

Memory Palace

A LARP by Olivia Montoya

*The Monarch of Memories is holding a ball.
All of the monarchs attend.*

*None can remember, no, nothing at all,
Before the last ball reached its end.*

*Ten years of alliances, and enemies at war,
At last in the same jeweled palace.
Ten years of memories that bond and that mar
Love and friendship, hatred and malice.*

*A chance to change, make amends, and become someone new.
Leave behind your past woes and mistakes,
As the Monarch of Memories remembers for you,
Lest your histories repeat in your wakes.*

*Confront your past selves, monarchs, and choose your domains,
So the cycle continues for new ten year reigns.*

About

Memory Palace is a LARP designed to be played in a proximity-based video chat platform like Gather.town where you can build interactive 2D environments and, most importantly, embed Google Docs into specific locations. The game runs 4 hours for 6-33 players, including pre-game and post-game activities, and doesn't require a GM during runtime, though someone will need to explain how to play the game and set up the online environment and sheets, which is very front loaded.

Intensity of gameplay may vary, as will content, but the following content is guaranteed to be present in this game: war, immortality, memory loss, character to character antagonism, characters having access to other characters' memories, change in core identity, learning new information about your character's past during game.

Summary

The central concept of Memory Palace is that every 10 years the Monarch of Memories hosts a ball at their palace for all the monarchs of the land, who are effectively immortal, but limited in memory. For the past ten years, each monarch has had influence over the world in a specific domain, which is determined by their personality traits. Traits, and therefore domain, are determined at the ball, which is the only place that monarchs have access to memories of their lives before the last ball ended. By spending time with these memories and with the other monarchs, who they've had various alliances, friendly and adversarial relationships with over the past ten years, monarchs trade traits with each other and potentially gain new domains. When the ball ends at midnight, monarchs

step through the Gate of Memories and all their memories are washed away, leaving only their personalities, domain, and budding connections to other monarchs. Personality traits will also determine who is enemies with whom.

The Monarch of Memories remains and remembers all, and plays the role of neutral advisor to all in the next ten years. There can only be a new Monarch of Memories if another monarch gives up all their traits to the current Monarch of Memories, in which case the giver takes their place.

Setup

This game is relatively heavy on setup, as it requires someone to design a physical space in a platform like Gather.town. There isn't space in this document to give a full overview of how to do this, especially since each platform works differently. The most important thing to keep in mind is to design a space with the following features:

- Has a variety of rooms and is large enough for characters to be able to find spaces to talk privately with other characters
- Has at least two interactive objects per player character, in which a Google Doc containing a memory will be embedded (more details later on these)
- Has a location from where the Monarch of Memories can address the entire space, regardless of distance
- Has a "Gate of Memories" characters can pass through at the end of the game

Depending on player familiarity with the platform, it may be a good idea to let players explore the space a little before playing. At this point, the memories won't be embedded yet, so players may explore anything.

Assigning Characters

Before the game begins, it is necessary to assign characters to each player. This can be done randomly, or players may pick a character from the list of monarchs. Once a player has picked a character, they should be given time to fill out their character sheets. Make sure that there is at least one of each of the 8 traits (explained below) in the game.

Structure

The LARP itself is entirely taken up by the ball at the Memory Palace. No violence is possible at the ball. The ball is divided into these distinct parts:

9 PM to 9:20 PM - The Monarch of Memories introduces each monarch as they enter the palace. Then they explain to the attendees how the ball works. There is a script for this below.

Domains

9:20 PM to 10 PM - Monarchs mingle and view memories, but no trading of traits is possible yet.

10 PM to 12 AM - The Monarch of Memories announces that monarchs may now trade traits and gain new domains, and access memories according to their traits.

12 AM - No more trading of traits is possible. The Monarch of Memories announces the new monarchs and their domains, and each monarch exits through the Gate of Memories, which ends the game.

Debrief and Derole - Optional debrief and derole exercises at GM discretion.

Mechanics

This game isn't too mechanics-heavy, but those mechanics that do exist in the game focus on "traits" that a monarch has. Each monarch has three traits, except for the Monarch of Memories, who has none. During part of the ball, monarchs will be able to trade traits with other monarchs, with some minor restrictions. A single monarch cannot have doubles of traits or opposing traits.

Every trait has an opposing trait. If a monarch has two traits that oppose two traits in another monarch, those monarchs will become enemies when they pass through the Gate of Memories at the end of the game, though even during the ball they might be somewhat at odds. If a monarch has two traits in common with another monarch when they pass through the Gate of Memories, they will have an entanglement in the future, which is some sort of strong positive bond.

The specific set of three traits that a monarch has at any time determines their current domain and title. There is a list of these below that should be accessible to all players, as well as a list of existing traits and their opposites.

Monarchs may also formally ally with up to three other monarchs, so long as no individual pair have an opposing trait with each other. If someone has allied with a monarch and acquires an opposing trait, the alliance is broken. Monarchs without an adversarial or allied relationship are neutral towards each other.

Traits should also influence how a player role-plays their character. Players are responsible for keeping track of their characters' traits.

Traits

Positive x Negative
 Quiet x Loud
 Rebellious x Conformist
 Silly x Serious

Traits	Domain
None	Monarch of Memories
Positive, Quiet, Rebellious	Monarch of Mercy
Positive, Quiet, Conformist	Monarch of Mindfulness
Positive, Quiet, Silly	Monarch of Make-Believe
Positive, Quiet, Serious	Monarch of Morality
Positive, Loud, Rebellious	Monarch of Miracles
Positive, Loud, Conformist	Monarch of Mirth
Positive, Loud, Silly	Monarch of Merriment
Positive, Loud, Serious	Monarch of Majesty
Positive, Rebellious, Silly	Monarch of Manifestation
Positive, Rebellious, Serious	Monarch of Magnanimity
Positive, Conformist, Silly	Monarch of Motivation
Positive, Conformist, Serious	Monarch of Marvel
Negative, Quiet, Rebellious	Monarch of Malfeasance
Negative, Quiet, Conformist	Monarch of Malaise
Negative, Quiet, Silly	Monarch of Mystery
Negative, Quiet, Serious	Monarch of Melancholy
Negative, Loud, Rebellious	Monarch of Malcontent
Negative, Loud, Conformist	Monarch of Malignancy
Negative, Loud, Silly	Monarch of Menace
Negative, Loud, Serious	Monarch of Misery
Negative, Rebellious, Silly	Monarch of Masquerade
Negative, Rebellious, Serious	Monarch of Manipulation
Negative, Conformist, Silly	Monarch of Mockery
Negative, Conformist, Serious	Monarch of Materialism
Quiet, Rebellious, Silly	Monarch of Mischief
Quiet, Rebellious, Serious	Monarch of Mistrust
Quiet, Conformist, Silly	Monarch of Metaphor
Quiet, Conformist, Serious	Monarch of Mediocrity
Loud, Rebellious, Silly	Monarch of Mess
Loud, Rebellious, Serious	Monarch of Might
Loud, Conformist, Silly	Monarch of Magnetism
Loud, Conformist, Serious	Monarch of Monotony

Initial Character Connections

Players should establish existing relationships between characters before play begins, but after they read their character sheets. Determine who has been enemies according to the trait rules, who has an entanglement, and freely decide who are allied as long as there are no conflicting traits.

Setting

Before play, players may wish to collectively establish a few things about the setting of the game. But as the “lands” of the game are supposed to be somewhat dreamlike and fantastic, players are technically free to make up just about anything that doesn’t contradict their nature, entanglements, alliances, and enemies. Players should probably check with other players if they want to make up something about another player’s character or their domain.

Constructing Character Sheets

Character sheets should go in a dedicated folder of Google Docs, and each should be set to be editable by anyone with the link. Character sheets are made up of a few different sections: Basic Info, Connections, and Questions. As the person setting up this game, you’ll need to create as many character sheets as there will be players.

The Monarch of Memories will have a special template. The questions section is made up of one question per trait that the monarch starts the game with (remove those that aren’t relevant before sharing the character sheet documents.) Plus a few other questions. The Monarch of Memories can view everyone else’s character sheets at any time, and the player should be given access to the full folder of them. This player should also be aware that they can view all memories at any time as well.

Template

Basic Info (Edit as Needed)

Name:
Pronouns:
Title: Monarch of [Domain]
Traits:

Connections

Entanglements:

Alliances:

Enemies:

Questions

Positive: What are some experiences you’ve had that make you hopeful for the future of the lands?

Negative: What are some experiences you’ve had that make you pessimistic about the future of the lands?

Quiet: Why do you feel that your reserved nature makes you a good monarch? Or do you feel that you are not a good monarch? If so, why?

Loud: Why do you feel that your bombastic nature makes you a good monarch? Or do you feel that you are not a good monarch? If so, why?

Rebellious: You have faced criticism for defying the status quo. What is one reason you feel that your rebellious nature is necessary?

Conformist: You have faced criticism for never challenging the status quo. What is one reason you feel that conforming to tradition is necessary?

Silly: Some say that you don’t take your role as monarch seriously enough. Why are these people wrong about you?

Serious: Some say that you take your role as monarch far too seriously. Why are these people wrong about you?

What is your favorite trait about yourself?

What is your least favorite trait about yourself?

How has the Monarch of Memories given you helpful advice over the years, while still remaining neutral in your conflicts?

Does some part of you desire to give up everything about yourself to become the Monarch of Memories?

Monarch of Memories Template

Basic Info

Name:
Pronouns:
Title: Monarch of Memories

As the Monarch of Memories, you can view other character sheets and all memories at any time. You should have a good reason for recounting a memory to someone who doesn’t have access to it at the ball, as you are duty-bound to remain neutral.

Questions

What traits appeal to you most in monarchs?

What traits do you dislike in monarchs?

Though your role requires your neutrality, secretly you like some of the monarchs more than others. Who are your favorites and least favorites? Why?

Does some part of you desire to give up the burden of remembering for the other monarchs and become one of them?

Memories

The person setting up the game should make sure that each character has a positive and negative memory document hidden somewhere in the online castle. It should be made apparent (perhaps through a label) which traits are necessary to view the memory (the traits that make up the character's domain). Any character with at least one of those traits can view the memory, but will lose access to it if they trade away that trait or traits.

Some memories might mention other monarchs without naming them ("fuzzy" memories), which are described in more detail below. You can choose to make up your own memories or use the sample ones here: <https://metaparadox.it.ch.io/memory-palace-larp>

The most critical thing about running this game is that you embed the memories for all players in the map after they choose their characters, but before play begins. So, probably when they're filling out character sheets. Make sure that you make the memory documents editable by anyone with the link!

Someone should read out the following before game start: In this game, you will encounter memories represented by Google documents. If you approach certain objects on the map, you will see a list of traits. If you have at least one of those traits, you can view the embedded memory (in Gather.town, this is done by hitting the 'x' key.) Some memories might be "fuzzy," in that they refer to an unnamed monarch. This will be indicated by brackets around either three question marks or one or two traits. The monarch whose memory this is can "clarify" it. "???" can be replaced with any monarch's domain, otherwise it must match the listed traits of a monarch, preferably one in the game.

Monarch of Memories Script

Welcome all to the Memory Palace! As you know, I am the Monarch of Memories, and it is my solemn duty to bring you here once every ten years, as the cycle dictates. Your first memory is of leaving the last ball, ten years ago. There is a reason for that. You have been here many times before, as many different selves, for all time. Every ten years you come to the Memory Palace, and the memory of your last ten years is erased.

In this liminal space, you still retain the memories of the last ten years. And, in some places in the palace, you'll find yourself able to access memories from the ten years before that. You can only access a memory if you share at least one trait that the monarch whose memory it is has had for the past ten years. If you lose all those traits tonight, you'll no longer be able to view the memory. The memory belongs to the monarch who starts the ball with the listed traits.

Until the first hour of the ball has passed, you can wander and mingle freely and view memories, but you cannot trade traits with other monarchs. If you encounter a memory of yours that is fuzzy, you will only be able to clarify it within the first hour of the ball. If it is not clarified in that time it will remain fuzzy to you and anyone else who views it forever. After the first hour, I'll make an announcement, after which you'll be able to trade traits and, therefore, change your domains, should you desire.

As you trade traits, you'll find yourself becoming a different person than you once were. Think of who you are now, once were, and who you want to be, and trade wisely, as the future of these lands is in your hands.

At the end of the ball, if you share at least two traits with someone, you will develop an entanglement when you leave the palace behind, a close friendship or romantic partnership or some other strong emotional connection. If you have at least two opposing traits with someone, you will begin the next ten years as enemies. At any time you can make up to three political alliance with another monarch so long as they don't have any opposing traits with you. But that alliance will shatter if one of you gains an opposing trait. Alliances in place at the end of the ball may endure the next ten years, but perhaps not. The more alliances you have and the fewer enemies, the less likely your domains will suffer in the next decade. If two or more monarchs end the ball with the same domain, you will be co-rulers over that domain.

The ball ends at midnight, three hours after it began. I will warn you when 15 minutes remain, at which point you can begin to leave through the Gate of Memories, which will wash away everything but your traits, which will determine your future entanglements and enemies. You will also remain connected by alliance to anyone you have maintained an alliance with.

Before I let you go, there is one last thing I must tell you. Just as you can gain new domains by trading your traits, it is also possible to give up all your traits to me, should I accept them, in order to take my place as Monarch of Memories. Tonight I will be watching you and perusing your memories, so keep this in mind if you feel the urge to take on my burden.

Now, disperse and explore, and may the cycle continue!

Roleplay Guidelines

In general, players should approach this game with a “yes, and” attitude, where in general content introduced into the game should be accepted as part of the game’s world unless it contradicts a memory document, there is a safety issue or someone is trying to establish something about your character or your character’s domain that you’re not happy with. If someone does the latter, a player might say something along the lines of, “You must be mistaken. Actually...” In other words, you can make a “no, but” statement. For the most part, characters should build off of each other to flesh out the game world.

Safety

Players and facilitators of this game should consider the emotional safety of everyone involved in this game, especially since there are a variety of different relationships, both close and adversarial, portrayed in this game, and because the content is so open-ended. I recommend checking out the TTRPG Safety Toolkit by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk here: <http://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit>

Gather.town Safety

Gather.town and some other similar platforms make it difficult to verbally convey things to everyone in the space, including safety issues. However, Gather.town has a text chat feature that allows people to message specific people, people in one’s vicinity, and all people in a space. This can be useful to notify people if there is a safety issue or game pause, if someone wants to let people know that some content is being removed from the game, or to privately message another player or GM out of character.

Ludography

There are quite a few games I’ve played or written that have inspired aspects of this game, including: The Pantheon Protocol, The Hand You’re Dealt, The Confluence, Prisoners of Memory, Space Squids, various LARPs by Alison Joy

Other Inspirations: The Giver

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the readers and others who offered feedback and support: Aer, Moss, Acata, Evie

This version of the game is not playtested at the time of publication.