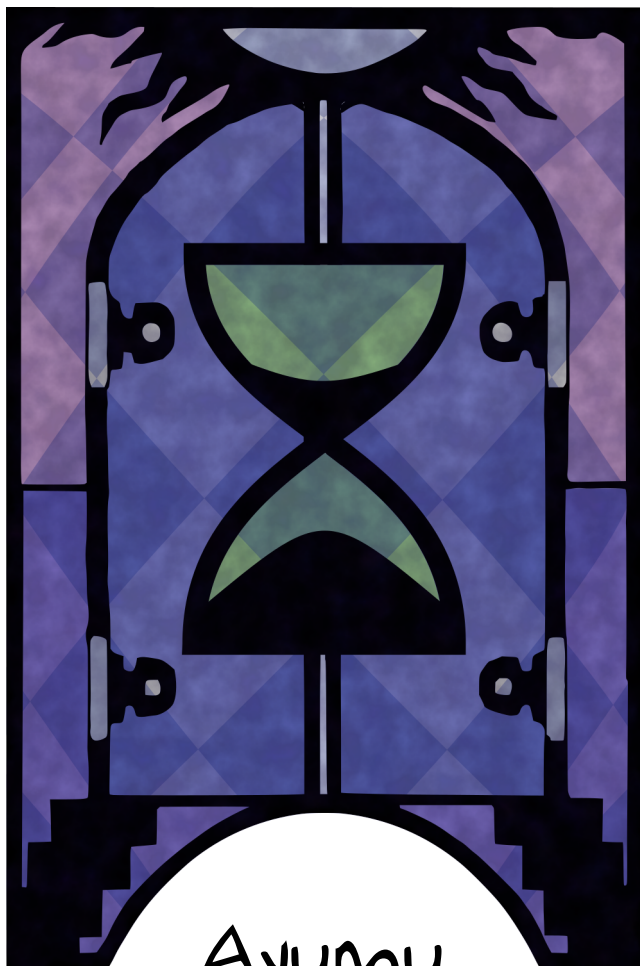


Too Late



Ayumu

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## Too Late Rules

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This is a game. Players are more important than characters. Its always okay to take space or leave game. Please be respectful of each other. Anyone may yell Cut! at any time to temporarily halt play due to a safety issue or other problem.

All characters are written to be gender-neutral. If you want, you can write pronouns and/or a gender on your badge.

Personae are specific mythological figures and thus have a default gender; however, feel free to regender them or rename your Persona to a different figure if you wish.

## Combat

Combat is based on cards. Each character has a hand of cards that represent abilities or items they have. Each card can be used once per event.

Item cards may be traded freely (but not during combat); other cards cannot. You can get new cards in various ways, such as successfully revisiting past events.

Combat proceeds in turns, starting with the PCs. On your turn, play one card to attack with and pick who you're attacking. (Cards by default have a single target, but some cards may attack more than one character.) Each defender must discard a card or cards with a total strength that meets or exceeds the attacker's card's strength. If they cannot, they're taken out; when everyone on a side is taken out, that side loses the combat.

You can pass instead of attacking if you really want to.

Each character has a Weakness to a particular element. Attacks of that element have double strength against them.

The PCs pick their turn order at start of combat. If you can't agree, play Rock Paper Scissors.

Some cards have strength \*; these can't be used to attack or block, and instead have a special effect when played.

There will be a table with decks on it for cards you gain during game. Each character has an Experience deck: take the top card when you gain an Experience. There's also a Darkness deck and a deck for each opponent you can face. Don't

look at or reorder decks.

Feel free to discuss the cards you have and their strengths and effects.

## **Social Links**

You may also have a Social Link with another character. If you have a Social Link with someone, you can sacrifice yourself to block an attack aimed at them. This takes you out. You can do this even if you couldn't block the attack normally.

During game, if you feel like you're connecting to another character, and they agree, the two of you may form a social link. Social links are always mutual. Each character can only form one social link this way during game.

Other social links may be restored via revisiting events.

If you make an attack in combat against someone you have a social link with, that breaks the link (for both of you).

## **Contingency Boxes**

Each player has a stat card (on the back of their character booklet) to track your stats and other information about your character. Your stat card also has three "contingency boxes" that have a condition like "if you win a fight". If you meet the condition in game, when it's convenient remove the sticker and read what's underneath. This may just be descriptive text describing a memory, thoughts, or feelings, or it may have some other effect on your character.

Your character is vaguely aware that their contingency box conditions could represent something significant for them, so feel free to pursue (or avoid) the conditions in game.

## **Stats**

Characters have 3 stats: Empathy, Courage, and Knowledge, which each have a numerical level. Everyone starts with one stat at 2 and two at 1. These stats are useful when visiting the past.

**Empathy** helps you understand other people and be an effective mediator.

**Courage** helps you act effectively in the face of danger.

**Knowledge** helps you figure things out and formulate plans.

Challenges when traveling through time often require certain stat values to pass. You can voluntarily fail a challenge even if you could pass it by not using your full stat value; it's not necessarily obvious to others that such a failure was intentional.

## Visiting the Past

Next to the Doorway, there is a calendar of events over the past month, one event per day. You can choose to revisit these events. Each event can only be revisited once. Multiple non-overlapping groups can use the Doorway at the same time.

When you finish an event, you'll put sticker dots on it showing what effect you had. Possible dot colors include:

**Blue** Decreased panic.

**Purple** Increased panic.

**Red** Saved multiple innocent lives.

**Pink** Saved a particular individual.

**Yellow** Decreased Shadow activity.

**Black** Increased Shadow activity.

**Green** ???

**Lime** ???

There are also signs in gamespace that an event may instruct you to reveal, representing changes to your environment in the present based on changes to the past.

Each character starts game with 3 Chances, in the form of glass tokens. These are tradable physical items. For a group to revisit an event, all members must agree what you're revisiting, and someone must spend a Chance.

Events are not independent; the past can affect the future. Some events may refer to the dots before the event; that is to say, on an event chronologically earlier in the calendar. Thus, what you do in one event can affect later events.

There are three types of events you can revisit: Disasters, Arguments, and Battles.

## Disasters

*The chaos of the Dark Hour spread to the normal world in the past month. While the Shadows have stayed hidden until recently, disasters rooted in the Shadows have become commonplace, hurting and killing your oblivious classmates and professors, causing great disruption and national panic.*

Revisiting a Disaster requires two people. There will be two role cards for the event, each with different requirements.

If the total stats of the two of you meet the calendar requirements, each choose a role card and read. When ready, roleplay the scenario together. Each of you will have a choice or challenge during the scene; choose simultaneously and remove the corresponding sticker when that happens. You may trade role cards before choosing. (Challenges may have requirements different from the initial requirements.) The result boxes will tell you what dots to add or any other effects.

If you added a dot that wasn't black or purple, you each get an Experience card and a point of Knowledge.

## Arguments

*You all aren't as close as you used to be. There've been a lot of arguments over the past month that have driven you apart from one another. The trust you had? It's mostly gone. Some of it, probably, for good reasons.*

Revisiting an Argument requires the two people who argued to open the Doorway and one other person to go back and intervene. The arguers, playing their past selves, roleplay the conflict described. Each arguer takes the corresponding role card, reminding them of the choice they couldn't agree on and how they felt about it. The intervener then joins in, attempting to resolve the argument in a way that both arguers are happy with. To succeed, the arguers must both agree on which option to choose. The intervener's result box will tell you what dots to add or other effects.

On agreement, the arguers get a Social Link with each other and a point of Empathy, and the intervener gets an Experience card. If no agreement is reached, the arguers each get a Darkness card.

## Battles

*Each of you has a Shadow, some dark parallel that appeared at some point over the last month to wreak havoc. While perhaps once you would've fought these shadows, you were too divided. Can you do better now?*

The Doorway can only fit three people, so at most three people can go back to battle a Shadow. You also need the person whose Shadow you seek to fight to open the Doorway.

That person plays the part of their Shadow, using the deck for their shadow from the table, **plus a bonus Darkness card for every black dot before this event in excess of the number of yellow dots before this event**. When playing your Shadow, play to win: do your best to make strong, effective attacks and to avoid defending wastefully.

If the party defeats the Shadow, add a yellow dot, and party members that weren't taken out each get one Experience card and gain one Courage. Otherwise, the Shadow strengthens its connection to the corresponding character: add a black dot and that character gets two Darkness cards. (The Doorway pulls the party back to the present before the Shadow can finish them off.)

Each Shadow will have one or more Item cards that the party can claim if they defeat it. If the party cannot agree on who gets each item, they must fight it out with their remaining combat cards.

## What Happens Next

*After this stolen time is up, you seven will have one last chance to face Death. This time, there'll be no second chances.*

When the hourglass runs out, the wards of this haven will shatter and you'll all be swept into the boss fight against Death. This works like a Shadow battle, except all seven of you participate.

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## Ayumu

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You're supposed to be the chosen ones. Or you were, anyways.

It's hard to remember what it was like back then. Before this all happened. At the start of the semester. In Psych 101. Kirijo Memorial University's pretty small, so you knew the others by name. But you were just classmates, back then.

You're just a freshman, overwhelmed by all the people and all the decisions. You didn't know what you wanted your career to be, what you wanted to major in. You didn't know what classes to take. The counselor recommended Psych, and there you were, trying desperately to keep up.

Then you had this weird dream. You were in this strange room lit with eerie green light, and the others were there, too. Shigeri. Ren. Yuki. Chiaki. Kazumi. Masami. Behind a desk sat a strange man, wearing an iridescent blue mask. Philemon, he called himself. He told you that a great darkness was rising up in your town, and that only those with great inner strength could stop it. If you promised to accept the consequences of your actions, he would grant you the power you would need. Not realizing this was any more than a dream, you of course agreed. You each signed the parchment he passed you with a quill pen. As the room faded, Philemon called out one last thing. "Your connections to others will be your strength."

The next day, as you raced to class, your "dream" stuck with you. You just thought of it as an oddity. But then Shigeri was telling Ren about this crazy dream they had. That just happened to match your own. It soon became clear that all seven of you had had the exact same dream. Chiaki thought it was the coolest thing ever. But then Yuki started to freak out. And none of you knew what to really make of it.

You soon found, however, that there was some mystical hidden 13th hour at the stroke of midnight. You'd get pulled into a parallel shadow version of the campus, where strange, violent Shadows roamed the streets and hallways. You were all pretty much terrified at that point. But you found that each of you had

a Persona, some sort of mythical companion or mask that gave you supernatural powers that let you fight the Shadows. Your Persona is Scheherazade, who gives you control of the element Ice. You don't really think of Scheherazade as a separate entity, though. She's just another part of yourself.

As for Philemon? Maybe he gave you the Personae. Maybe they were in you all along. Regardless, you never saw him again.

The Shadows, on the other hand, were constant. At first you just fought them to protect yourselves. But then you started to enjoy it. Here, you were in control. Sure, it hurt when you got bit or scratched or blasted by acid. But the pain just added to the thrill. And in the morning, you were fine. Well, mostly.

You wondered what your adventures in the Dark Hour meant for the real world. At first they just seemed like shared dreams, aside from the scratches and scars. But when powerful Shadows started resembling your classmates, you started noticing things too uncanny to be coincidences. You beat up Erika's Shadow, and she aced the math test. You ran from Takeshi's Shadow and its piercing ice, and he vanished for weeks without telling anyone. Looking back, that's when things started to fall apart.

Kazumi had been sort of the unofficial leader up until that point. When everyone was treating this like a game, that had been fine. But now that you all saw that what you did in the Dark Hour mattered back in the "real world"... that broke down. Towards the end of November, Masami told Kazumi that this unconsidered Shadow-bashing needed to stop. They didn't take it well. And then everyone except you started talking at once. There was lots of yelling, lots of name calling.

Eventually, it fell out that:

- Kazumi and Shigeri thought that you needed to take out Shadows more now than ever.
- Masami and Ren wanted to study the Shadows and the Dark Hour before trying to solve more problems with violence. If what you were doing was messing with people's heads, you couldn't just galavant around doing whatever you felt like.
- Yuki and Chiaki wanted to find or build some sort of fortress. The Shadows



seemed to be getting stronger and more plentiful, and they weren't eager to test what happens if you die in the Dark Hour.

- For your part, you were just terrified, and didn't know what to do. You didn't want to be a part of this at all any more.

The others sarcastically wished each other well and split off to embark upon their plans. You might still run into each other during the day, but no more cohesive group bullshit at night. And that's when things really started going to hell.

You think the others had stopped noticing you at all by that point. Certainly no one thought to invite you along with them, to make sure you were safe. You were too scared by all the yelling to go after anyone. So you did the only thing you could do. You hid.

You never asked to be a hero, to face shadows and fight Death Itself. You're not strong enough to be a fighter. But if there's anything you're good at, it's hiding. Shadows have a sense of smell, or something like that. But the bio labs have good strong doors, doors that open easily for you in the Dark Hour but that Shadows seem to have trouble with. And they seal well, well enough to keep the Shadows from finding you. So you'd hide there in the Dark Hour, and during the day you'd hide in your dorm room. Once disasters started happening in the normal world, you gave up on going to classes. You just couldn't deal with it.

So you had a lot of time, alone. Or, more precisely, just you and Scheherazade. Scheherazade stuck by you, at least. She'd tell you story after story, comforting you when you had panic attacks and keeping your mind occupied the rest of the time. All sorts of stories: heroes saving handsome princes from vicious dragons, clever tricksters outsmarting kings and demons, ambitious sorcerers dooming themselves by reaching for power they couldn't control.

At first they were just stories to keep the fear at bay. But you started seeing yourself in the stories, in the heroes that used cleverness against superior foes. In heroes that, though doomed, made a difference for others. You thought about how much you didn't know about the Shadows. Why here? Why now?

It was on the night after all the explosions that your curiosity got the better of

you. Maybe it was seeing the student center, the art building, the south grad dorm crumbling into rubble that jolted you into action, reminded you that hiding wasn't necessarily going to keep you safe, that there were innocents with no ability to fight back being hurt or dying. You started, cautiously, to explore, seeing if you could find anything in the labs that would be useful.

And after days and days of searching, you found something, in a lab deep in a sub-basement that must've been tightly locked down during the day. The notes were cryptic, but they clearly talked a project about opening the gateway to Death. From what you could make out, this isn't a physical gateway, but something that exists in people's minds. That can be opened in people's minds. And, what's worse than that: that can spread from mind to mind, a contagious infection that spreads with panic and chaos. This won't just stay here, at the University. This could spread everywhere.

You wanted to do something to stop it, but it seemed hopeless. The disasters on campus had already captured national attention. You couldn't find the others. You were too weak to fight on your own. And Shadows were starting to appear in the normal daytime world, too. There wasn't anything you could do. All you could do was hide alone in your room in the dark and hope they wouldn't find you.

And then, out of the blackness, you saw a figure. She was a bit human-shaped, a bit shadowy, a bit indistinct. Her face was hidden behind a white mask like a ghost. And she reached her hand out to you.

"It's too late for you." Her voice sounded familiar, but you couldn't place it. "But I can give you a second chance. A chance to fix things. If you work together, you can change the course this world's stuck on. But I fear some of you have been lost to darkness. And I can only hold Death back so long."

Uncertain, desperate, you took her hand. And then you were in a dim room, with an hourglass counting down and a beckoning translucent doorway. And the others.

She told you this Doorway can let you revisit the past, let you fix what went

wrong. She's linked it to events you can visit safely, without fear of paradox. But outside you can see endless hordes of Shadows, with a Shadow taller than the bell tower looming above them. Death. You may have been granted respite, but he's coming. She says her wards will keep him out until the hourglass runs out, but after that you're on your own, with whatever you've managed to regain.

You're terrified. You don't know how to face a Shadow like that. You don't know if you can trust your old companions. This Death gate is in all of your minds: who knows how they've been twisted? But maybe you can do something anyways, pry some small spark of light out of the darkness. You at least have to try. You owe it to the innocents. To Scheherazade. Maybe even to yourself. Even though you'll just let everyone down, in the end.

### **Goals**

- Go back in time and do what you reduce the panic and chaos to try to keep what's been going on here from spreading to the outside world. Whether or not you manage to save the University, you can't imagine what would happen if this infection spreads.
- Keep an eye on your companions and keep any that have been twisted into traitors from sabotaging your efforts.
- Try to be like the heroes in Scheherazade's stories, despite your fear.

### **Contacts**

- **Kazumi:** Your initial "leader", always up for a fight and trusting their gut and never listening to anyone else.
- **Shigeri:** Bold and decisive, a bit terrifying.
- **Masami:** Rationally minded, always trying to use logic to understand this absurd situation.
- **Ren:** Cynical and disparaging. You always hoped they meant well under the surface, but...
- **Yuki:** Always seemed to worry about keeping everyone safe. Of course, that doesn't mean they paid any attention to you once things broke down.
- **Chiaki:** Almost seemed like someone you could get along with; not loud and confident like the others. Of course, that never went anywhere.

### **Character Info**

- **Persona:** Scheherazade
- **Element:** Ice
- **Weakness:** Fire
- **Courage:** 1
- **Empathy:** 2
- **Knowledge:** 1

### **Items and Abilities**

- Bufula (combat card)
- Rejuvenate (combat card)
- Bufu (combat card)