



MNEMONIC

CRACKS IN THE MIRROR

A TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME

by Dee Pennyway

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Cover

The cover illustration was created from a composite of the following stock images from pexels.com:

- Brown Color Dawn Environment
- Tourist Attraction of a Place

This game is dedicated to DC, my favorite themkin, who has done more for the tabletop community, and for me personally, than I will ever be able to adequately repay. Stay hydrated, friend.





MNEMONIC

CRACKS IN THE MIRROR

INTRODUCTION

Mnemonic is a game about exploring forgotten places in service of the communities whose history is buried there.

This document contains the procedures and prompts needed to play a full session of Mnemonic.

This game does not require a facilitator. To play, read the text of each ritual, and follow the instructions.

Your group will need a single standard-size poker deck, including two Jokers.

You may also want to keep a piece of paper or a notepad and something to write with, to help you keep track of the world you're exploring.

SAFETY NOTE

Periodically throughout the game, the text will include Safety Notes that provide specific guidance around potentially sensitive story moments.

If the story or the group conversation at any point drifts toward material that makes you feel unsafe, you are also well within your rights to pause the game, to skip over the parts that cause you anxiety, or to walk away from the table entirely.

Take care of yourself. Take care of each other.

RITUALS OF PLAY

RITES OF INITIATION

In which we develop and introduce the characters who will be our vessels for exploring the world.

RITES OF EXPLORATION

In which we travel to a place of memory and explore our family's history.

RITES OF REFLECTION

In which we look back on the events of the session.



RITES OF INITIATION

I spent years looking in the mirror.
One day, I saw that the mirror was cracked.
In the seam, I saw myself.

Nervously, I tried to fit the pieces back together.
To repair what was broken.
To hide what I had seen.
But it was no use.
The mirror was broken.
It had always been broken.

THE RITES OF INITIATION

Each of you will invent a character to join the group on their journey through the world of Mnemonic.

Mnemonic is a world painted in silhouette: the outlines are there, but the details are murky. As you explore the world, you will flesh out its history for yourself and your group. Ignore any and all lore that you may have read about this world; from the moment you begin, this world is yours to shape.

BEFORE WE BEGIN...

This game is not designed, nor is it intended, as a space to explore other people's oppression or diaspora. White players should not be engaging with cultures and histories that are not their own.

As you play, be mindful of the details and inspiration you draw from the real world, and avoid details from cultures that don't belong to you, especially Indigenous cultures, even if you've studied them in an academic setting. Academic study or proximity to other people's cultures is not a replacement for lived experience.

As much as you can, limit your inspiration to details from cultures and communities to which you have a concrete personal connection.

INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS

Follow the instructions on the following pages
to create and introduce your character.

It's okay if you don't have all the answers.
Do the best you can.

THE LIE

WHAT LIE HAS SOCIETY ENDEAVORED TO
TEACH YOU ABOUT YOURSELF?

- I talk too much.
- I think too much.
- I try too hard.
- I'm better off alone.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER.

When did you realize the lie
was holding you back?

THE SOURCE

WHERE DO YOU DRAW YOUR STRENGTH?

- I draw strength from my connection to other people.
- I draw strength from the actions I take.
- I draw strength from the lessons I learn.
- I draw strength from the world around me.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING.
YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER.

Until recently, you had no idea that
this was the source of your strength.

What kept you from discovering it?

THE POWER

WHAT MAKES YOU SPECIAL?

- I'm a talented healer.
- I'm a powerful fighter.
- I'm a gifted magician.
- I'm a prolific creator.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER.

This specialty frequently gets you
into trouble in your community.

What keeps you from giving it up entirely?
Could you if you wanted to?

SPECIES

WHICH SPECIES BEST DESCRIBES YOU?

- **Drake**
Winged, dinosaur-like people who can breathe fire.
- **Fey**
Small, faerie-like people.
- **Gemfolk**
Human-like people who can change their appearance.
- **Human**
People who look most similar to humans outside of the fiction.
- **Spiderkin**
Arachnoid people who can spin webs out of silk.
- **Sun Child**
People made of metal and stone and magic who cannot die.

These species are broad categories of people, and what you look like within your category is entirely up to you.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER.

What makes you stand out from the other members
of your species? Is it a physical feature, or
something less tangible?

HOME

WHICH CITY DO YOU CALL HOME?

- **Sun City**
A bustling metropolis
- **Ironhold**
A city of forges
- **Luckwater**
An island academy
- **Luria**
A distant port town
- **Rynwood**
An ancient forest
- **Tower**
A desolate ruin

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER.

Why did you leave home?
Who do you miss most?

NAMING CEREMONY

WHAT IS YOUR CHOSEN NAME?

Every person is given a name at birth, but you no longer use that name for yourself. Pick your chosen name from the below lists of common names, or choose one of your own design.

- **Names of plants or animals:**
Iris, Moss, Lily, Ash, Willow, Mouse, Sparrow
- **Names of natural elements:**
Rain, Winter, Moonlight, Cinder, Stone, Aurora, Aster
- **Names of physical objects:**
Spindle, Cog, Winder, Oar, Blade, Lock

PRONOUNS

Introduce us to your character using their chosen pronouns. An example is provided below.

“Moss is a spiderkin from Tower. She has her secrets that she keeps to herself, but one thing you should know about her is that she is gifted with magic, although it has gotten her into trouble in the past.”

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER.

Do you remember your given name?
Who do you still allow to use it?

LIMITATIONS

Declare and record one limitation for your character, something that, when it comes up, prevents you from continuing on the current path.

You might be able to find a different way forward, or someone else might be able to help you, or your limitation might simply stop you where you are, or force you to retreat.

Below are some examples:

- Afraid of heights, snakes, or deep water
- Social anxiety
- Partial or total impairment of hearing or vision
- Unable to walk or run without an assistive device

SAFETY NOTE

Avoid making jokes at the expense of your character, especially if they have limitations that you do not.

If at any point a limitation comes up in the fiction that you don't feel comfortable exploring, you may divert the story away from that moment.

If you or your group are unable to engage with a limitation safely and respectfully, change it to something else.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER.

How do you overcome your limitation
in your daily life? When does your limitation
become too much of an obstacle for you?

YOUR GROUP

Somehow, you all came together in the same community, eventually forming a group of your own.

Discuss the following questions as a group:

- Where did you meet?
- Did everyone join the group together, or did some join later?
- What circumstances brought your group together?
- What do you remember from that day?
- What have you chosen to forget?
Do others remember it?

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER.

What secrets have you kept from the group,
to protect yourself or your family?

FAMILY

The world is made up of many families. Some of them intersect. Some are isolated. Your family shares your culture, many of your needs, some of your pain.

Your family also includes specific ancestors, people who lived during moments of history, whose stories may or may not have survived the passage of time.

Each member of your traveling group comes from a different family, but your group, too, is a kind of family, with its own needs, shared pain, and culture.

When the text mentions “family”, it is referring to the family you come from, beyond your traveling group.

Within these two kinds of families, is you. Only you know who you are, who you want to be. You have your own needs and pain. You share a connection with the other members of your group, beyond the meals you share around the campfire on the path toward your destination. You might not know what it is just yet, but it’s there, waiting to be explored.

Consider all of this, as you make your journey to the places of memory.

I had spent years staring into that mirror—

—Decades—

Seeing what **they** wanted me to see.

Being what **they** wanted me to want to be.

No more.

Let the thing shatter.

I'm done hiding.



RITES OF EXPLORATION

The walls remember.

The stones remember.

It is we who have forgotten.

THE RITES OF EXPLORATION

The Rites of Exploration are a series of intimate procedures for exploring your culture's history. The text here mentions a place of memory, suggesting a journey to a distant or possibly ancient location, but the place of memory could be inside your family's current home, or at a local cemetery, or inside a theatre.

This place could be as vast as a city, or it could be as small as a room. It could be as new as a supermarket or as ancient as a circle of stones.

An example of play is offered on the next page to demonstrate how your exploration could play out; please know that this is just one possible scenario.

Take a moment now to discuss with your group the kind of place you would like to explore.

- Where is it?
- How long will it take to get there?
- Have any of you been there before?

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Arrival

You have been sent by your grandmother to retrieve a painting from the building she grew up in.

Exploration

Your exploration takes you through that downtown neighborhood, with pieces of your grandmother's childhood presented to you through empty storefronts and murals on alley walls.

Transgression (X)

You find an old diary on the ground, with your grandmother's name written on the front.
You take it with you to return to her, (Safety) but you do not read its contents.

Shared Memory

The shared memory you experience takes your group into the building where she grew up, and your friends see that their families, too, once spent time here.

Resolution

You find the painting, sitting on top of a box in the corner of a storage room, and take it with you as you leave the building behind.

ARRIVAL (PART I)

You are on your way to the site of an important moment in your community's history.

WHO SENT YOU ON THIS JOURNEY?

- Someone in our group
- A family member
- Someone outside of our families, whom we trust

As you answer the questions in this ritual, you may elaborate as much or as little as you feel comfortable.

You do not need to share the details of this moment of communion with the other members of your group, nor the other players at the table.

ARRIVAL (PART II)

Each of you is looking to accomplish something specific here.

WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THIS SITE?

- I am looking for answers to a question about a member of my family.
- I have come to retrieve something of value that was taken from my family.
- I intend to repair a harm that was visited upon my family.

As you answer the questions in this ritual, you may elaborate as much or as little as you feel comfortable.

You do not need to share the details of this moment of communion with the other members of your group, nor the other players at the table.

ARRIVAL (PART III)

Before you enter the place of memory, you must attune yourself to the memories of your ancestors.

HOW DID YOUR FAMILY PREPARE YOU
TO ENTER THIS PLACE?

The rituals completed, you each feel the veil of
time peeling back from this place.

You sense it opening itself to you, allowing you to
explore the memories of your ancestor as they
passed through this place.

EXPLORATION

As you enter this place of memory, each of you senses a mnemonic imprint--a tangible memory of one of your ancestors.

You each only feel one of these imprints, calling you toward your objective. While you move forward, you bear witness to a moment in history through your ancestor's perspective. How you engage with that moment is up to you.

Each player, draw a card from the deck and place it face-up on the table. The suit of the card determines the feeling of the memory you witness with your ancestor.

- **Hearts**
You find your ancestor in a moment of vulnerability.
- **Spades**
You find your ancestor hard at work.
- **Diamonds**
You find your ancestor struggling with a problem.
- **Clubs**
You find your ancestor at peace.
- **Joker**
Draw a new card, discarding any additional Jokers. During the moment described by this new card, you realize you have made a **transgression**.

SAFETY NOTE

The Joker represents a transgression within your own family's culture. You may not use this card to play out a violation of cultures that do not belong to you.

TRANSGRESSION

A transgression represents a mistake, a violation of the place you're in. Maybe you took something that wasn't yours to take, or you broke something by accident. The significance of this transgression might be physical, such as the damaging of the physical site, or it could be spiritual, such as severing a connection between your ancestor and your family.

The harm might not be tangible to the other members of your group, but for you it is a thing that must be reconciled immediately, by you, in this moment.

SAFETY NOTE

If the idea of transgression in the context of your current exploration makes you feel unsafe, simply discard the Joker and signal that this is a piece of the story that you wish to leave unexplored.

You can justify this omission within the context of the story or not, as you prefer.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING.

ANSWER AS YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE.

How did the transgression occur?

What does this transgression mean, within your family?

What is at stake for your ancestor's memory if you don't repair the harm?

What must you do to make things right?

SHARED MEMORY

By group decision or by chance, each of you arrive at the same spot in this place of memory. Each of your ancestors has passed through this place at some point in time, leaving an imprint on the world's memory.

You all feel the connection, pulling you forward, asking you to descend into the moment, to witness what transpired here.

Perhaps it was a series of moments occurring at different points in history, or a chance encounter of each of your ancestors in the same spot at the same time.

Whatever the circumstances, you all bear witness to the same events, though you might not immediately recognize their significance or connection to each other.

SAFETY NOTE

Before you continue: if anyone feels uncomfortable moving forward as a group, you may resolve this memory as separate, individual scenes.

You do not need to invite others into your family's history, and you do not need to explain your reasoning to the group.

SHARED MEMORY (PART II)

Each player, draw a card from the deck and place it face-up on the table. Discuss your ancestor's connection to this place, using the suit of the card to determine the kinds of events that took place in this spot:

- **Hearts**
This place was a site of coming together—of great sadness or joy, of communion or shared grief.
- **Spades**
This place was a site of conflict—of battle or strife, of pain and loss, of severed ties or broken bonds.
- **Diamonds**
This place was a site of discovery—of innovation, of new friendships, of secrets learned or stories told.
- **Clubs**
This place was a site of creation—of building homes, of founding cities, of making do with what remains, of helping the land recover.
- **Joker**
Each of you brings an internal conflict with you to this place. Before proceeding further into the shared memory, each of you must deal with this conflict in your own way.

INTERNAL CONFLICT

The conflict you bring with you to the place of memory might be a challenging relationship with a family member that interferes with your ability to commune with your ancestor, or a transgression you made during your journey that you have not yet reconciled.

Do you deal with this conflict now? Or do you endure the struggle inside of you to focus on your ancestor's memory, and plan to resolve it later?

RESOLUTION

The shared memory complete, your group at last finds what you came for: an opportunity to answer a question, to retrieve what was stolen, to repair what was broken.

The choice remains:

DO YOU TAKE IT?

Before the ritual ends, take a moment, each of you, to consider, and describe as much as you're comfortable, the moment you return home to your family, with the memories of what you experienced still lingering in your mind.

Do you tell them what you saw?
Or do you quietly go off to bed?



RITES OF REFLECTION

You're coming home.

Slow. Steady.

Legs tired.

Pack heavy.

You're coming home.

Slow. Steady.

Come on in.

Supper's ready.

rites of reflection

The Rites of Reflection are your time to think about what happened during the session. Use this time however you need, to process what you experienced, to record what you remember.

You can write in a journal or notebook, you can paint or draw, you can listen to music. Be mindful that the other members of your group might have different needs; do your best not to interfere with their reflection.

Allow yourselves no more than 5 minutes to reflect; then come back to the group to discuss the experience.

Some things to consider:

- Moments that were especially powerful for you
- Questions that were left unanswered or unresolved
- If you like, you can share parts of your reflection process with the group, but you don't have to.

When you reach the end of your time together, remember to thank the other members of your group for the experience.

WHAT COMES NEXT:

If you finish the session and find yourself wishing you could play longer, you can!

To continue the story with the same characters, continue playing from the start of the Rites of Exploration.

THANK YOU FOR PLAYING.

If you have questions about this game, or if you just want to share your experience with me, please leave a review or a comment on the game's itch.io page:

<https://mnemonicrpg.itch.io/mnemonic>

You can also find me on Twitter: [@DeePennyway](#)





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