



# In Memoriam

Golden Cobra Entry 2016  
By: Shoshana Kessock

**In Memoriam** is a game about finding just the right words to say in the face of tragedy and how those words can help a person move on. When a person dies, someone has to write the obituary, the perfect summation of an entire life in just a few paragraphs. But what if the departed wants their say in how they're remembered? *In Memoriam* lets the nosy Deceased have their say before heading off to the afterlife. That is, if they want to leave at all.

**Number of players:** 4

**Time:** 1-2 hours

## The Roles

### The Deceased

You are dead. How you died is up to you. In the moment before passing, you're haunting the writing of your own obituary. But do you really want to leave?

### The Writer

Someone significant to you has recently died. The task of summing up their life in an obituary falls to you. You control the way people will remember the Deceased.

### The Collaborator

You've agreed to help write the obituary of someone recently passed. You are the counterpoint, intent on influencing the obituary to reflect your feelings on the Deceased.

### The Guide

You are dead. You knew the Deceased in life and cared for them. Now you've come to help them come to terms with their death and move on in peace to the Afterlife.

## The Materials

Table and a few chairs, plus pens and a few pieces of paper - the obituary might need a few drafts. Tissues as needed.

## The Set-Up

The players should find a comfortable place to play with a **table and chairs**. It doesn't need to be quiet or in private, but **can be played in public** if the players are all right with potentially being observed. Together, they should read through all the rules for this game from beginning to end.

Players should introduce themselves and talk a little bit about their expectations for the game, as well as any topics they might not want to have mentioned during play, such as any gruesome means of death that are off limits. **Players must accept these topics as off limits and should not ask for explanations as to why these topics are being vetoed.** All players involved must also consent before play begins to physical contact with one another. Only arms will be touched.

All four players should then sit around the table to divide up the four roles and decide on their relationships before play starts. The players who will play the Deceased and the Guide must be comfortable moving around the table for the entire game, as well as be willing to initiating physical contact.

Please note: The **X-Card** may be added to this game for additional safety should players want a way to veto elements brought up during play. A piece of paper or index card is set on one side of the table with an X drawn on it. Should at any time a subject come up that any player finds unacceptable, they can touch the card. Players briefly negotiate with one another how to revise around the unacceptable material with no questions asked about why the players feels as they do. Once the players decide how to revise the scene, play continues.

## The Relationships

The players must discuss together how they know/knew one another and a little about their relationships with the Deceased before their death. Was the Writer the Deceased's sibling, sister, or lover? Maybe the Deceased had no living relatives and their obituary must be written by a nosy neighbor. Just how well did the Collaborator know the Deceased and what did they think of them? What was the Guide's relationship with the Deceased during their lifetime?

The only restrictions on creating these relationships are:

- The Writer, Collaborator, and the Guide must all have known the Deceased, at least slightly.
- The Writer must have a close enough relationship to know details about the Deceased's life, which they negotiate with the player of the Deceased in advance. They're free to make up other things during play as they want.
- The Guide must care enough about the Deceased, no matter their relationship, to want to shepherd the Deceased on to their eternal rest.

The Writer must also decide one secret about the Deceased or kept from the Deceased while they were alive. **This secret should NOT be revealed to the other players during character creation but instead revealed during play.**

Once these relationships have been established, play begins.

## The Game and Play Mechanics

**The Writer and Collaborator have come together to write the Deceased's obituary.** They have sheets of paper and pens to scribble down what they feel is most appropriate to submit to sum up the life of the Deceased. The Writer needs help talking through the process and reflecting on the Deceased's life, so they've brought the Collaborator to add insight.

Meanwhile, the Deceased has come to hear just what will be said about them. Their Guide, the person meant to shepherd them to the afterlife, has come to help them pass on to whatever comes next. **During play, the Guide and the Deceased can speak to one another freely and the Writer and Collaborator should act as though they cannot hear them.**

Play begins as the Writer and the Collaborator discuss the Deceased and how best to write the obituary.

Trouble is, the invisible Deceased isn't interested in being a passive observer in this process. **During gameplay, the Deceased may interfere 3 times with what the Writer is putting down on paper. If they want to change something in the obituary, they reach out and put their hand on the Writer's arm and dictate to the Writer what they want written.** The Writer must put these ideas down on paper, though how they feel about these sentences that are not their own is up to the player. If they're the type to believe in ghosts, they might be shaken or scared or even awed they've made contact with the other side. It's all up to the players.

Meanwhile, the Collaborator's job is to act as a sounding board for the Writer, a support in their time of need and a critical eye towards the obituary, and the light it'll cast the Deceased in for everyone to read. How they want the obituary to slant (truthfully? flattering? harshly?) is entirely based on their feelings about the Deceased. **Their goal is to get the obituary to reflect just how they felt about the Deceased by influencing the Writer through conversation.**

The Guide's job meanwhile is to convince the Deceased to stop haunting the land of the living and move on. Acceptance is the key to moving on, and helping the Deceased come to peace with their obituary will help them come to terms with their life. If things aren't going well with the obituary, the Guide can exert a little influence to help things along. **During play, the Guide may interfere 3 times by touching the Collaborator or the Writer on the arm and whispering suggestions about the Deceased.** The Writer and Collaborator must repeat these words aloud as if they were inspired to do so, though by what it's up for them to decide.

**During play, the Writer's job is to decide just what they want to keep for the final obituary:** the words 'inspired' by the Deceased's touch, the Collaborator's input, or the strange messages coming from the Guide. They have one other factor influencing their judgement: **the Secret they desperately feel the need to share during play.** The Secret must be shared aloud for all to hear during play before the obituary is finalized.

Once the Writer and Collaborator decide they've finalized what needs to be said, the Deceased has been given a glimpse into just how people remembered them. They'll then decide if they're willing to move on to the afterlife with the Guide, or else if they want to stay and haunt the living to try and correct what people thought about them.

**Play ends when the decision is made and the obituary is finalized and read aloud.**