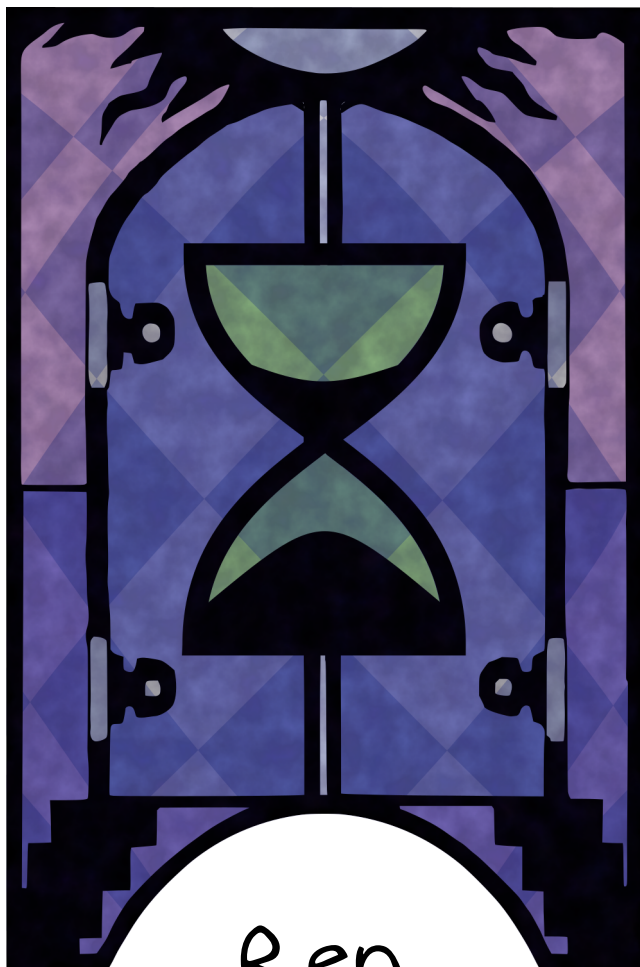


Too Late



Ren

Too Late Rules

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.

Ren

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.

Your life and goals from those days don't matter any more. Who cares about Astrophysics now? Still, you were clueless then, full of plans for the future.

Then you had this weird dream. You were in this strange room lit with eerie green light, and the others were there, too. Shigeri. Yuki. Chiaki. Kazumi. Masami. Ayumu. 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 a strange story. But Shigeri came up to you as soon as they got into class and wanted to tell you about this crazy dream they had. That just happened to be identical to 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 Artemis, who gives you

control of the element Wood. You don't really think of Artemis 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 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 you 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.

- Ayumu, for their part, just seemed terrified and wasn't saying much of anything at all.

So you wished each other well, with varying levels of sarcasm. And split up. 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.

So you and Masami studied the Shadows and their movements. At first, you found some interesting patterns. The Shadow density was growing slowly but exponentially. New shadows seemed to cluster in two locations: around the biology building and the bell tower. Other Shadows would cluster around larger, more powerful Shadows.

You worked on some math, trying to analyse what you were seeing so you could predict future shadow movements and clustering. You got a statistics major you knew, Omi, to help. You're not sure she quite understood what you were doing, but she insights on what to measure and what sort of model to use were invaluable. But then she vanished, presumably fled or dead, and you had to continue with just Masami.

But your analysis bore fruit. You noticed that when the secondary cluster density spiked, that's where weird things would happen in the normal world. Now that you thought about it, there'd been leakage even before the big falling-out, strange transient phenomena. But major stuff was happening now: people getting sick, acting crazy, getting hurt in freak accidents. And it had clear correlation to the shadow clustering patterns.

You and Masami both agreed you needed to do something. But what, exactly, was another question. You weren't strong enough to take on these gangs of Shadows yourselves. Masami wanted to trace where the Shadows were coming from, see if you could stop them at the source. You wanted to study these clusters more, try to figure out how stuff was crossing over. Needless to say, tensions were high. Masami said that if you wanted to keep staring at the same thing over and over, be their guest. You said that if they thought they could stem the tide of Shadows by putting their thumb in a dike, they was obviously beyond help. After some further yelling, you two split up as well.

In the week and a half since then, it became clear this was a mistake. It was a lot harder to monitor these groups of Shadows safely without someone watching your back. Artemis was good at helping notice patterns and collect data, but it wasn't the same as having a friend to talk to.

Still, you couldn't really trek out looking for Masami, so you kept at it. Studying the clusters of Shadows in the Dark Hour, and studying those same areas during the day. And you noticed something. Before you'd thought that the weirdness and disasters in the normal world were just caused by the mass of Shadows. But there was more to it than that. The clusters weren't stationary; they'd move around and split and join. And they weren't just doing it randomly. They were following people in the normal world who'd been exposed to Shadow influence previously. It was spreading like a disease, a disease that poisoned people's minds and caused chaos and entropy. And the effects were getting stronger.

You realized now that there'd been a blessing of sorts up until this point. Kirijo University's pretty isolated. During term, there aren't a lot of people coming or leaving, and the disease seems to need a critical mass to spread. So the infection'd remained contained. But that wouldn't hold true forever. Incidents were already making national media. If attention brought waves of people in, or people swarmed home on break, the infection could spread far outside your University. If enough infected gathered somewhere else, it could get far bigger.

When you got your models worked out, something clicked. Artemis had been a part of you since the beginning, but you'd never really had a conversation. But, suddenly: "I see what you're doing, there. I can show you it." And she told you how to make, in the Dark Hour, a lens. It was just some bits of glass, some Shadow protoplasm, and some blood from your forehead. But it let you see shadow energy, and you saw the connections your model predicted: between Shadows and people, and between the Shadows themselves. Not one-time transmissions, but persistent connections, resonating and spreading. The lens isn't always clear, it gets more and more erratic, but it was enough to confirm your fears.

As for how the disease started, the math points to it starting right about when you met Philemon. Whether it was a result of your meeting or he decided to

awaken your Personae as a response, you can't say. But something happened then.

Realizing that this was a real plague, a possible end-of-the-world scenario, you wanted to stop it. But you couldn't really do anything about it alone, could you? Even with all seven of you, how would you stop it at this point? And who else beyond the seven could you talk to? No, it was too late.

You were sitting in an empty classroom in the Dark Hour with Artemis, not seeing the point of further research, when you heard a loud crack. Eerie green light shone through the window. Then the light was replaced by some sort of invasive inky fog.

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.

And you realize, now, that even if you defeat Death, that might not be enough. You've studied diseases. The dangerous ones are the ones that linger. They have time to spread. Killing Death won't stop the disease. The Shadows will still be there, subtle again. Without the active death and disasters, the quarantine will be

lifted, and the infection will spread. Through the country, through the world. And next time Death rises, or another like him, it won't just be here, in this no-name town. It'll be everywhere.

The easy way to stop this is the coward's way. If the disease is too deadly, if it kills its hosts, it dies out, and the rest of the population is safe. You've tracked the deaths on campus: they've been growing exponentially, faster than the disease. If Death wins here, if it finishes its campaign of killing while the campus is still locked down, then the disease won't spread. You won't be there to enjoy it, but at least the world will be saved.

If there's another way, it's slim. You can see the links connecting the doorway to the calendar of events, specifically crafted ornate energy nets. Artemis tells you that, with enough power, you could brute-force something else, make another change. Maybe you could stop whatever brought the disease here in the first place, if you knew where to go. But to get the necessary power, you'd need to sacrifice an item of great power, something rivaling Death. And even if you had something like that, you'd need to know where to go: it won't let you revisit long enough to search.

So you'll have to stick to plan A. Make sure Death wins, and you can stop this. Can't distract yourself pursuing a fool's hope; it's too late to rescue yourselves. But you can still save the world, if you can get these fools not to ruin everything trying to play hero.

Goals

- Your priority is to stop the disease from spreading by any means necessary. The only realistic way you can see is making sure that no one stops Death, so that the disease can die out before it spreads elsewhere. But if somehow you found a powerful source of energy and learned where this all started, maybe you could hack the Gateway to go there and stop the disease before it started.
- Build your strength with Experience and/or Shadow cards so you can stop your friends if necessary. Left to their own devices, they'll try to "save the world" and only end up helping this spread.
- Be careful about how you talk about this to the others. They're not going to

want to accept the truth, but in real life you can't always win with friendship and determination.

Contacts

- **Kazumi:** Too much into trusting their “gut” and leaping in head-first, full of blind confidence.
- **Shigeri:** Bold and enthusiastic. Stupidly impulsive.
- **Masami:** More sensible than the rest, but still irrationally optimistic and blind to their own arbitrary convictions.
- **Yuki:** Always friendly and chipper, obnoxiously cheerful. Seems to think that their enthusiasm alone can make you all best friends.
- **Chiaki:** Weird little quiet kid. Seems pretty cool when they actually get over their awkwardness and say something.
- **Ayumu:** Another quiet kid. Needs some balls.

Character Info

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| - Persona: Artemis | - Courage: 1 |
| - Element: Wood | - Empathy: 1 |
| - Weakness: Metal | - Knowledge: 2 |

Items and Abilities

- Vanara (combat card)
- Divine Aim (combat card)
- Vana (combat card)
- Ragged Notebook (in-game document)