

GM Notes

Blurb

There was a deep darkness. Then a burning light. And now you're here.

Whatever you thought the afterlife would be, this isn't what you expected. Your soul feels restless, fraying. Unless you manage to connect it to a proper afterlife soon, you'll be stuck like this forever.

This is a mildly serious, vaguely philosophical game about exploring the afterlife, figuring out why you died, and deciding where to go from here.

Afterlife is a lightweight secrets-and-rituals game originally written for X Camp.

Content Warning: All characters have died just before game start, mostly in unpleasant ways. Game includes suicide and suicidal and psychopathic characters. Game includes many casual references to Christianity, Satanism, Buddhism, and Egyptian and Norse mythology; players with strong religious beliefs may be offended. Recommended for ages 13+.

Necessary Nouns

- 6 rooms, or a way to divide your space into 6 separated areas. These materials label these Room A-F. In addition, you need to put the Limbo sign somewhere, potentially a hallway or a centrally-located room.
- Badge holders
- 11-17 players

GM Instructions

- Print out:
 - 1 copy of each character sheet
 - Enough copies of the rules
 - The badges, item cards, and contingency packets
 - 1 copy of each ritual, except 2 copies of The Gates of Oblivion
 - 1 copy of each Location sign, including each Truths page, Duplex with short-edge binding (if possible)
- Cut out, fold and staple/tape the contingency packets.
- Cut out the Truths
- Assemble character packets consisting of a character sheet, the matching badge and contingency packet, and a copy of the rules.
 - Fantoni has two badges so they can choose to be a nun or a priest.
 - Some characters start with rituals as indicated on their character sheets.
 - Also, Morgan Harris starts with a Knife item card (as indicated).

- Hand out character packets. All characters are gender-neutral. Brief character descriptions are later in these notes, if you want to cast based on that. Note that some characters are romantically-involved, which may be relevant for casting.
 - If you have fewer than 17 players, cut one or more of the groups of characters marked “cuttable” below. Either cut all characters in a group or none of them. This will allow you to run with any number of players from 11 to 17.
- Put up signs as labeled. Every location has a main sign, some locations have an additional sign, some locations also have immobile-carving rituals that should be put up like a sign near their main sign.
 - Put the remaining item cards by type near the sign that mentions them.
 - Put the Truths unobtrusively but not well-hidden in the appropriate locations, such as low-down on a wall.

Locations

- Room A: Cave (door sign, stone clubs)
- Room B: Desert (door sign, obsidian daggers)
- Room C: Swamp (door sign, machetes)
- Room D: Heaven (Edge of Cloud, feathers)
- Room E: Hell (iron spears)
- Room F: Valhalla (Battlegrounds, wine)
- Limbo

Characters

- Academics
 - Professor Lynch: comparative religion, has rituals
 - Francis Frehry: cut corners building the theatre, causing it to burn really fast
- Crime Plot (various scraps of memory on people’s sheets can point to Morgan Harris being the Killer because they’re wearing plaid)
 - Morgan Harris (aka The Constellation Killer): set up disaster, has infinite death ritual
 - Bene Cumberland, detective: Sherlock Holmes
 - Marti Fredericks, assistant: Watson
- Family
 - Angel Faith Jones, teen: wants to go to hell with cool people
 - Lynn Jones, parent: wants to go to Heaven with their kids
 - Taylor Percy Jones, kid: loves Thor, wants to go to Valhalla
- Religious
 - Father Fantoni, Catholic priest: wants others to find God and go to Heaven
 - Nishitani, Buddhist monastic: wants everyone to go to Oblivion
 - Grandier, Satanist: Satanist, wants everyone to embrace desires and go to Hell
- Love Triangle (cuttable) (winner of the duel can be inferred from starting locations)
 - Professor Ev Gallo, academic suitor: dueled over Mercury, lost

- Mercury Davis, businessperson target of affection: dueled over by Ev and Steph
- Steph Sanders, actor suitor: dueled over Mercury, won
- Exes (cuttable)
 - Sam: controlling and needy ex of Alex
 - Alex: emotionally involved with a platonic best friend in a secretive manner
- Lone (cuttable)
 - Cameron: suicidal person who couldn't get a job as an architect

Backstory (based on Truths of Life)

Before dying, the current souls in this part of the Afterlife were in the Orpheum Theatre, where a group of actors were performing Dante's *Inferno: The Musical*. The musical used fire as a special effect, so those in the audience did not immediately notice when the theater started becoming smoky. Suddenly, large fires broke out on the stage and in the middle of the audience, resulting in total chaos. Panic quickly set in as people struggled to escape the crowded theater.

The cause of the fire was not an accidental malfunction in the theater's special effects. In fact, it was set off deliberately by someone tampering with the pyrotechnics: Morgan Harris, the Constellation Killer. They also had blocked the emergency exits, making escape much more difficult. This plot was just the latest in a series of crimes committed by the Constellation Killer.

Even with the sabotage, people might have been able to escape the theater, and many more might have been able to survive. However, the architect of the building, Francis Frehry, had cut some corners in the design. Rather than designing for proper structural integrity and compliance to fire codes, they cut costs everywhere they could by skimping out on safety measures. Ultimately, this negligence contributed to the deaths of everyone in the theater, including the very architect who designed it.

Metaphysics (Truths of the Afterlife)

The Afterlife is place of many fates, which can be reached in many ways. Here, truth is not as concrete as it is on Earth. Does God exist? Do gods exist? What happens after people die? The answers to these questions are not so much based on objective truth, but rather on the collective beliefs of the countless people who come to the Afterlife.

It is nearly impossible for souls to be destroyed. The only way for souls to cease to exist is when they enter Oblivion. Anything else — weapons, words, the entities known as gods — can do nothing more than transport them. Souls enter the Afterlife when their first death rips them from their bodies. Souls appear to keep the forms of the bodies they were previously in, but this is nothing more than an illusion caused by the beliefs of the soul itself and the souls around it. Thus, a soul's appearance can change as the beliefs about its appearance change, although this generally can only happen over a long period of time.

The Afterlife is divided into many sections. An infinite number, in fact. Souls can move between a few of them by "dying" in the way their bodies might; the destination of the soul then depends upon the type of death. However, most destinations can only be reached by those who know the proper rituals. The nature of the ritual, like the nature of the destination, is generally

determined by the collective belief of millions of people, and often requires praying for the help of those that mortals call gods.

The ability of a soul to move within the Afterlife becomes limited with time. When souls first enter the afterlife, they can travel relatively freely. They can then tie themselves to a certain section of the Afterlife, which will allow them to stay there permanently. However, if they do not consign themselves somewhere soon after they arrive, they will remain restless and frayed, drifting between, unable to remain anywhere.