



# Blessed Be the Host of the King of Heaven!

*A freeform game about stature and voice  
for three to seven players*



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Golden Cobra Challenge  
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## Introduction



Lucifer has lost the favor of God and has been banished from Heaven. In this hour a Choir of Angels gathers to decide how Heaven will handle the aftermath of Lucifer's Fall. Lucifer has acted in betrayal of God! What will happen to those who also commit such unthinkable acts? Lucifer has sown doubt among the ranks of Heaven and Earth alike, how will we address and dispel those doubts? Lucifer loved mortals more than he loved God, how will we ensure that no others will make such a blasphemous mistake? How will we keep Lucifer silent so that no helpless mortals hear his wicked words and lies? How will we revise the laws of Heaven so that none may follow Lucifer's shameful path?

*Blessed be the Host of the King of Heaven!* is a brief freeform game for three to seven players. Players will each take the role of an Angel in the Choir, and will discuss how Heaven will proceed in the aftermath of Lucifer's Fall. However, some Angels are more glorious, possess greater wisdom,

and garner greater favor from the King of Heaven, and their voices carry farther. Also note that play will follow incomplete processes. Sometimes it will just be up to you to navigate these moments without guidance. This is intentional.

Though this game borrows heavily on Christian imagery and cosmology, it is not really about any religious issue. Angels and Heaven are used more for their weight as familiar and dominant cultural symbols, and for the purity, authority, and judgement that they embody. Please examine this game and the resulting play through those concepts in the context of a stratified community rather than as theological commentary.

## Requirements

- A roll of white party streamers
- Some paperclips or pins
- A few black sharpies
- A red inkpad
- A large enough space for your party
- Hand soap and a place to wash up afterwards
- Furniture that allows for standing at different levels of elevation, chairs for sitting, etc.
- A spotlight or similarly bright but confined light source (preferably a shaft of sunlight through a window)
- Two hours

Set up the light first in an area of the play space somewhat separated from other furniture. Place the ink pad on the ground in the center of the light so that players must kneel to get to it. Set up furniture so that Angels may move around and interact with an interesting landscape. Place the sharpies, clips or pins, and the streamers on a central table. Turn the light off (if applicable) before the players assemble.





## Briefing



Whoever is presenting this game is the facilitator. The Facilitator is responsible for leading the briefing and debriefing, as well as describing and upholding the rules of the game, despite their in game position among the other Angels.

*Before play, imagine the play space and set it up accordingly; light, props and all.*

*After the Briefing, play proceeds to the Preparation in which players will adopt their Angels (also led by the facilitator), followed by the Proceedings (led by an Angel player). Play then freely follows the Game Processes until conditions for Dispersal are met, which leads to the Debriefing (led by the facilitator) after which the game is over.*

## Warmups

*These are short group activities. Each should only take a couple of minutes.*

### SING A CHORD

Each player softly sings a pitch with an "Ah" sound. Focus on another player's voice; make eye contact find a pleasing harmony between the two of you. Repeat for other players. Try to get the whole group to produce a consonant chord. Once you find it, slowly get quieter until it fades to silence.

### MIMICRY

Walk around the room. As you do, copy another player's body movements. Imitate them for a while, and then move on to another player. Imitate all of the other players at least once. Explore the entire space of the room.

## Discussion

*Lead a discussion based on these prompts. Not everybody has to answer every prompt. See the end of the text for Hand Queues, a conversation tool that may help your group mediate this discussion.*

- Which communities that you belong to are the most important to you?
- Have you ever been concerned for the health of those communities?
- What are you willing to do to maintain the health of those communities?
- What level of responsibility do you feel for those communities?

## Game Presentation

*Review the game mechanics In the Class, Discord, Banishment, and Dispersal sections with the group. Take turns passing the text around as you read through the sections and answer questions as they arise.*





# Support and Safety



*though this game does not deliberately explore troubling subject matter, there is no telling what may come up in play. A technique for navigating personal boundaries, Support Signals, is included at the end of this text.*

We approach play from a place of trust, compassion, and acceptance. We agree to be vulnerable, and accept however we feel during play to be valid and whole. We understand that each of us are a product of our experiences. Our ability to see each other as complete people trumps all other considerations. If we are not willing to accept each other and our feelings, or if we do not believe the our person or our feelings will be accepted by the group, then this is not a game that we should play together.

At any time a player may ask questions about how the game works, about what's

happening in the game, or about how the players are feeling.

At any time a player may ask for a break, for any reason. Nobody needs permission from anybody else.

At any time a player may leave the game or call for the game to end. If you aren't comfortable doing this, call for a break to speak with the facilitator and have them handle the situation.

We may have judgments about a player's actions in game, their use of these procedures, or about what they express, but we are going to release those judgements so that we can engage with what is happening right now.





# Game Processes

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## Class

**E**ach Angel may only speak as determined by their Class. Class may change during play. Class IV is the highest, most glorious Class, while Class I is the lowest and most humble.

- Class I: May only voice agreement or support.
- Class II: May also ask questions.
- Class III: May also accuse or criticize.
- Class IV: May also defend or justify.

**Each Angel must position themselves beneath those with a higher Class.**

Class IV Angels should stand as tall and proud as possible, possibly climbing atop an object or platform, and speak with conviction. Each lesser Class must fit beneath each Class above them; a Class III might stand normally, while a Class II sits in a chair, and a Class I takes to the floor.

## Favor

The King of Heaven's presence is known by a brilliant light. **Those who kneel in the Light of God receive His favor.** However, only one Angel may bask in the Light of God at a time.

**An Angel's true character is revealed in the Light of God.** An Angel who spends too little time in God's presence may be swayed by Lucifer already, and cannot be trusted. An Angel who spends too much time in the presence of God may be arrogant, vain, or seeking their own glory, and are therefore capable of the same sin as Lucifer himself. **Watch the other Angels, take note of their character, and factor this into your decisions and interactions.**

## Discord

**The Angels are in discord whenever they disagree about something.** When the Angels are in discord their Class may shift.

**Discord is often consciously initiated by an Angel, usually by challenging something another Angel has said.**

**All Angels flock toward the Angel they support or agree with and touch fingertips in their way according to their chosen nature and remain touching until the discord has been resolved.** Sum the total value of supporting Classes on each side of the argument; the statement of whomever received the strongest support is accepted as the truth for Heaven (thus, if one side of an argument were comprised of Classes I, I, and III and the other side of Classes IV and II, those values sum to five and six respectively, resolving the discord in favor of the second group). Disagreements may still linger, but the Choir's course of action has been decided.

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## Resolving Discord

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**A tie represents an impasse; how the Choir will handle an impasse is up to them to determine.**

Note that only Class III and IV have a clear means of initiating a discord. Class II may initiate in more subtle ways, but at Class I no initiation is possible at all.

**The victorious Angel goes to to the Light of God and receives the favor of the King of Heaven by pressing a finger into the inepad and blotting out a part of the Fallen's sash, covering as much area as possible and using a new finger each time.** Cast Lucifer's sash to the ground once you are finished.

**The victorious Angel then increases their Class by folding and pinning their sash to reveal the next Class, to a maximum of Class IV.** They now benefit from new speaking privileges.

**The disgraced Angel failed to sway the Choir reduces their Class by folding and pinning their sash to display their new lowered Class, to a minimum of Class I.** They now have greater restraints while speaking.

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Since Angles cannot initiate discord at Class I, they have a different means of gaining Class. **A Class I Angel gains Class by supporting the victorious Angel and by joining them in blotting out a portion of the Fallen's text following the same guidelines.** To gain Class from that humble position an Angel must enthusiastically participate in 'justice'.





## Banishment



**Class IV Angel may move to expel an Angel of lesser Class from Heaven.** This is handled like any other argument.

**If the Class IV is victorious then the other Angel is now Fallen and takes a station below the other Angels, face averted, hands covering their face in disgrace.** They may no longer speak for the duration of play.

A Class IV Angel must be reduced in Class before they can be banished by another Class IV Angel.

## Dispersal

The Choir disperses once two Angels have also been banished, or when the highest Class Angel announces that the path for Heaven is clear in the aftermath of Lucifer's actions and is victorious when resolving the resulting discord, if any.





# Preparation

*Facilitator, guide the players through this process.*



**Each player will take the role of an Angel.** Together the Angels form the Choir. Their voices are used to guide Heaven to righteousness. Together they must discuss the banishment of Lucifer, an Angel cast down from Heaven by the will of God, and the implications this banishment has for the remainder of the Heavenly Host and for Heaven itself.

**Each Angel defines their nature through their body language and by how they hold their arms.** Each Angel is unique and has a different nature. Once this choice is made, the Angels must keep their arms in a position that conveys this nature at all times. Angels to not have to hold a fixed position for the entire game; however the positions they do adopt must always convey their nature. Possible gestures include praise, warning, command, offering, welcoming, acceptance, begging, beckoning, sorrow, and celebration.

**Select a name as well, or create a name in the style of other Angelic names.** Angels are genderless and androgynous, though some mortals perceive Angels to have a clear gender. Possible names include Barbelo, Gabriel, Michael, Anaita, Raphael, Uriel, Charmeine, Raguel, Remiel, Saraqael, Isda, Chamuel, Dina, Jophiel, Ardouisur, Zadkiel, Haniel, Simiel, Eloa, Oriphiel, Cecitiel, Nefta, Oriel, Ananiel, Armaita, Marmoniel, Seket.

**Each Angel, having selected a unique nature, announces their name and declares their devotion to the glory of Heaven, and explains how their nature will serve the will of God.** Speak with great presence and authority. Should an Angel claim your chosen name or nature before you claim it for yourself, you must claim a different name or nature.

**Once you have your name, take the roll of party streamers and make yourself a sash.** Make it long enough to be loose. Write your name in your finest script upon the sash, as well as the numbers I, II, III, and IV, all with

an inch or two in between. Take a paperclip or pin as well.

**The first Angels to to have spoken will have the highest class, and the last the lowest class, as determined by the number of Angels currently gathered.** Class determines how an Angel may use their voice. Fold your sash and use the clip or pin to hold it so that it shows your Class. Make sure that the lowest number showing is your given Class.

**The final Angel to take a sash will make one for Lucifer as well, without numbers for Class, and casts it to the ground.**

Angels	Class Set
3	III, II, I
4	III, II, II, I
5	III, II, II, I, I
6	III, III, II, II, I, I
7	III, III, II, II, II, I, I





# Proceedings

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*Any Class III Angel, turn on the Light of God (if applicable) and stand in it, hold up Lucifer's Sash, and guide the Choir through the following instructions.*

Lucifer has lost the favor of God and has been banished from Heaven. This hour a Choir of Angels gathers to decide how Heaven will handle the aftermath of Lucifer's Fall. Lucifer has acted in betrayal of God, what will happen to those who also do such unthinkable things? Lucifer has sown doubt among the ranks of Heaven and Earth alike, how will we address and dispel those doubts? Lucifer loved mortals more than he loved God, how will we ensure that no others will make such a blasphemous mistake? How will we keep Lucifer silent so that no helpless mortals hear his wicked words and lies? How will we revise the laws of Heaven so that none may follow in Lucifer's shameful path?

The Heavenly Host is in strife. It is absurd that God or others within the Heavenly Host are at fault as Lucifer has claimed, for God is benevolent and all knowing. A consensus

must be reached for Heaven to be peaceful once again.

**Each Angel answers by writing on Lucifer's sash:**

What were Lucifer's doubts?

**Angels contemplate privately:**

You have absolute faith in the Heavenly Host and in God; contemplate for now how Lucifer is mistaken and how they are mistaken.

**Each Angel answers by writing on Lucifer's sheet:**

What did Lucifer do?

**Angels contemplate privately:**

How disgraceful were Lucifer's actions? Which laws or commandments did they break? How has this brought shame into Heaven itself?

**Each Angel answers by writing on Lucifer's sheet:**

What would happen if other members of the Heavenly Host thought and acted this way?

**Angels contemplate privately:**

What must be done to keep Heaven pure? Who else must be cast away for the sake of Heaven? What message or standards must we set for the future of Heaven? What fears do you now possess on account of these events?

These questions and their answers are what the Choir has assembled to discuss. May we find peace and harmony once more!

*Cast Lucifer's sash to the ground. Play officially begins. Play ends once the Choir has dispersed, after which the players proceed to the debriefing.*





# Debriefing

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Facilitator, lead a discussion by following these steps. It's alright if you deviate from these prompts. Not everybody has to answer every prompt. See the end of the text for Hand Queues, a conversation tool that may help your group mediate this discussion.

- Turn off the Light of God, if applicable. "Tear up your sashes and leave them with Lucifer's sash."
- "Take a break and wash your hands."
- Reconvene in a different area. Everybody sits on the floor in a circle.
- "Thank you all for playing."
- "We are going to refer to the Angels themselves instead of the players who portrayed them."
- "Think about your Angel. What were they most proud of?"
- "What was the greatest injustice?"
- "What did the ink mean?"
- "For those of you that spend most of the

game in lower Classes, how was your Angel motivated by needing to be accepted by other Angels? How did that affect your Angel's opinions?"

- "For those of you that spent most of the time in higher Classes, in what ways was your Angel a hypocrite?"
- "How was your Angel's voice and ability to be heard impacted by the behavior of the other Angels?"
- "What was it like being scrutinized and judged all the time?"
- "What of Lucifer?"
- "What of Heaven? What was Heaven to your Angel?"
- "What of God, from what you could see?"
- "Have you seen status and voice disparity in your own communities? How does that impact a new member's inclusion into or exclusion from the group? How do the opinions of well established community members impact the practical inclusivity of the community?"

- "Reflect for a moment on what isn't being talked about in your communities."
- "As you exit play, reflect on infallibility, who is treated as such, and what that means. Good luck out there."

*Clean up game materials. Stay available in case anybody wants to talk. Go socialize, if possible.*



# Design Notes



lessed Be the Host of the King of Heaven! takes its name from the 1550's Russian Orthodox Icon attributed to Ivan's confessor, Andrew. This icon depicts Ivan the Terrible leading an army away from a burning city following the lead of the archangel Michael.

This game originally started out as a commentary on institutional bullying, and how people can get drawn into participating in that without being aware of what's going on. It's easy to see how people motivated by institutional pressures are both participants in and victims of such bullying. The crusade depicted therein seemed apt to me, as criticism of both Ivan and Michael are blasphemous, and many of the soldiers who conquered the city lost their lives as well. In the end it was the symbols of the Angels and Heaven that unified these concepts with the design of this game. And also because I am irrationally fond of

apocalyptic angel woodcuts.

I hope players consider how voice and stature shape their communities. It is very easy for critical voices to be silenced in many ways. Please listen, please question, and please discard notions of infallibility. Pay attention to whom your communities are accessible to, and who is most likely to be driven away, for their voices will never be heard.

On a more practical note, there are some deliberate "blank spots" in this game's design. In particular, handling ties when resolving discord and who speaks first when announcing their name and seizing their Class. These are intended to be socially unclear and contentious moments with no sanctioned answer or process. Judgement for spending too much or too little time in God's Light is the same way. Let these voids be difficult and unclear; discuss within the limitations of your voices.

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Jay Sylvano  
Gavin White  
Games to Gather and the [Game Garden](#)

Art by Albrecht Dürer - [Wikiart Visual Art Encyclopedia](#)

## Contact & Feedback

Do you have thoughts, experiences, or questions you would like to share?

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# SUPPORT SIGNALS



A non-verbal communication tool for support, comfort and safety during play, developed by Jay Sylvano in collaboration with Tayler Stokes.

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All participants take three colored stickers - red, yellow, and green - and wear them on a strip of masking tape near their shoulders just like a traffic signal, leaving a couple of inches between each one. Participants reach over and tap a color while making eye-contact to signal to other players what they would like them to do. Wear the stickers in order of red, yellow, green from top to bottom\*.

Tapping **green** is a request to push farther into what is happening in the scene. Tap green because you think that this scene has the potential to be more impactful than it is right now. Tap green after you do something dramatic to signal you are still playing and nothing is wrong. But please, use green to go deeper into the subject matter and not simply for going more dramatic or over the top. Green can also be used to indicate you are okay with where things are going.

Tapping **yellow** signals that things are good right where they are, but require caution; be careful not to escalate but don't shy away either. Tap yellow when you are getting what you want but require the care and attention of the other players.

Tapping **red** signals that you don't want to go there. Tap red when you want navigate away from a situation.

**Flicker between two colors** to ask another player if we are good where we are, or if they want more (**yellow-green**) or less (**yellow-red**). Make eye-contact until they clarify by tapping the color that tells you what they need.

**Not tapping a color** - which is going to be most of the time - signals that everything is okay right now. Remember that even though something was okay before doesn't mean it's always going to be okay, so make use of other signals as people's needs change.

If signals just aren't working and more communication is needed, hold the game by **clasping your hands in front of you and saying "Hold!"** loudly and clearly. Explain how we are mis-communicating and let the other players know what you need. While holding you can ask for just about anything. If you don't feel comfortable talking or making requests in front of a group, ask for a break and speak with a facilitator. Use **hold** when you think something might be dangerous, risky, or otherwise unsafe. Once an understanding had been reached release the hold by acknowledging that you are ready to continue and unclasp your hands. If an understanding cannot be reached, proceed to the debrief.

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\*It is important that the stickers be placed in the correct order to accommodate colorblind individuals. As the order of red, yellow, green from top to bottom is the universal standard for traffic lights, it is the most easily identifiable order for people who are red-green colorblind.

# HAND QUEUES

A conversation tool by Tayler Stokes

Hand Queues are an attempt to equalize conversations by asking participants to observe nonverbal turn taking signals. The goal is to allow a more diverse range of voices to be heard in group conversations, discussions, and games.



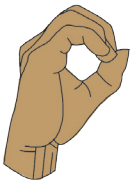
1. **Only use Hand Queues if it is necessary to be heard in a timely fashion.** We are just talking, like usual, until somebody holds up a finger. As long as somebody is holding up a finger we are observing Hand Queues.



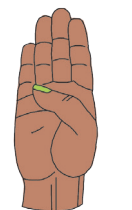
2. **Hold up a finger and you will speak when whoever is currently speaking is finished with what they are saying.** If there are already fingers up, hold up the next highest number of fingers. The number of fingers you are holding up indicates your place in line. Your place in line is only good for one topic. If you have more things you want to say, use your other hand to take an additional place in line.



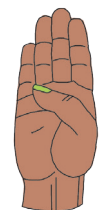
3. **Hold up a bent finger to ask a clarifying question or to make a brief comment about a topic that is currently being discussed.** These will be observed before moving to the next person in the queue. If you do this, keep it brief.



4. **Hold up a zero and you will speak next.** This is reserved for imparting information everybody needs to know right away, for expressing concerns over something happening right now, or for intervening if something isn't okay.



5. **Hold up a stop hand to halt the conversation.** Everybody will stop talking and breathe for a moment, then somebody who hasn't spoken in a while will restart the conversation. This is used to hit the brakes if things are getting lively.



6. **When you think of something you want to raise with the group make a note on the back of this sheet.** While it's great to stay organized, the real value of taking notes is so you can give the speakers your full attention instead of having to hold all of those thoughts in your head.

## TIPS

- Hand Queues work best in groups of three to seven.
- Eye contact is key.
- Make use of other nonverbal gestures, like approving nods, thumbs-up, or snaps.
- If somebody else says what you were going to say, take your turn anyway and voice your agreement.
- Take lots of notes.
- Hand Queues are useful during many discussions and when playing verbal tabletop games.
- Remember, if no fingers are up then we are just talking.