

Memories

A Collaborative Storytelling Game for 4-6 Players

INTRODUCTION

This game is designed to tell a series of stories, one for each protagonist at the table. While these stories will all be linked together, by a common theme and the relationships that exist between the protagonists, it is not strictly necessary for the protagonists to know one another.

As in stories like *Cloud Atlas*, our protagonists' lives can be affected by the lives of those who come before and after them, and even by characters who, so far as they're concerned, never really existed at all.

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SETTING UP

Physical supplies-wise, you'll need 26 index cards (25 for Mementos, and one for the Theme), plus name tents for each protagonist. Once you have all that, the first step is to select a Theme that will run through all of your protagonists' stories. Despite the name, the Theme need not be an abstract concept; it can just as easily be a location, person, event or anything else you all agree on. The main thing, the *vital* thing, is that it must be deeply and implicitly important to all of your stories.

Once you have your Theme, you will then each create a protagonist. You might not have all the details yet, and that's fine. A name, a brief description, and perhaps a setting will suffice for now; you can fill in the details in the next and final step.

Finally, you will create your Mementos. A Memento is comprised of two components: what the Memento actually *is*, and what relationship it helps to define. You will each be creating five of these. For games with six players, you will create one Memento for each other player at the table. For games with five players, your fifth Memento will be tied to a relationship with some aspect of the outside world, and in games with four players you will tie your final Memento to an internal struggle.

Some sample Mementos can be found in a later segment.

THE WORLD

Long ago, the world was green and bright, but now the sun is no more than a myth. Our last city crumbles, and our people weep. Can we save ourselves, when we are descended of those who stole the sun?

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PLAYING

The main game progresses through a series of three Acts, with each Act made up of one scene centering on each protagonist. The oldest player at the table takes the first scene, and turn order progresses clockwise around the play space from there.

In Act I, each protagonist selects three Mementos to incorporate into a scene. The players whose relationships the Mementos are tied to will be participating in the scene, though depending on your stories they may not be playing their own protagonist. For smaller games which have Mementos not tied to a particular protagonist, you should select another player at the table to take the empty roles.

Over the course of the scene, with the aid of you and your fellow players, your protagonist will explore their relationship with these Mementos. When the scene has reached a satisfying conclusion, it is up to you to determine what happens to these Mementos.

One of them will be Resolved. Whatever memories and karma you had tied to the Memento have run their course; you have learned what you need to learn, and you close that chapter of your life with a measure of peace. Set this aside on what we will call the White Scale.

One of them will be Broken. Through whatever tragedy or happenstance, the path you were meant to walk with this Memento has fallen out from under you. This business is unfinished, and will forever remain so, leaving the mark of regret forever on your soul. Set this aside on what we will call the Black Scale.

Finally, one of them will Evolve. In the wake of the rest and restlessness your other Mementos have brought you, you find that this third part of your life has, in some perhaps small but certainly fundamental way, changed. You see the Memento, and by extension yourself, in a new light, and this will color your story going forward. Put this back with your remaining three Mementos; you will be calling upon it again.

Act II is much the same as Act I, save that you will only incorporate two Mementos into each scene. This can include the Memento which Evolved in Act I, if you so desire. In this Act, you will select one Memento to Resolve, and one to Break, putting each onto the appropriate Scale as before.

In Act III, you will bring only your last remaining Memento, and use it to bring your protagonist's story to a close. At the end of the scene, this Memento will be either Resolved or Broken, and placed onto the appropriate Scale.

Now, you should have one Scale which is heavier than the other; this will determine how your protagonist's relationship with the Theme finally plays out in the Denouement, an epilogue which you will narrate based on the weight of your Scales. One everybody has finished Act III, you will take it in turns narrating your protagonists' Denouements. This will be the only "scene" which you will narrate alone.

If your White Scale is heavier, then in the Denouement your protagonist is Consumed by the Theme. In a major way, the Theme takes over their life, shaping them forever after.

If your Black Scale is heavier, then your protagonist is Repelled by the Theme. Through all the struggles and losses, they have found that the Theme is something they should forever leave behind, and this avoidance, like the clinging of Consumption, will largely define the rest of their life.

SAMPLE MEMENTOS

A Memento can be a skill, a location, an object, a song, or anything else, so long as it is 1) of deep significance to your protagonist; and 2) defined by an external relationship. As mentioned above, each Memento is tied to and in part defined by a relationship, and that relationship should be included in the Memento's description. Consider the examples below, and use them to create your own.

Skills might include "Frank taught me how to fish," or "Jeanine and I learned the cello together."

Objects might be "The rifle I killed Erin with," or "A jacket I modeled after one that Gloria-99 wore in the comics."

Locations could be along the lines of "The bar where I proposed to Jack" or "The estate I will one day leave to Eliza."

And so on. As mentioned before, of course, smaller games will include unique Mementos tied to either the outside world or an internal struggle. The former will be much like "normal" Mementos, except that they might be tied to, for example, the protagonist's family, or a certain business, country or other organization, or an event—so long as it is something with enough agency to allow another player to take their role in your scenes, anything within reason is allowed.

Internal struggle Mementos will be tied to some problematic aspect of your protagonist, e.g. "the knife I tried to kill myself with" or "the house where I learned to be afraid."

As a final note, larger groups are gently discouraged from using alternative Mementos, but are free to do so if they so desire.

DENOUEMENTS

Finally, take note that neither outcome is implicitly "good" or "bad." To dive in or to run away can both be blissful or tortuous experiences. It all depends on who's diving in, or what they're running away from. It's your ending; you decide how you feel about it.