



# MEMORRY QUEST

# Memory Quest

## A race for truth

a roleplaying game for 3-4 players

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using “whisper” and “morning”

An amnesiac agent trapped in a strange place on a secret mission hears whispering voices. Can the agent recover a lost identity and complete the mission before the Nemesis arrives? If so, then what? And what’s the whispers’ role in it all?

### Game Length

This game can be played in a single session. The results at the end of the session may wrap things up or fill you with an urgent need to play more. Playing more should result in a maximum of 3 sessions for one Agent Player.

### Agent and Whispers

Everyone should read the Agent Instructions, and no one should read the Whispers Instructions. Pick one player to be the Agent Player. Everyone else will be Whispers Players, and they can now read the Whispers Instructions.

If you have played the game before, you must be a Whispers Player.

### Materials

A coin and a a four-sided die, or two coins

A pencil and eraser for the Agent Player, and a pen or pencil for the Whispers Players to share.

These instructions

A space to play where the Whispers Players can easily hear the Agent Player’s speech and each other’s whispers, but where the Agent Player cannot hear more than an occasional word of the whispers.



# Agent Instructions

If you're the Agent Player, do not read the Whispers Instructions.

## The Situation

It was 2011 in America. You had a life of some sort, and you definitely had training for this mission. You can't remember how you got here, or even where "here" is for sure. Did your enemies injure your brain? Did your agency erase your memories so you couldn't talk under torture, but now they've failed to return? There are a few things that you're sure of. You're sure that you're on the clock, that your Nemesis is after you. You're sure that if it catches up to you before your mission is complete, it will take you -- kill you, or maybe worse. You're sure that this place has some clues to your past, but you have no idea where to look for them. And you're sure of your mission. You know what you need to accomplish, and you know what four steps are required for that. The mission is top secret, and no one can be trusted with your true objective or these steps.

What you're not sure of is the whispers. You hear them constantly, coming from no particular direction. Are they allies? Enemies? Gods? Hallucinations? It takes a great effort of will to focus on them, but you can.

With every step you take toward your objective, or toward investigating your situation by sidetracking or listening in to the whispers, your Nemesis draws closer.

How much can you learn about your situation, from the whispers and the obstacles that confront you, without letting your Nemesis sabotage your mission?

If you complete your mission, your Nemesis will be defeated, but what will be next for you?

## Instructions

Write out (a) where you are, (b) the objective of your mission, and (c) the four steps you must complete in order to be able to achieve your mission. You can use a note card, blank paper, or the bottom of the Situation page.

You will describe your adventure to the other players as if they observe all, but know nothing beyond what they can see, hear, etc. You may not narrate what you are thinking. You may not reveal your mission or steps to people you encounter, either (top secret!). No speaking your thoughts into the air, either; your Nemesis may always be listening.

When the other players interrupt your narration to present you with an obstacle, narrate how you overcome it, and the other players will narrate what that costs you. Often, you will be injured, and there's nothing you can do about that. What you can do is decide whether or not to interact with the objects, places and people that the obstacles thrust into your path. Some might be dangerous, while others might help you on your mission.

### What's an apt mission?

The main constraint is that you were sent from 2011 America. So wherever you are now, it should be accessible from there. Go for something inspiring, flexible, and at least a teeny bit familiar. The inside of a submarine or small moon base will limit you too much. New York, Paris, London, Antarctica, or the Congo are probably better choices. Narnia is not an option.

Beyond that, action movies and secret agent fiction are fine models for your narration -- blatantly unrealistic technology is out, but lots of slightly-more-advanced-than-real-life gadgets are fine.

The mission itself can be good or evil, big or small. Just make sure it's big enough that it's worth an elite outfit sending their top operative!

# Agent Instructions

If you're the Agent Player, do not read the Whispers Instructions.

## How to narrate what you do:

Every time you start speaking (e.g. after finishing with an obstacle or hearing a whisper), begin your narration with one of the phrases listed below.

The Whisper Players need to know which type of activity you are engaged in at all times, so you also need to use a phrase if you switch to a new activity in the middle of a narration.

Whenever you speak a phrase, mark off a box with the letter corresponding to that phrase.

In addition, whenever you complete a step for your mission, mark a box with a star.

If you continue on with your mission after completing a step, you do not need to mark another box for that.

(Alternate rules: (1) mark the "O" but do not announce it to the Whisper Players; (2) mark the "O" and announce as usual)

The three activities and phrases are:

**O - On with the mission!**

**S - Sidetracking,**

**W - What did you say?**

## Must I do the steps in order?

No, but write steps that you can only pursue one at a time. Making each step a prerequisite to the next is encouraged but not required.

## How fast to go?

When you're *On With the Mission*, don't waste any actions on other stuff! Don't kiss your lover goodbye, write your mom, or finish your stamp collection. That said, you shouldn't rush, either! Make each of your four steps non-trivial; show how they require your unique skills, gear or connections. How colorfully you describe your adventure is up to you; start with whatever level of detail you enjoy most.

## Why sidetrack?

To probe anything you're curious about that isn't obviously part of completing your mission! Specifically, that means your memories, your Nemesis, and anything that might be tied to them. You might want to explore your environment, or go back to something from a previous encounter.

Activities:

Damage:

When you are about to fill in your **next-to-last Activity box**, announce, "**I know my Nemesis is coming!**" and listen to the Whispers Players' response before announcing your next activity.

When you are about to fill in your **last Activity box**, announce, "**I know my Nemesis is here!**" and listen to the Whispers Players' response before announcing your final activity.

When the **last damage circle** is filled, **you die**.

# Whispers Instructions

If you're the Agent Player, do not read the Whispers Instructions.

Whispers players, read these instructions either silently, or out loud where the Agent player can't hear you.

## The Situation

You are brilliant government scientists, and your experiment has succeeded. Mostly. You were able to insert your government's most skilled agent into the mind of a psychotic terrorist in order to break down the terrorist's barriers to interrogation. Unfortunately, the terrorist's mind has reacted to the agent like a virus, erasing his memories and working to kill him. You wanted to pull the agent out, but your data suggests that he'll return as a drooling vegetable without a very specific extraction procedure, covering reminders and transition.

## Reminders:

You've moved your operation to the agent's home, surrounded by everything he owns. Your procedure is to prime the agent for extraction by slipping reminders of the real world into his experience inside the terrorist's mind. Each time the agent connects with such a reminder (i.e., takes it with him on his mission), he gets one step closer to being able to return. Four reminders should do the trick.

The science of implanting reminders is inexact at best, working through the medium of the terrorist's brain. Half the attempts get through as intended; the other half are co-opted by the terrorist's attempt to purge the agent.

Even the most successful implantation is dangerous. The agent's mind will only react to content that obstructs his mission; nothing else registers. Further, the agent's own paradigm of risky missions translates every obstacle into a danger. The harm these dangers can inflict is small -- unless co-opted by the terrorist.

## Transition:

The final ingredient is the transition. The mission is the strongest remaining element of the agent's mind, and only at the moment of completing that mission will the agent's brain be receptive to extraction.

## Understanding the agent:

The mission is the life-raft that keeps the agent functioning, and piggybacking onto it is your best chance to slip him reminders. If you can figure out what he's trying to do, you can choose reminders which he would logically take for the good of his mission. If he's bent on assassination, you'll have better luck with a gun than with a screwdriver!

You've got a monitor hooked up to the terrorist's brain, tuned in to the frequency of the agent's consciousness. You can see and hear everything he's imagining. By analyzing what you see, as a team, you can hope to deduce the agent's mission and get him the reminders he needs. Choose wisely and hope for some luck, for too many failed implants will hasten the agent's demise.

# Whispers Instructions

If you're the Agent Player, do not read the Whispers Instructions.

## What if we fail to deliver reminders?

Each time the agent succeeds in a mission without getting his reminders, he loses himself deeper inside the terrorist's mind. All the reminders he'd found cease to function as connections, and now he has less time to evade the terrorist (who manifests as a new Nemesis) on his next mission. See "Subsequent Tries" below. The scientists refer to these tries as Mission 1, Mission 2, etc.

## What if the agent fails at the mission?

If the agent dies in his fantasy mission, he dies for real, the end. Fortunately, when death is on the line (or at any time you choose), you can always dismantle the terrorist's attack with a powerful electric shock. The scientists call this a Reset.

There are two situations where death is on the line:

- 1) If the Agent's final Damage circle could be filled by:
  - a) the next Obstacle
  - b) the next Reminder
  - c) the Nemesis's attack (i.e., not hitting Reset the second after the Agent Player says, "I know my Nemesis is here!")
  
- 2) If the Agent runs out of Activities without completing their mission -- this means the terrorist has caught up to them, has already damaged them once, and will now kill them if not stopped.

Unfortunately, a Reset destroys some of the agent's recent memories as well. The agent "wakes up" on the same mission, but now needing only 3 steps to complete it. All the reminders they found cease to function as connections; they need 4 new ones. You now know more about their mission, but your time to use that knowledge is limited, as some injuries remain and the terrorist is closer to finding them.

# Whispers Instructions

If you're the Agent Player, do not read the Whispers Instructions.

## Creating the Nemesis

When the terrorist's mind tries to eradicate the agent, this manifests in the agent's fantasy as his Nemesis. Choose a way to identify the forces of the Nemesis when they appear. Men in black, ninjas, a certain color or odor or symbol, nightmarish nonsense, gnashing teeth -- whatever you think is a distinctive manifestation of some psycho's brain in attack mode! Collaborate on this in secret before starting play.

## Starting and re-starting play

All Whisper Players say this in unison: **“You wake up in the morning. Where are you?”** This begins every new Mission.

At the beginning of the game, it's the Agent Player's cue to begin narrating.

After a completed Mission with insufficient reminders for extraction:  
Deliver the “You wake up” line and take a break. Tell the Agent Player to author a new mission, while you go create a new Nemesis. Before doing these, see “Subsequent Tries” below.

After a rescue from death via Reset:  
It's a little different. Say in unison, **“You wake up in the morning.”** Then one Whisper Player should ask, **“What was the first step of your mission?”** When the Agent Player reads you what they have written down for that, tell them, **“You've done that, but haven't accomplished your other steps. So, where are you?”** Before continuing play, see “Subsequent Tries” below.

## Subsequent Tries

Instruct the Agent Player to erase some of their boxes and circles, leaving half of their Damage taken (round up) and one third of their Activities used (round to nearest).

Example: an Agent who ends a Mission or gets a Reset with 13 Activity and Damage would begin their next try with 4 Activities and 7 Damage (that is, 11 Activity boxes open and 8 Damage circles open).

## Victory

If the Agent Player has collected four reminders, and performed their four steps, and the Nemesis hasn't killed them:

Once they finish narrating the completion of their mission, all Whisper Players say, in unison “You're awake!” Then, roleplay the doctors telling the agent about what happened. Refer to your Situation page for all the details.

# Whispers Instructions

If you're the Agent Player, do not read the Whispers Instructions.

## How to discuss the agent's activities

Whisper to each other! If the Agent Player catches a few words, that's fine, but make sure they can't hear full phrases!

## How to respond to the agent's activities

For **"On with the mission!"** no response is needed.

For **"What did you say?"**, the Whisper Player being addressed by the Agent Player repeats out loud the last sentence they whispered. (In the case of a really long sentence, the last two clauses will do.)

For **"Sidetracking"**, as soon as the Agent Player narrates moving to a new location, interrupt to narrate how the edges of the agent's environment begin to fray, and manifestations of the Nemesis slowly approach. Then tell them, **"That's all; continue your Sidetracking."** (If they ask, they do not need to spend a new Activity box.)

Once the Agent Player finishes Sidetracking, secretly flip a coin to see whether they took a point of damage (tails) or not (heads) before getting distance from the Nemesis. If damage was dealt, narrate how, and tell the Agent Player "1 point".

For **"I know my Nemesis is coming!"**, narrate how the ultimate manifestation of the Nemesis arrives on the scene, and begins gaining ground on the Agent. Then say, **"Okay, what's your next activity?"** (Alt. rule: ditch this whole feature.)

## Reminders

Mission 1	1	2	3	4	First Reset	1	2	3	4	Second Reset	1	2	3	4	Third Reset	1	2	3	4
Mission 2	1	2	3	4	First Reset	1	2	3	4	Second Reset	1	2	3	4	Third Reset	1	2	3	4
Mission 3	1	2	3	4	First Reset	1	2	3	4	Second Reset	1	2	3	4	Third Reset	1	2	3	4

Don't track these, but feel free to ask Agent Player for them any time you've grabbed narration:

**Activities**

**Damage**

For **"I know my Nemesis is here!"**, narrate how the Nemesis attacks. Secretly (or visibly?) flip a coin to see whether the Agent takes one point of damage (heads) or two (tails), then tell the Agent Player. Then say, **"It's poised to kill you now. Can you complete your mission before it finishes the job?"**

If the Agent Player says **no**, narrate how the Nemesis prepares for the killing blow, then Reset.

If the Agent Player says **yes**, then let them narrate that, and treat it as a regular new Mission.

**AP:** Sidetracking, I leave the museum and head back toward where I met the informant. When I-

**WP:** You see dark figures moving quickly in the alleys and rooftops you pass. (*Referring to Nemesis: ninjas*) You see an occasional glint of steel. At first they were mostly distant, but you catch movement out the corner of your eye that's closer. That's all; continue your Sidetracking.

# Whispers Instructions

If you're the Agent Player, do not read the Whispers Instructions.

## How to play obstacles

Whisper Players agree as a group on:

- 1) a Reminder they'd like to introduce, and
- 2) an Obstacle that the agent must deal with right now.

Once agreed, one Whisper Player interrupts the Agent Player. You can say "Interruption!" or just turn to them and start narrating the obstacle in a loud voice.

Then ask the Agent Player, "**How do you overcome this?**"

As they narrate, secretly roll 1d4 (or flip two coins, designating one first and one second):

<b>1</b>	<b>tails-tails</b>	terrorist co-opts reminder	obstacle does 1 damage
<b>2</b>	<b>tails-heads</b>	terrorist co-opts reminder	obstacle does no damage
<b>3</b>	<b>heads-tails</b>	reminder arrives successfully	obstacle does 1 damage
<b>4</b>	<b>heads-heads</b>	reminder arrives successfully	obstacle does no damage

Wait until the Agent Player finishes their response. Then add to their narration, saying, "**During that,**" and then:

- a) if they were damaged, tell them how, and how many points (1)
- b) introduce the Reminder in a way that they can interact with it or not, and ask them, "**Do you do anything with that?**" Do not narrate how the Reminder is familiar to them at this time!

If the Agent Player says, "**No,**" then say, "**Okay, what's your next activity?**" Play then resumes as normal, with the player announcing and checking off a new Activity box.

If they Agent Player **interacts with a successful Reminder**, tell them how it gives them a flash of memory ("this was yours! you used it every day!") and makes their environment seem briefly insubstantial. Describe how this memory seems core to their real self that they've forgotten, and how they now have some sense of being closer to recovery from their amnesia.

If the Agent Player **interacts with a co-opted Reminder**, tell them how it morphs into a manifestation of their Nemesis and harms them. Secretly (or visibly?) flip to see whether it does 1 (heads) or 2 (tails) points of damage, and convey the result.

For both Reminder interactions, cut the Agent Player off as soon as you can, describe what happens, then say, "**Okay, what's your next activity?**" Play then resumes as normal, with the player announcing and checking off a new Activity box.

Only one Activity box is used per obstacle.

# Whispers Instructions

If you're the Agent Player, do not read the Whispers Instructions.

## Example, bad Reminder roll:

AP: I finish chatting with the guard and slip him a hundred dollar bill, which he takes with a wink. I then move into the entryway to the main vault. I unsling my bag and-

WP: "Hey! Who are you?" A guard you don't recognize has come up being you. He's reaching for his gun. How do you overcome this?

WP: (rolls a 1 -- bad news! damage and no reminder!)

AP: I kick his ass with my awesome ninja skills. I disarm him, knock him out, and toss him in a storage closet. Then I go back to-

WP: Wait! During that, he grazed you with a bullet, as you were first moving toward him. Take 1 point of damage. He also dropped a ring of keys. Do you do anything with that?

AP: Sure! I'll pick it up and see if it's-

WP: It instantly writhes and twists unnaturally, turning into a ninja!

WP: (flips tails -- 2 points of damage)

WP: The ninja attacks! You eventually kill him, but he slashes you first for 2 points of damage!

AP: Gah! What the fuck?!

WP: Okay, what's your next activity?

## Example, good Reminder roll:

AP: I finish chatting with the guard and slip him a hundred dollar bill, which he takes with a wink. I then move into the entryway to the main vault. I unsling my bag and-

WP: "Hey! Who are you?" A guard you don't recognize has come up being you. He's reaching for his gun. How do you overcome this?

WP: (rolls a 4 -- great news! reminder and no damage!)

AP: I kick his ass with my awesome ninja skills. I disarm him, knock him out, and toss him in a storage closet. Then I go back to-

WP: Wait! During that, he dropped a ring of keys. Do you do anything with that?

AP: Sure! I'll pick it up and see if it's-

WP: It's instantly familiar! These keys -- you used to use them every day! They're the keys to your storage shed, where you have your lawnmower and tools, and a small cache of secret agent gear. Suddenly, the world around you flickers and becomes insubstantial. The keys are the only things that seem real. Then the world returns, but you have a new sense of remembering who you really are.

AP: Nice. I'm keeping these. I guess I'll tuck them in my pocket. Then-

WP: Okay, what's your next activity?