

# DEAD ❁ FRIEND

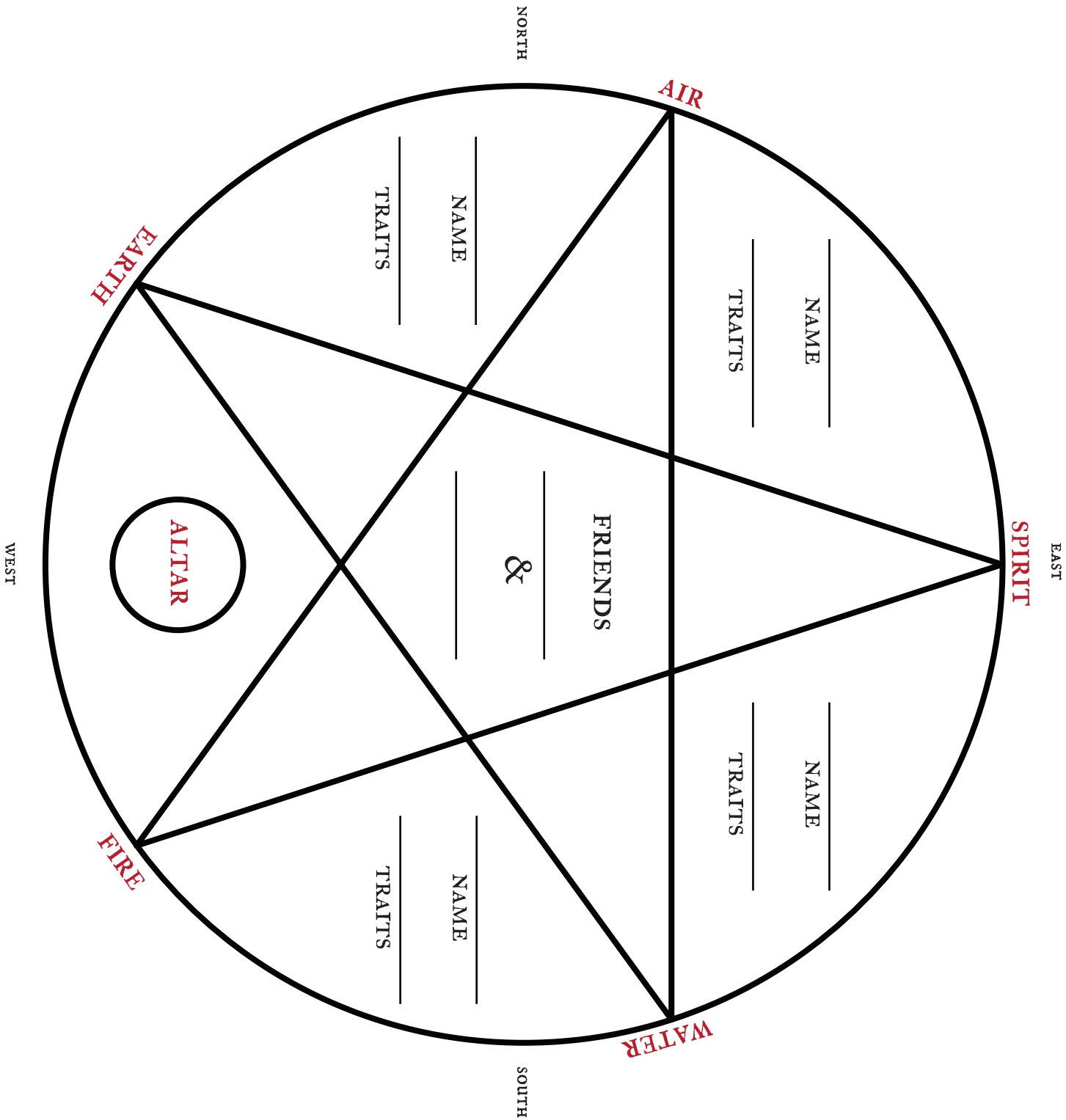
*a game of necromancy*



by Lucian Kahn

THE LIVING

CENTRAL MOTIVATION



THE DEAD

CENTRAL MOTIVATION

# Survival Guide *for* New Necromancers

## The Players

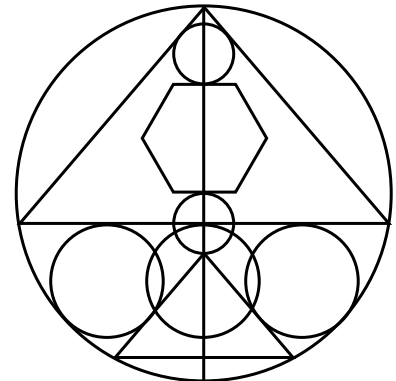
**THE LIVING** ~~~~~ **THE DEAD**

A magician or witch — or someone with newfound ability to conjure spirits.

Friend of THE LIVING; a ghost.

## The Nature of the Game

Dead Friend is a collaborative storytelling game for two players. You will each play the role of a friend, one living and one dead. You will ask and answer questions to develop the characters, their community, their history together, and the motivations leading up to their final conflict. The script follows the dramatic structure of a necromancy ritual, and you will use the spellbook of instructions throughout the entire game like a witch reading spells from an ancient grimoire. The mood may be spooky or intimate, heartwrenching or hilarious — it is up to you as storytellers. Although your characters may desire certain outcomes, your goal as a player is not to win, but to create an intriguing tale of friendship, loss, and diabolical magic.



*some polygons, arranged  
diabolically*

## Materials of Resurrection

- Print out one copy of the Magic Circle and two copies of the spellbook (one for each player)
- One Tarot deck or one deck of mundane playing cards, separated into suits
- One large coin, called the **CIRCLE COIN**
- One small coin, called the **STAR COIN**
- Two pens or pencils
- Salt (optional)
- Two matches (optional)

Time: Two to four hours.

# The Fine Print

## *For The Witch Who Must Know All*

### Storytelling Guidelines

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- A. Take turns reading the Spellbook's instructions aloud, with a new reader each page.
- B. This story alternates between the present ritual of necromancy and flashbacks to past details of the friends' lives together, including the death. During the flashback sections, you may decide to narrate events from the perspective of your character or an all-knowing narrator, or roleplay conversations between your characters. You and your partner may also use different storytelling styles than each other. Feel free to switch up styles as you go, and allow the story to develop as a patchwork.
- C. When answering prompts, you are allowed — even encouraged — to invent new details about any character in the game, including your partner's character.
- D. If your partner is having trouble thinking of a response to a prompt, wait quietly and allow them time to think. Resist the urge to offer suggestions at this point. Instead, accept the ritual's moment of silence.
- E. After your partner answers a prompt from the script, feel free to ask clarifying questions to enrich the development of the world and characters.
- F. Players familiar with Tarot may choose to add additional story details based on their own interpretations of the cards' meanings. To maintain the balance of the game, this is suggested as an enrichment of the written prompts, but not a replacement.
- G. Dead Friend is morbid by nature but designed to entertain both players. If you would prefer to omit specific types of death from your story (for example: gun violence, suicide), tell your partner at the beginning of the game. If a story detail comes up midway that ruins your enjoyment of the game, you may ask your partner to “rewind” the scene and retell it differently. Be kind to each other!
- H. Removing outside distractions such as social media or phone apps is strongly recommended.

### Credits

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#### GAME AND WORDS

Lucian Kahn

#### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Miriam Nadler

#### COVER ART

Toby Elias



#### PLAYTESTERS



Marley Emma  
Alexander  
Sharang Biswas  
Ethan Brown  
Amelia von Cóunt  
Amber Dean  
Rick Dean  
Joseph DeSimone  
Mati DuPont  
Eli Eaton  
Toby Elias

Ariel Speedwagon  
Rya FitzGerald  
Nathaniel Ford  
Danni Green  
John R. Haberstroh  
Lucy Hadman  
Doug Hurst  
Jax Jackson  
Adam Kenney  
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Beth Lerman

Jenny Levison  
Niko Dominika  
Nawalany  
Adrian Nelson  
Melissa Parker  
Katia Perea  
Cat Picardat  
Hope Ranker  
Mackenzie Reynolds  
Diana Roffman  
Richard Ruane

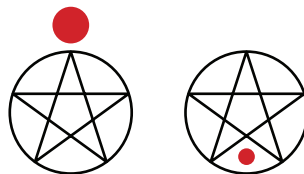
Zachary Wager  
Scholl  
Tessa Siddle  
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Alex Temple  
Joshua Waletzky  
Sara Williamson  
Tess Yardney

# DEAD FRIEND SPELLBOOK



IN GIRUM IMUS NOCTE ET CONSUMIMUR IGNI

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# Preparing for the Ritual

- A. Together, briefly describe the setting of this story.

*Example settings: modern Brooklyn, revolutionary France, a shtetl, Jupiter 2075, an ancient forest, an elementary school playground, a desert cult, an artists' retreat, a Cold War submarine, a nunnery.*

- B. Each choose a name for your character and write it in the center of the pentagram.

*Example names: Sophia, Ramon, Ash, Hiro, Luna, Dorian, Pilar, Ji-a, Arjun, Kat, Babs, Mikey, Quinn, Zahara, Eleanor, Thomas, Sterling, Ari, Zoë, Percy, Oskar, Bjørn, River, Betsy, Anastasia, Jane, Winter, Abraxas, Fluffy.*

- C. Choose one of the central conflicts below to guide the plot of your story. Each write your character's motivation from the central conflict in the designated spaces to the left and right of the pentagram. *The Magician* and *The Tower* are recommended for beginners.

*The conflicts are named after Tarot cards; you may wish to draw one at random.*

## *The Magician*

### THE LIVING

You wish to bring your dead friend back to life.

### THE DEAD

You wish to kill your friend.

## *The Tower*

### THE LIVING

You wish to say a final goodbye to your dead friend.

### THE DEAD

You wish to return from the dead and wreak havoc.

## *The Devil*

### THE LIVING

You wish to gain otherworldly power from your dead friend.

### THE DEAD

You wish to own your friend's soul.

## *Justice*

### THE LIVING

You wish to force your dead friend to take revenge on someone for you.

### THE DEAD

You wish to remain at peace.

- D. Decide who will play THE LIVING and who will play THE DEAD.

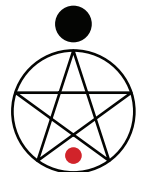
*Optional: each player strikes a match. As soon as the matches are aflame, the ritual begins. Whoever's match goes out first will play THE DEAD.*

# Earth and Water



## Setting the Scene

- A. **THE LIVING:** Place the Magic Circle in the center of the table. Sprinkle a large circle of salt around the paper for protection (or mime this). Place one pen near yourself and the other near **THE DEAD**. Place the **CIRCLE COIN** (the large coin) heads-up slightly outside the circle, so that it touches the word “East”. Place the **STAR COIN** (the small coin) heads-up on the altar.
- B. **THE LIVING:** You are preparing to perform a dangerous ritual of necromancy. Describe the scene of your preparations. Is it day or night? Are you outside or inside? What can you see, hear, or smell?
- C. **THE DEAD:** You died recently and are new to the realm of the dead. Briefly describe that realm. What can you see, hear, or smell? How is it similar to or different from the world you left behind?
- D. **THE LIVING:** Place your right index finger on the **STAR COIN**. At some time before dying, your friend gave you an important object, represented by this coin. Describe the object.
- E. **EVERYONE:** The coins are ritual objects. Over the course of the ritual, the **CIRCLE COIN** travels around the circle, visiting each of the four cardinal directions. At the same time, the **STAR COIN** travels to each of the five points of the pentagram. Together, the two coins mark both the passage of time and the characters’ journey through the elements.



For the rest of the game, whenever the **CIRCLE COIN** moves around the circle, both players hum softly.



For the rest of the game, whenever the **STAR COIN** moves to a different location, **THE DEAD** says, “A word from beyond!”, followed by a single word.

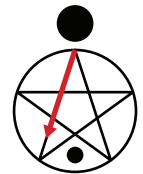
*Examples: “A word from beyond! Moonrise.”  
“A word from beyond! Betrayal.”*



# RITUAL OF EARTH

THE LIVING *and* THE DEAD *remember their shared community from before the death.*

- A. THE LIVING: Invoke Earth with the following three motions. First, to form an Invoking Pentagram of Earth, place your index finger on the Spirit point of the pentagram, then moving toward Earth, trace the entire pentagram with your finger. Second, move the STAR COIN to the Earth point of the pentagram. Third, slide the CIRCLE COIN around the circle counterclockwise to the North, the cardinal direction of Earth.
- B. THE LIVING: Shuffle the diamonds/disks/pentacles suit of cards. If you are using mundane cards, include one joker.
- C. EVERYONE: Each draw two random cards and look at them. Taking turns, name and briefly describe two people in your shared community, using the prompts in the **Earth Legend** that correspond to the cards you have drawn. Write each new character's name and traits in one of the designated spaces around the pentagram.
- D. THE DEAD: These memories are beginning to stir up the environment in the realm of the dead. What changes are developing around you?
- E. THE LIVING: As you complete the Ritual of Earth, your body feels somehow different. Describe the sensations.



~~~~~

## EARTH LEGEND

- |                                     |                                                      |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 someone enthusiastic and confused | 9 someone beautiful and aloof                        |
| 3 someone humble and helpful        | 10 someone intelligent and forgotten                 |
| 4 someone powerful and greedy       | <i>Page/Knave/Joker</i> someone idealistic and naive |
| 5 someone suffering and ignored     | <i>Jack/Knight</i> someone principled and determined |
| 6 someone successful and generous   | <i>Queen</i> someone respected and emulated          |
| 7 someone hardworking and depressed | <i>King</i> someone wise and nurturing               |
| 8 someone productive and cheerful   | <i>Ace</i> someone mystical and intimidating         |



# RITUAL OF WATER

*Like a eulogy, THE LIVING and THE DEAD remember the details of their friendship.*



- A. THE LIVING: Invoke Water with the following three motions. First, to form an Invoking Pentagram of Water, place your index finger on the Air point of the pentagram, then moving toward Water, trace the entire pentagram with your finger. Second, move the STAR COIN to the Water point of the pentagram. Third, slide the CIRCLE COIN around the circle counterclockwise to the West, the cardinal direction of Water.
- B. THE LIVING: Shuffle the hearts/cups suit of cards.
- C. EVERYONE: Each draw one card, look at it, and describe a past scene from your friendship that corresponds to the prompts in the **Water Legend**. Although this scene is primarily about you and your friend, it must also include at least one community member from the paper. Feel free to embellish the story with descriptive details.
- D. EVERYONE: Repeat part C, but include one community member who has not yet been part of a Water memory. *If all four community members have been part of a Water memory, move on to part E.*
- E. EVERYONE: Repeat part C, but build on the existing story using the card's prompt however you wish.
- F. EVERYONE: Repeat part C, but place the card face-up near the circle of salt. This scene must foreshadow your motivation in the central conflict.
- G. THE DEAD: These memories provoke a jolt of emotion so strong that you momentarily forget you are dead. Describe the emotion.
- H. THE LIVING: As you complete the Ritual of Water, the weather begins to change. Describe what you see, hear, and smell.

## WATER LEGEND

- 2 you argued with your friend
- 3 your friend brought you to a party
- 4 you reassured your friend about an insecurity
- 5 your friend chose someone else over you
- 6 your friend helped you with a problem
- 7 you lied to your friend
- 8 your friend embarrassed you
- 9 your friend defended you against someone
- 10 you celebrated a holiday with your friend
- Page/Knave/Joker*  
you learned something new about your friend
- Jack/Knight*  
you were jealous of your friend
- Queen*  
your friend gave you romantic advice
- King*  
your friend manipulated you into doing something
- Ace*  
your earliest memory of your friend

# Fire and Air



## The Magical Link

- A. THE LIVING: Place your right index finger on the STAR COIN.  
Why is this object so important to you?
- B. THE DEAD: Turn over the STAR COIN, tails up.  
There is a secret about this object that your friend does not know.  
What is the secret?



*The third style of unsuccessful summoning  
(as described in Potentia vol. II)*

# RITUAL OF FIRE

*To summon THE DEAD into conversation with THE LIVING, both friends recall the death. This section establishes the cause of death, or, if it has already been established, adds complicating details.*

- A. THE LIVING: Invoke Fire with the following three motions. First, to form an Invoking Pentagram of Fire, place your index finger on the Spirit point of the pentagram, then moving toward Fire, trace the entire pentagram with your finger. Second, move the STAR COIN to the Fire point of the pentagram. Third, slide the CIRCLE COIN around the circle counterclockwise to the South, the cardinal direction of Fire.
- B. Shuffle the wands/rods/clubs suit of cards. If you are using mundane cards, include one joker.
- C. THE DEAD: Draw two cards randomly, look at them, and answer the following questions using the details that correspond to your cards in the **Fire Legend**. How did you die? In old age or in youth? By natural or unnatural causes? Violently or at peace? Describe your final living moments.
- D. THE LIVING: Draw two cards randomly, look at them, and answer the following questions using the details that correspond to your cards in the Fire Legend. Describe the events of the day your friend died. Did you witness the death or hear about it second hand? How did you feel, and what did you do?
- E. THE DEAD: In response to these memories, you are starting to catch a glimpse back into the world of the living. Describe what you see, hear, and smell.
- F. THE LIVING: As you complete the Ritual of Fire, hints of the dead realm are gathering within the circle. Describe what you see, hear, and smell.



## FIRE LEGEND

- |                                 |                                            |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 2 a material need               | 9 a survivor                               |
| 3 a journey                     | 10 a sickness                              |
| 4 a wedding                     | <i>Page/Knave/Joker</i> a careless mistake |
| 5 a community argument          | <i>Jack/Knight</i> a collision             |
| 6 a celebrity or popular person | <i>Queen</i> a well-meaning error          |
| 7 a stranger                    | <i>King</i> an order                       |
| 8 an oppressive force           | <i>Ace</i> a noble decision                |



# SUMMONING THE DEAD



- A. THE LIVING: You are about to conjure your dead friend into the circle of salt. Set the scene for this act of magic by answering the following questions. How much time has passed since your friend died? What is happening in your life now? What led up to performing this ritual? How did you acquire the power to summon the dead?
- B. THE LIVING: Turn the STAR COIN back over, heads up, on the fire point of the pentagram. Place your right index finger on the STAR COIN and repeat this magical formula three times:

Beloved NAME OF DECEASED, thou who perished by  
MEANS OF DEATH, through this NAME OF OBJECT I  
conjure thee.

Beloved NAME OF DECEASED, thou who perished by  
MEANS OF DEATH, through this NAME OF OBJECT I  
conjure thee.

Beloved NAME OF DECEASED, thou who perished by  
MEANS OF DEATH, through this NAME OF OBJECT I  
conjure thee.

- C. THE DEAD: Describe what you look and sound like when you appear in the Magic Circle.
- D. THE LIVING: Tell your friend why you have conjured them.  
*Remember to express your motive from the central conflict.*
- E. THE DEAD: Tell your friend why you believe they must fail.  
*Remember to express your motive from the central conflict.*

# RITUAL OF AIR

THE LIVING *and* THE DEAD *draw weapons for the final battle.*

- A. THE LIVING: Invoke Air with the following three motions. First, to form an Invoking Pentagram of Air, place your index finger on the Water point of the pentagram, then moving toward Air, trace the entire pentagram with your finger. Second, move the STAR COIN to the Air point of the pentagram. Third, slide the CIRCLE COIN around the circle counterclockwise to the East, the cardinal direction of Air.



- B. Shuffle the swords/spades suit of cards. If you are using mundane cards, include one joker. Everyone: Randomly draw four cards each, but you will only use three of them. These correspond to the weapons in the **Air Legend** that are available to use in battle. Each weapon card has a literal meaning and an abstract meaning; you may choose which you prefer to use when you play the card.

## AIR LEGEND

- |                                         |                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 a blindfold or darkness               | 9 a candle or nightmares                                           |
| 3 a vial of blood or loyalty            | 10 community allies or solidarity                                  |
| 4 a rune-covered box or prayer          | <i>Page/Knave/Joker</i> a shield or what your friend does not know |
| 5 hand-to-hand combat or intimidation   | <i>Jack/Knight</i> an animal or passion                            |
| 6 a map of the dead realm or travel     | <i>Queen</i> control of the weather or logical persuasion          |
| 7 a key or trickery                     | <i>King</i> an important document or instilling doubts             |
| 8 magic words and hexes or imprisonment | <i>Ace</i> an enchanted sword or a higher authority                |

- C. THE LIVING: Flip the STAR COIN in the center of the pentagram so that it lands on the table. If it lands heads-up, THE LIVING will go first in the final battle. If it lands tails-up, THE DEAD will go first. Place the STAR COIN in the center of the pentagram so that it touches both names.

- D. Starting with the winner of the coin-flip, place a card face-up inside the Magic Circle and describe how you use that weapon against your friend. Your friend responds to this attack with another face-up card and description of battle. Continue countering each other's attacks until you have each used three weapons.

- E. THE LIVING: Move the STAR COIN to the Spirit point of the pentagram.



- F. EVERYONE: As players, come to a consensus about who won the battle and how.

- G. THE VICTOR: Describe the moment of your victory. How does the central conflict resolve?

- H. THE DEFEATED: Conclude the story with an epilogue: what happens to the two friends next in life or the afterlife?