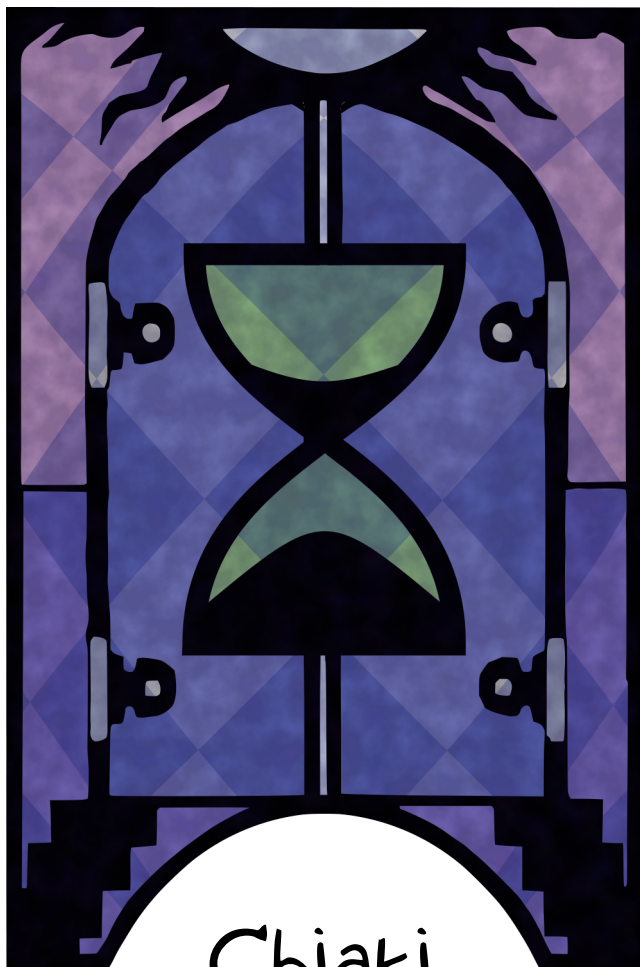


Too Late



Chiaki

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.

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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 hadn't even really wanted to go to Kirijo. It's more of a science and engineering school. Your parents had wanted you to go here, make a career for yourself. Instead, you ended up in the miniscule Classics department, interpreting works by long-dead authors. They're easier to deal with living people, at least. But you always feel self-conscious talking about it to the other students, like it's a weaksauce major. Especially to the students in your out-of-major classes. You picked Psych 101 for one of your science electives that hopefully wouldn't be *too* hard.

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. 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 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. You 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 Hephaestus, who gives you control of the element Fire. You don't really think of Hephaestus as a separate entity, though. He'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 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 you wanted to find or build some sort of fortress. The Shadows seemed to be getting stronger and more plentiful, and you 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.

You hadn't realized there was such tension in the group. You thought this would blow over, that the group would be back together soon. But it wasn't.

Meanwhile, you and Yuki were trying to create a safe space to hole up in the Dark Hour, a home base where you could rest and be safe from the ever-growing horde of Shadows. The weaker shadows weren't too much of a threat, even when it was just two of you. But there kept being more and more of them.

You started trying to barricade the doorways into the basement of one of the dorms for a sort of home base. The Shadows were less dense away from the academic buildings, there was plenty of room if the others came to their senses, there was water and vending machines. Yuki brought peanut butter and jelly; you bought some protein bars and clementines. And then you waited.

Keeping the Shadows out while you sat there wasn't hard. They didn't seem great with doors in the first place, and there was plenty of furniture to use for re-enforcement. But as you sat there in the Dark Hour, night after night, you started to have panic attacks. Yuki's attempts to find the others during the day and convince them to use your hideout as a base hadn't gone well. There kept being greater and greater hordes of Shadows outside. And then Yuki came up with this idea that there must be others you could find, others that might need your help. Now that you had a safe place to retreat to, they wanted to go look.

You thought this was stupid. Why go to all this trouble to create safety, only to take unnecessary risks? With tensions already high, it didn't take much more before you were both yelling. Eventually, they got fed up and headed off. And you sat in your basement next to piles of snack food and waited out Dark Hour after Dark Hour. For several weeks.

Sitting there with just Hephaestus for company gave you plenty of time to think, but there wasn't much to think about but the hopelessness of the situation. The Shadows were growing stronger, their influence was leaking over into the normal world, and the only people who could fight back couldn't get past their own fear and pride to do anything about it. It was like some sort of big metaphor for the human condition, or like some kind of distributed seven-person tragic hero's fall. If this was how you felt in your bunker, imagine the fear and despair the others must be feeling. You knew they were still alive, because you'd see them during the day, but they didn't look like they were holding up well. And meanwhile, the Shadows that tested your barricades seemed to be getting stronger and more persistent. You all had never known what you were dealing with. You were just a group of clueless students and their imaginary friends. You'd always gotten through on luck and blind confidence. Now that the Shadows were a real threat, even united you wouldn't have been able to deal with them.

And that's when something occurred to you. These Personae seemed to have something to do with your personal ideal, who you wanted to be, your positive desires. What if these Shadows were the opposite, powered by your negative emotions and the negative emotions of the oblivious normals? When your anger and fear drove the seven of you apart, they became strong enough to influence the normal world and cause fear and depression there. That in turn gave them more fuel, which is why the disasters have gotten worse and worse over time. It was a cruel cycle, one you were powerless to do anything about.

You couldn't really talk to any of the other Persona-users at this point, so you went out on a limb and talked to someone you knew in the daylight world, Tomoka. She worked at the local shrine and also had been involved as a volunteer medic and with the recovery efforts. She listened to you open-mindedly, seeming

not to think you were crazy despite everything you said. You guess how crazy things had gotten on campus probably helped. She told you that, supernatural factors or not, the chaos and fear was dividing everyone against everyone else and certainly compounding the problems. She said she'd do some research and also see if she could help convince people to work together instead of falling into anarchy. But you never saw her again, after that.

And one night, alone in your hideaway, you heard a loud ringing, then a noise like an avalanche. Then the fitful basement lights went dark, and you felt a great lurch.

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.

It all still seems hopeless. But if this is a tragedy, might as well play it out and rail against the Fates. And maybe if you can fight against the emotions that power the Shadows, you'll at least be able to accomplish something before Death finishes you.

Goals

- Go back and do what you can to fix the fear, chaos, depression, and despair of the people in the normal world, to weaken the hold the Shadows have on the world.
- Try to understand more about this whole situation and what's really going on.
- Help the others get past their fear and anger and make peace with the hopelessness of this situation.

Contacts

- **Kazumi:** Your initial “leader”, always up for a fight and trusting their gut.
- **Shigeri:** Bold and decisive, fiercely loyal until things broke down.
- **Masami:** Rationally minded, always trying to use logic to understand this absurd situation.
- **Ren:** Cynical and disparaging. You always thought they meant well under the surface, but. . .
- **Yuki:** Your fortress-building buddy, until they decided that going out looking for possible random strangers was more important than staying safe.
- **Ayumu:** The quiet one, always following along from the back. You're not sure what ended up happening with them.

Character Info

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|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| - Persona: Hephaestus | - Courage: 1 |
| - Element: Fire | - Empathy: 1 |
| - Weakness: Water | - Knowledge: 2 |

Items and Abilities

- Agilao (combat card)
- Forge's Heat (combat card)
- Agi (combat card)