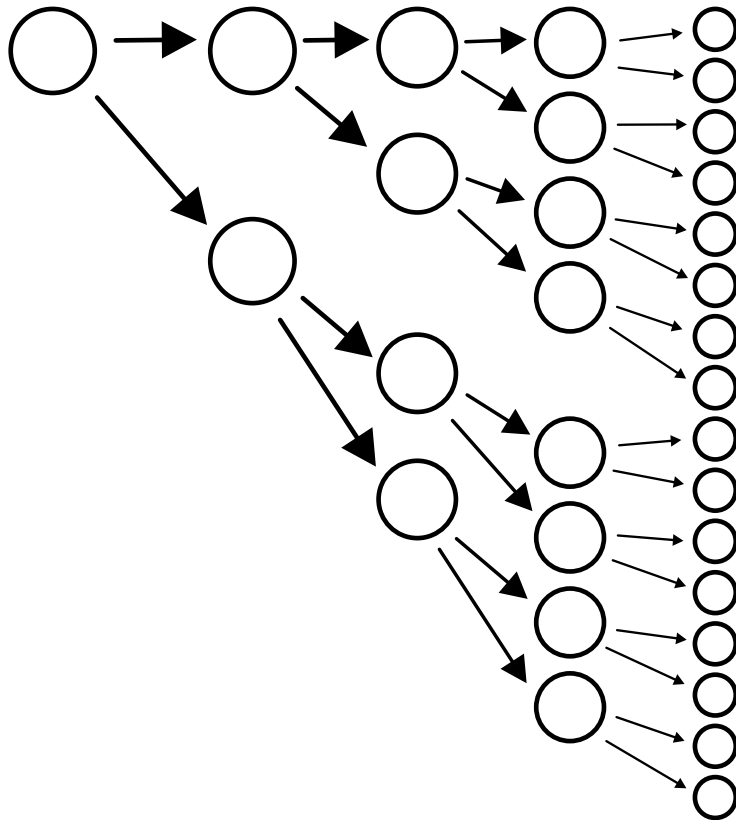
- Different locations are passages





# Too Many Choices?

- More choices is good
  - Impractical to have too many choices
    - Due to exponential explosion



# Let's Make Some Stories!

- Not enough time to make a full story
  - More writing required than normal stories
    - Choices mean lots extra content needed
  - Make a small scene
    - e.g. conversation or small area to explore
- Booklet contains some recipes for some more additional features of Twine
- At end, we'll play each others' stories

# Need Inspiration?

- What are some things that interactive stories do better than normal stories?

# Some Ways Interactivity is Better

- Exploration
  - Explore a space
- Self-expression and roleplaying
  - I did it my way!
  - Player controls focus and pacing

# Some Ways Interactivity is Better

- Challenge
  - Puzzles or difficulties to overcome
  - Learn a skill
- Complicity
  - Players are responsible for outcome because it's based on their choices
    - Help develop empathy?
- Difficult choices and moral decisions

# Need Inspiration?

- Booklet contains links to some games to try

# Playtesting

- Let's try each others' games
  - Important!
- Players interact with what you've written
  - Players are unpredictable
  - Need to test your story to see if it works