

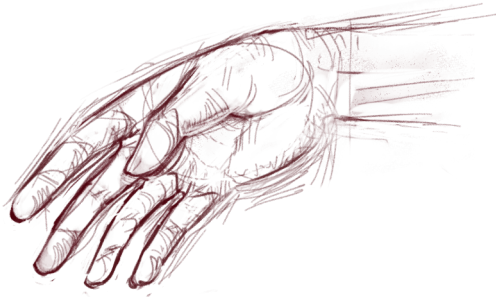
ANAMNESIS



1

2

3



Credits:

Design/Writing: Samantha Leigh

Editing: Marx Shepherd

Layout: Thomas Manuel

Art: Victor Winter

Samantha Leigh's other games can be found
at blinkingbirchgames.itch.io

1. The font used for the title is Quicksand. The layout artist, Thomas Manuel, chose the fonts. He also had the idea of the title fading down the cover, which symbolizes the fading memories in the game.

2. The figure on the cover is intentionally androgynous with facial features obscured to represent a loss of identity.

3. The artist, Victor Winter, used himself as the model for the cover art.

4. I could not have asked for a better team. Anamnesis would not be anywhere near as good if not for these awesome people.

5. Anamnesis was a lot of firsts for me: my first time working with collaborators, my first time crowdfunding a game, my first time bringing a game to print. It's been a huge learning experience and I'm truly proud of the result.

Anamnesis ⁽ⁿ⁾ 6

\ ,a- ,nam- 'nē-səs \

1. a remembrance of the past.
2. *Platonism*. the recollection of innate knowledge from a previous existence.

6. I hadn't heard the word Anamnesis until I finished writing the beta version of the game. I was trying to come up with a title when my friend and fellow game designer Ty Pitre suggested the word. I looked up the definition and couldn't stop thinking about it all day. There are many different definitions of anamnesis - the most relevant ones are listed here, but these aren't the only ones. Anamnesis can also refer to a patient's medical history. It has theological relevance, too - from my understanding, in Christian faith it refers to a prayer of remembrance for God's deeds.

WHAT IS ANAMNESIS?

7

Anamnesis is a solo journaling game about self-discovery, reflection, and identity.

You play as an individual who has woken up with memory loss. You do not remember who you are, where you are, or what you care about.

As you draw tarot cards, you fill the blank spaces of your past, and learn more about your present.

To play, you need a deck of tarot cards and a way to record your thoughts (pen & paper, audio recording, etc.).

8

7. The layout of Anamnesis is simple, but elegant. Thomas and I considered giving the pages more texture to look book-like, but we realized that may suggest an older time period and we wanted to keep the game as setting-neutral as possible.

8. I didn't know much about tarot when I started writing Anamnesis. I owned one deck (the Rider-Waite, illustrated by Pamela Colman Smith), but I had only done a couple readings. Just before designing this game, my friend (who's much more knowledgeable about tarot) did a reading for me. It was an eye-opening experience, and they taught me that tarot isn't necessarily about predicting the future, but rather working through thoughts, feelings, and decisions. I ultimately decided to use tarot cards for Anamnesis because of how evocative the cards can be - they're a fantastic storytelling tool. Tarot also matched the general mood I was trying to achieve with the game - flipping over large, weighty cards feels suspenseful and significant.

SAFETY 9

While the prompts in Anamnesis are not dark or frightening, its themes may lead you to journal about serious topics. If the content of your journaling ever becomes too heavy or disturbing, prioritize your mental health and step back from the game. You can always revisit the game later or make changes to the narrative.

If you ever draw a card that makes you uncomfortable, or that you do not want to journal about for any reason, discard it and draw a different card.

9. Safety is incredibly important in TTRPGs. It's good practice to set boundaries before playing a game together - you never know which topics are uncomfortable for other players around the table. Safety in solo games is just as important - while you have more control over which topics you explore, you might still find yourself veering into heavy territory. Mental health is always more important than the rules of a game. I wanted to make it clear that prompts can be skipped, cards can be redrawn, and revisions to your story can be made at any time.

Separate the tarot cards into five decks: The 22 Major Arcana, The Pentacles, The Swords, The Cups, & The Wands.

10

Shuffle each deck. Set aside the four Minor Arcana decks.

Draw one card from the Major Arcana deck.

This card is your **Shadow** and represents who you were in your past. Keep your Shadow face-up next to you. Use this card as a guide for uncovering your past.

11

There are five Acts. Each Act uses a different deck.

1. At the beginning of an Act, draw three cards from its corresponding deck.
2. Place the three cards face-down in front of you.
3. Flip over the first card. Read the prompt associated with the card.
4. Make a journal entry. Remember your Shadow.
5. Flip over the next card. Continue until you have made journal entries for all three cards; then, move onto the next Act.

10. The only materials needed for Anamnesis are tarot cards because I wanted to require as few tools as possible. I had considered adding dice so players could roll to determine the genre and setting, but ultimately decided to leave that up to the player.

11. The idea of the Shadow came to me much later in the game's development. You could certainly play without it, but I think it adds an extra dimension to the game and can provide players more guidance in the beginning. I also love how the Shadow sits beside you for the duration of the game, a looming reminder of your past. Some players have told me they end up forgetting about their Shadow by the end of the game - I actually love that! It feels thematically appropriate as you come into your own identity as the game progresses.

After you read a prompt, draw from the Major Arcana deck. Use this card to answer the questions in the prompt. For example, a prompt might be the following:

*You talked to a friend yesterday. Who was this friend?
What was your conversation about?*

For this prompt, the **Major Arcana** you draw represents the friend you spoke with, and/or the topic of conversation.

At the end of each Act, shuffle the Major Arcana cards back into the deck.

How you interpret the Major Arcana cards is up to you. You could use the traditional meaning of the cards as found in tarot guides, or you could find inspiration from the name or design of the card. **There is no wrong way to interpret the cards.**

Alternate methods of play:

Flip over all three cards at once. Make a single journal entry for the entire Act.

Draw three Major Arcana at the beginning of the Act. Choose which one goes with which prompt.

12. It was important to me that anyone with a tarot deck could play Anamnesis, regardless of how much they know about tarot. I wanted to make that as clear as possible, which is why it's mentioned in both the rules and examples of play.

12

EXAMPLE OF PLAY #1 13

Robyn starts playing Act I, which is associated with Pentacles. They draw three cards from the Deck of Pentacles and lay the cards face-down in front of them. They flip over the first card, which is the Ace of Pentacles. The prompt for this card is:

“You take a moment to familiarize yourself with your surroundings. Where are you?”

Robyn draws a card from the Major Arcana deck. They draw The Moon. Robyn decides they want to use the traditional meanings of tarot cards, so they consult a tarot guide which says The Moon can symbolize danger and darkness, among other things.

Robyn wants their game to take place in a fantasy setting. With this information, Robyn writes the following journal entry:

I awaken with a splitting headache, laying face up on a cobblestone road. The sky above is pitch-black and a memory prods at the edges of my mind – a memory of when the sun winked out during my childhood, causing panic in the streets. Before I can dig up the details of the memory, a dark shape rears above me. I roll to the side, narrowly avoiding the hoof that clops down against stone. The hoof belongs to a gurrut, a tamed beast of red shaggy fur and many eyes that gleam in the dark. The carriage driver shakes his fist as I stumble down the nearest alleyway.

13. The examples of play were one of the last parts written. They weren't in the beta version of the game, but Marx and I decided they'd be helpful for players, especially those not as familiar with tarot or journaling games. I distinctly remember writing them during a family car trip to my brother's college graduation (a year late due to the pandemic). Ironically, at the time of writing these I had never played Anamnesis, so this was the first time I did prompted writing from the game. (In fact, I still haven't played this game myself, nor any of the other solo games I've written. Not sure why - maybe the concern that I'll be judging my work as I play.)

EXAMPLE OF PLAY #2

Yolanda starts playing Act II, which is associated with Swords. She flips over one of the cards in front of her: the Two of Swords. She reads the prompt:

“Your eyes are drawn to a statue. What is this statue of? Which emotions does it stir in you?”

She next draws a card from the Major Arcana deck: The Empress. Yolanda prefers to interpret the cards her own way rather than use the traditional tarot meanings. The face of the card shows a woman in a fine dress wearing a crown, leaning against a large pillow.

Yolanda’s game has involved political intrigue, so she decides to interpret the card literally. She writes the following journal entry:

I walk out of the courthouse and begin squeezing my way through the crowded street. My feet stop instinctively before I can process what’s in front of me. In the center of the square is a statue, no fewer than 10 feet tall, depicting a woman with luscious, flowing hair. She wears a crown on her head and holds a jeweled scepter. I don’t need to read the plaque to remember who she is: Queen Ophelia. She recently came into power after her father, the King, passed away. Something inside me burns as I look over the statue, and I recognize the feeling as deep respect and affection... but why?

14. I’m a sucker for the name Ophelia.

14

15. This is the very last part that was written. My editor, Marx Shepherd, never actually saw this (sorry Marx) because it was added so last-minute. Why? Because Anamnesis was 22 pages, and I needed it to be 24 for print. Also, I needed a good place to include Victor's awesome card art. Thus, this 2-page spread was born. A couple people have told me it's their favorite spread in the game, so I'm glad I included it!

when you are ready

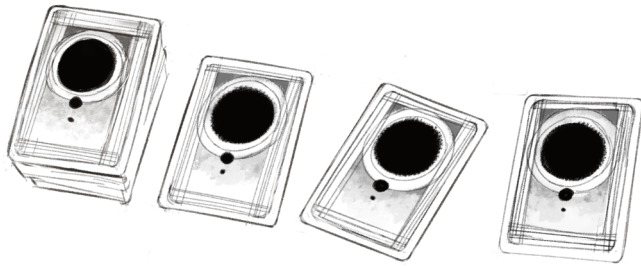
take a deep breath

15

and wake up

16. I love this piece. It's simple, but really gets the tone across. Victor did an incredible job matching the mood I was going for with his art. He also came up with the design on the back of the cards! I told them to make whatever design they wanted and I think it turned out fantastic.

16



ACT 1: PENTACLES 18

You wake up in an unfamiliar place, seemingly within a town or city. You cannot remember who you are or why you are here. All you know for certain is that you are not in your home.

Draw three cards from the Deck of Pentacles.

19

- A You take a moment to familiarize yourself with your surroundings. Where are you?
- 2 You look down at the clothes on your body. What are you wearing? How do you feel about the way you look?
- 3 You open your mouth and hear yourself speak. What is your voice like?
- 4 When you look over your body, you notice a tattoo on your skin. What is this tattoo? Where is it located?
- 5 You take a deep breath and smell something in the air. What is this scent? Does it trigger any memories?
- 6 There is someone at your side. Who is this person? What do they say to you?
- 7 There is a word on the tip of your tongue. Which word is this?
- 8 Your hand closes around a memento in your pocket. What is this memento? How does it make you feel?

17. When I talked to Thomas about the layout for the Acts, I referenced *The Wretched* by Chris Bissette. I love the spreads for each suit in that game, and we went with a similar design for Anamnesis. I'm delighted by how it turned out! The long capital letters at the beginning of each Act really set the tone.

18. Giving the Acts the same name of the suits was originally just a stand-in until I thought of better names. But they grew on me!

19. This introductory text was hard to write! It sets the very first scene of the game and sneakily contains vital information for future Acts. Act 2 is about walking around a town, and Act 3 is about exploring your home. Thus, I specify in Act 1 that you're "within a town or city" and that "you are not in your home." This (hopefully) deters players away from waking up in the middle of nowhere, like on a raft in the ocean (which would contradict with Act 2) and from starting in their home (which would contradict with Act 3).



20

- 9 You realize you have an intense craving for something. What are you craving?
- 10 When you focus, you can grasp the edges of a hazy memory from just before you fell unconscious. What do you remember?
- P Despite your memory loss, someone's face sticks clearly in your mind. Who is this person? Which feelings does their face evoke?
- Kt You notice a scar on your body. Where is this scar? Do you remember how you got it?
- Q You feel pain. Where is the pain coming from? What is it caused by?
- K You are wearing a piece of jewelry. What does the jewelry look like? Do you remember why you are wearing it?

Shuffle the three Major Arcana back into the deck.

21

20. The fog around the edges of the suits is meant to capture the feeling of a hazy memory. Again, Victor did a fantastic job here.

21. There was originally a prompt here about flipping through your wallet, but Marx pointed out that wallets denote a certain time period. I never would have thought about that! Marx's editing was invaluable.

22

22. When brainstorming the prompts for this Act, I laid down for a while, closed my eyes, and focused on my body and surroundings. It helped...some. Got a couple prompts that way, but this was definitely one of the most difficult sections to write!

23

23. It was important to me that none of these prompts force a character to have a disability or experience dysphoria. There are certainly prompts that provide easy access for exploring these topics (such as 2 and Q), but none of them require it.

ACT 2: SWORDS

After getting your bearings, you walk around town. You know this town. You know it well, but you cannot remember it.

Draw three cards from the Deck of Swords.

24

- A You take in the sights, sounds, and smells of the town around you. How does the town make you feel? Does it feel like home?
- 2 Your eyes are drawn to a statue. What is this statue of? Which emotions does it stir in you?
- 3 In front of you walks a couple. They are holding hands and smiling. How does seeing this couple make you feel? Does it remind you of anyone?
- 4 An abandoned building stirs up memories. What used to be here? Why did it matter?
- 5 Someone on the street recognizes you. How do they react when they see you?
- 6 People are looking at you and whispering. What are they saying?
- 7 You find yourself walking through a market. Which stall are you drawn to?

24. When I was working on Act 2, I went downtown on a nice day and walked around for a while. About half of these prompts came to me during this walk. I currently live in rural New Hampshire - sometimes I wonder if I would have written different prompts if I lived in a big city.



- 8 You pass a place of worship. What is this place? How do you feel when you look upon it?
- 9 Someone is having an argument in the street. Does this remind you of an argument you've had?
- 10 You find yourself wandering through a graveyard. What do you find there?
- P As you walk through a park, you realize you've been here before. What happened here?
- Kt Someone asks for directions and you're able to correctly point the way. Where was this person trying to go? Why do you know the route so well?
- Q You pause at a building and realize you used to work here. What was your job? Do you still work here?
- K You see a child swinging from their parents' arms. How does this sight make you feel?

Shuffle the three Major Arcana back into the deck.

25

25. There were a number of extra prompts for this Act that didn't make the cut. One involved seeing a manhole cover on the ground and realizing you've been down there before - this one felt too setting-specific. Another was "Noticing your hunger, you are drawn towards a place to eat. Upon arrival, you learn you're a regular here. The owner recognizes you. What does the owner tell you about yourself?" This prompt actually made it into the beta version of the game, but Marx pointed out that it was weaker than the others. Instead of the character recalling something or having a moment of self-discovery, they're simply told about themselves. As much as I liked this prompt at the time, I definitely agreed and decided to change it to prompt 7. Looking back, I'm glad I did! I think the new prompt is a much better fit for the game.

ACT 3: CUPS

You manage to find your home. The façade is unfamiliar. You fish the key out of your pocket and open the door.

Draw three cards from the Deck of Cups.

26

- A You stroll around your home, a place you do not remember. Which emotions bubble to the surface?
- 2 There are signs that someone else stays here (or at least used to stay here). Who is (or was) this person?
- 3 You look inside your wastebin. What do you find?
- 4 A book on your shelf catches your eye. Which book is this?
- 5 You see notes to yourself lying about. What is written on them?
- 6 You find an item that was gifted to you. What is the item? Who gave it to you?
- 7 The walls are adorned. What is hanging from the walls of your home?
- 8 Something has been slipped under your door. What is it?

27

28

26. I walked a lot of laps around my apartment while brainstorming prompts for Act 3.

27. The first draft of this prompt said "sticky notes" - I use way too many sticky notes.

28. This prompt was originally about receiving mail, but Marx mentioned this could also denote a certain time period or setting. They helped edit it to make it more setting-neutral and I like this version much better.



- 9 You stumble upon a collection. What did you collect?
- 10 You open a drawer to find a journal. What does the final page say?
- P There is a dent in one of your walls. What happened here?
- Kt You find a box that seemed intentionally hidden. Where did you find it? What did you store here?
- Q You find a tucked-away sketchbook and flip through its pages. What does the cover look like? What is inside?
- K An area of your home brings a strong memory to the surface. Which memory is this?

Shuffle the three Major Arcana back into the deck.

29

29. I thought a lot about whether to keep this prompt. I was concerned it would provide too much information. However, at this point the character is near the end of uncovering their past, so taking big swings might be a good thing. Originally, the prompt didn't specify the last page of the journal, but I think adding this detail gives more direction and weight.

30. The first draft of this Act had a prompt about finding a computer and looking through its files. After the game was playtested, I decided to cut all prompts about modern-day tech so players could tell a story about any time period. There was also a prompt in Act 1 about finding a cell phone in your pocket, and one in Act 2 about getting a call on your cell - both of these were cut as well.

30

ACT 4: WANDS 31

You have learned much about yourself. Take some time to reflect.

Draw three cards from the Deck of Wands.

- A You decide to change your appearance. What do you change? Why did you make this decision?
- 2 You catch yourself staring into space. What were you thinking about?
- 3 There is somewhere in town that beckons you. Which place is this? Do you travel there?
- 4 You listen to some music. What are you listening to? How does it make you feel?
- 5 You seek out conversation with someone. Who do you reach out to? What do you want to discuss?
- 6 Needing a distraction, you seek out some art. What type of art? Why are you drawn to it?
- 7 You destroy one of your belongings. What do you destroy? Why?
- 8 Exhausted, you lay down to sleep. What do you dream about?

31. This was the hardest Act to write. I wanted to focus on different ways to reflect, process, cope, and recover. The purpose of this Act is for your character to think deeply about the information they've learned, figure out how they feel about their past, and begin to move forward. What about them has changed, and what has remained the same?

32. This prompt was particularly difficult to word correctly, but was very important to me. I wanted to make sure "art" could be interpreted in a variety of ways - drawings, theater, music, writing. One player even used this prompt to have their character visit a garden she grew.



9 You feel as though something is missing. What do you suspect is causing this feeling?

10 You realize you are crying. Why? **33**

P You decide to seek company. How do you go about this? **34**

Kt There is something you are desperate to learn. Which question haunts you? How do you seek this information?

Q You sit down to write a letter that you will never send. Who is this letter for? What does it say?

K A memory comes back that you would rather forget. Which memory is this? Why does it bother you?

Shuffle the three Major Arcana back into the deck.

33. This is my favorite prompt in the entire game.

34. For a long time, this prompt was "You write a poem. What is this poem about?" I finally decided to change it before bringing Anamnesis to print - as much as I love poetry, not every player is going to share that interest, and not every character is going to be the poetry-writing type.

ACT 5

Your past may shape your experiences, your thoughts, your desires, but it does not define you. You are in control of your own path. The road ahead may be built from the stones that you've gathered, but these fragments of your past do not dictate where it leads. It is time to move forward.

Return your Shadow to the Major Arcana deck.

35

35. This text originally just said "It is time to move forward." However, Marx pointed out that, for a finale, it might be too brief. I also thought it was too similar to the introduction to Act 4. We worked together on creating this new text, which I think is a lot stronger than the original.

36. Returning your Shadow at the end was important to me. Not only is it symbolic for moving forward, but it also allows the player to choose this card to represent their present self if they feel their character has not changed from their past self.

36

Choose one of the Major
Arcana to represent your
present self.

Do not draw from the deck. Choose freely among
the cards. You are in charge of your own identity.

37

Who are you? What do you do next?

37. These 3 sentences didn't exist in the previous version. I threw them in before bringing the game to print because I learned there was some confusion about this Act. After drawing cards for the entire game, switching to *choosing* a card needed some extra instruction. In my opinion, this is the most important part of the entire game and solidifies its themes. Until now, the player draws cards randomly, leaving a lot up to fate. This is the first time the game allows you to choose a card, letting your character take charge of their future. It represents a deeper understanding of self and an opportunity for your character to carve their own identity.

38. The suits in this picture are all upside-down. This is for two reasons: 1) it's a small nod to tarot, as "reversed" cards play a large role in tarot readings, and 2) it represents the end of the game, like closing the back cover of a book.



38

Extra fun fact - every time I write the word anamnesis, I still double-check the spelling. Every. Single. Time.

Inspirations

The Wretched by Chris Bissette

The Portal at Hill House by Travis Hill and Lindi Farris-Hill.

Acknowledgements

Emily Alexander and Parker Haviza for playtesting the game, providing thoughtful feedback, and listening to me ramble.

Ty Pitre for coming up with the title of the game and teaching me a new word.

Victor Winter for brainstorming a couple excellent prompts (Four of Pentacles, Queen of Cups).

The indie TTRPG community for being welcoming, encouraging, and inspiring.

Anamnesis is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0)

This game uses the typeface Dicier, by Speak the Sky, licensed under CC BY 4.0

Anamnesis is a solo journaling game about self-discovery, reflection, and identity.

Play as an individual who has woken up with memory loss. You do not remember who you are, where you are, or what you care about.

Draw tarot cards to fill the blank spaces of your past and learn more about your present.

