



THE REAPER'S ALMANAC

BY MITCH SCHIWAL

The Reaper's Almanac

By Mitch Schiwal

Inspired by:

What Remains of Edith Finch by Giant Sparrow

Reaper Man by Terry Pratchett

Cover Art:

"Watercolor Skull with Flowers" by lembrik.

This cover has been designed using resources from Freepik.com

“What can the harvest hope for,
if not for the care of the Reaper Man?”

Terry Pratchett, *Reaper Man*

The *Reaper's Almanac* is an epistolary role-playing game. Which is to say a game where you act out a character by writing letters to other players. Think of it as pen pals with a dash of make-believe. Together, you will collaboratively tell a story from the point of view of your characters.

In this game, you and your fellows will be playing as Reapers. Your task is to shepherd souls upon death. But just as important is remembering the lives of those you take. A soul survives so long as it is remembered. So more than the reaping, the most sacred task is the remembrance through writing and sharing letters. A Reaper is not necessarily eternal and by sharing a remembrance with your fellows you will ensure their story and soul carries on.

As a Reaper you have a charge, this could be a building, a particular family line, a weapon, or some other thing you have been assigned to record. Whenever a death involves your charge, you are responsible for the reaping and remembrance. This is an important decision for your character as much of the setting and tone of your letters can be determined by your charge.

Introduction

Much of the character of your reaper will be in how you write your letters. What you say is important, but just as important to your character will be how you say it and what you choose not to say. Your tone, vocabulary, and emotion given is key to presenting yourself as you write.

You are roleplaying as a chronicler.

Your primary goal is the remembrance, telling a compelling story about the recently departed so that it will stick with your fellows. A good story is worth remembering and will help the souls survive on. Your Reaper's character will come through in what you choose to focus on, how you tell the story, and what you draw from it.

Your Reaper will grow and change alongside their charge, embrace this progression even when it's not where you expected the story to lead.

Death, like life, leads to the unexpected.

Overview

You and your fellow will take turns sending letters to each other. Each letter will focus on a recently departed person you've reaped. Your letter is how they will be remembered, so write accordingly. Over the arc of the game you are also trying to show growth for your reaper through their words.

Safety

The Reaper's Almanac is a game to enter with caution. This is a game about celebrating life after death has come. Dying and surrounding topics are directly connected to playing this game. That being said that does not excuse unpleasantness or mean this game can't be played safely and comfortably.

However, with letter writing games it can be hard to arrest topics as they come up. You can't simply tap the X-Card or quickly request that a subject is changed after someone brings it up in a letter. The static nature of a letter combined with the lengthy time lag of epistolary games necessitates discussing safety before the game starts.

Use any tools you are familiar with or comfortable with to ensure you can play this game safely and responsibly. In my own games, I utilize lines and veils.

A line is a hard limit, a veto put in place before the topic ever reaches the game. A line is drawn when a topic is particularly triggering or unpleasant where interacting with it in fiction would ruin your enjoyment of the game. If someone draws a line, you do not cross it.

A veil is a softer limit. It is saying that while these topics or themes may exist in the game, as both directors and audience we do not wish to see them on screen. When a veiled topic is broached, the scene will fade to black or cutaway.

Despite the game's stories focus on death, you are still quite capable of avoiding unpleasant topics. Subjects like gore, meat, suffering, or animal death are examples of some topics that some may find unpleasant and can have a line drawn without affecting your game in any way. If someone is uncomfortable and wants to draw a veil on death, you can avoid any discussion of the actual event in your letter. It can even be intriguing to portray a reaper who leaves death as a mystery in their letters.

Finally, if you and your fellows can't find common ground or someone refuses to honor a line or veil you have set up: do not play this game with those people.

This is a game is for discussing topics that can be difficult and is never to be used as an excuse to harm or upset others.

Set-Up

After ensuring that the game will be played safely and respectfully, it's time to set up. It is possible to play this game with no setup, Reapers need not be constrained by time or dimension if you don't want them to be. One player could be recording their charge of a Victorian-era manor while the other regales with stories of a deadly asteroid and the worlds that fall in its path. However, many players may not enjoy such anachronistic energy in the game.

So it's worth having a conversation to create some synergy. You can place yourself in the same era or setting. You can even be focused on the same event in which death is common, such as a war. By having similarities like these present, it allows for a sense of collaboration and even brainstorming. As one player may bring in an element or theme that another player will utilize later.

Leave blank spaces to be filled in by your letters. You shouldn't have a destination in mind with this conversation and players should be allowed to explore freely. But having an agreed starting point for all parties can make things easier.

Once you are ready it is time to start down the Path

The Path

The Path is a collection of prompts that give the game its structure and will guide you along the game. Starting out at Prompt 0 you will be given an event or situation to address in your letter. The Path will guide you through the 5 letters that make up the game. There are questions at the end of each prompt. After you've received a letter from your fellow. Your answer will lead you to the next prompt.

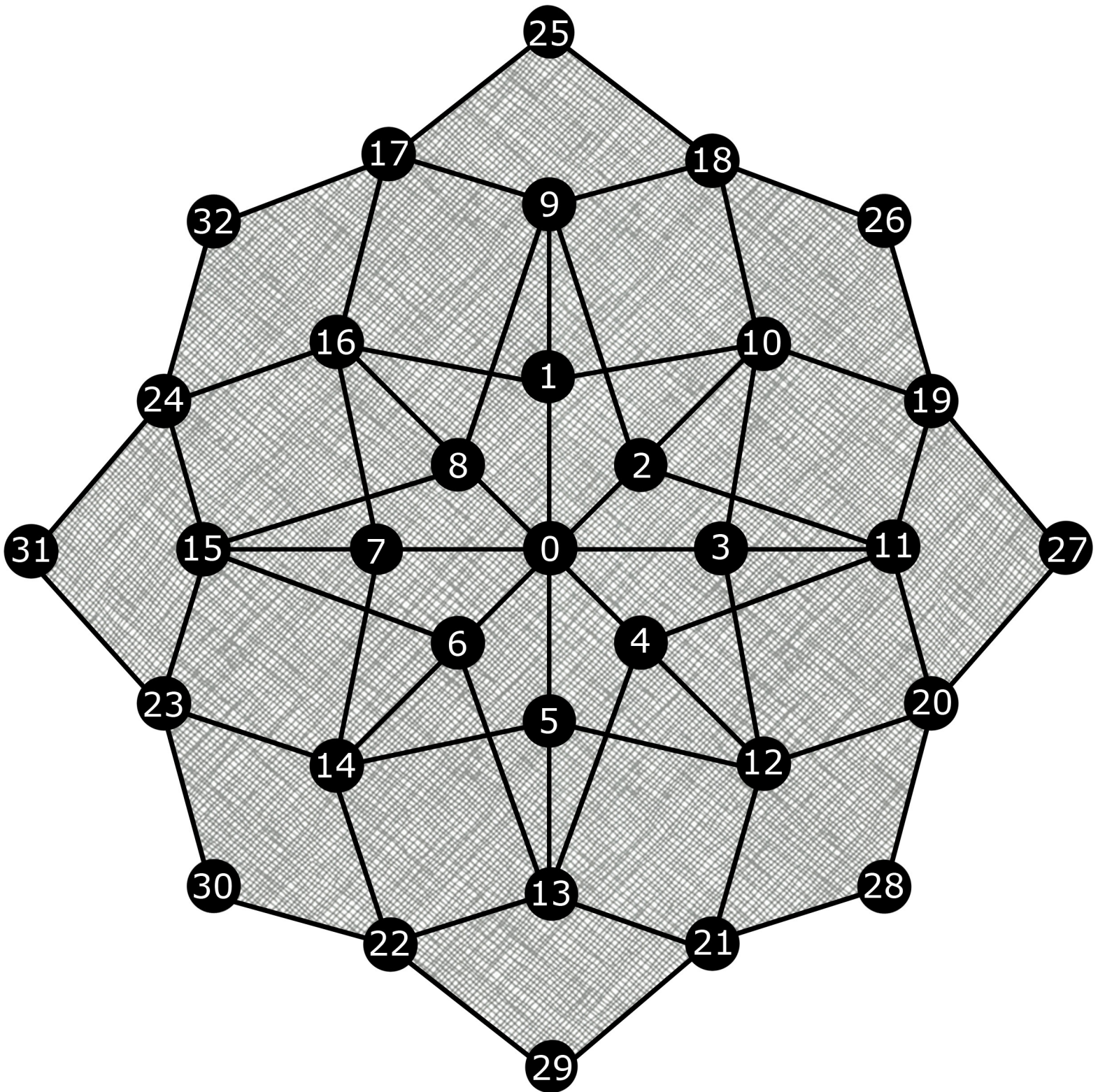
Not every prompt will detail the departed, instead giving ideas for the situation or a dilemma for your Reaper. In these instances, it will be up to the player to decide the circumstances of the departure. Unless the prompt states otherwise, always assume someone has departed and caused a letter to be written.

Straying from the Path

The purpose of this mechanic is to provide some outside setup to get you started in your writing, but that doesn't mean it is necessary. While it is recommended you play your first game following the path, you can stray from it if you like. You may be inspired to ignore a prompt because you have an idea for where things go that you find more interesting. Or once you've written your 5 letters, you and your fellow may wish to continue and conclude the game later.

If a prompt is too dark or upsetting and writing about it would ruin your enjoyment of the game, ignore it. And, of course, if the players want to ignore the path entirely and free to use the Reaper framework to tell their own stories.

The Path



Begin with Prompt 0 and continue along the path as directed.

Prompt 0

This first prompt is blank and waiting for you to fill it. Rather than provide a scenario you have 3 goals for your letter.

*Detail Your Charge: What do you observe here? This, most likely, is not the first time you'll have spoken of your charge to them. So it won't be described as something new. Instead, try and paint it through the eyes of the recently departed. How did they interact with your charge and what did it mean to them?

*Recount the Departed: The goal of every letter is to make the departed feel real and make them matter to your fellow. Engage them with your story and be sure to focus on their life more than their death.

*Elicit Emotion: Make your fellow feel something with this story. Whether or not they interpret it as you wanted them to doesn't matter as long as it evokes something.

Next Step

If your fellow's letter made you feel happy or content; proceed to [Prompt 1](#)

If your fellow's letter made you feel admiration or trust; proceed to [Prompt 2](#)

If your fellow's letter made you feel fear or apprehension; proceed to [Prompt 3](#)

If your fellow's letter made you feel surprised or distraction; proceed to [Prompt 4](#)

If your fellow's letter made you feel thoughtful or sad; proceed to [Prompt 5](#)

If your fellow's letter made you feel boredom or disgust; proceed to [Prompt 6](#)

If your fellow's letter made you feel annoyance or anger; proceed to [Prompt 7](#)

If your fellow's letter made you feel interested or anticipation; proceed to [Prompt 8](#)

Prompt 1

Someone besides the departed has caught your attention. A rose growing in an unexpected place. Don't neglect the departed's story but also express your interest. What about them caught your eye and how did they react to the departed's passing?

Next Step

If you wish to get to know your charges better; proceed to [Prompt 9](#)

If you wish to retain a proper, professional distance; proceed to [Prompt 10](#)

If you simply let things take their course; proceed to [Prompt 16](#)

Prompt 2

Those under your charge have grown familiar to the point where they feel almost like family. What about it do you take pride in? How did the departed exemplify those values?

Next Step

If you leave things as they are; proceed to [Prompt 9](#)

If you become more involved in your charges; proceed to [Prompt 10](#)

If you take a step back to keep yourself from getting attached; proceed to [Prompt 11](#)

Prompt 3

Your charge's time is limited after the death of the departed. Soon there will be nothing left to harvest. What has doomed your charge? How do you feel about the impending end?

Next Step

If you accept this as natural and proper; proceed to [Prompt 10](#)

If you are excited about the prospect of a new charge; proceed to [Prompt 11](#)

If you wish you could stay on with your charge; proceed to [Prompt 12](#)

Prompt 4

You came to collect the departed and instead found them healthy. They have somehow cheated death. How have they done so? Who did you reap instead, and how are they connected?

Next Step

If you reap someone unrelated to your charge; proceed to [Prompt 11](#)

If you reap someone else under your charge; proceed to [Prompt 12](#)

If you punish those who cheated death by reaping someone dear; proceed to [Prompt 13](#)

Prompt 5

Tragedy has struck your charge. More than one death comes all at once. What happened, and how does it threaten even more death in the future?

Next Step

If you take steps to protect those under your charge; proceed to [Prompt 12](#)

If you refuse to become involved in mortal affairs; proceed to [Prompt 13](#)

If you are curious to see how bad things can get; proceed to [Prompt 14](#)

Prompt 6

Everything stays the same. Someone died as others have before? Why have you grown dissatisfied with your charge? What do you yearn for?

Next Step

If you resent the charge you've been given; proceed to [Prompt 13](#)

If you wish for excitement; proceed to [Prompt 14](#)

If you want something unexpected; proceed to [Prompt 15](#)

Prompt 7

Those under your charge have gained your disapproval. What are they doing and how is it hurting others? Why do you care?

Next Step

If you believe they are causing harm through hatred; proceed to [Prompt 14](#)

If you believe they are causing harm through ignorance; proceed to [Prompt 15](#)

If you believe they are causing harm through madness; proceed to [Prompt 16](#)

Prompt 8

You have been assigned a new charge. How do you feel about this change and what do you miss about your previous charge?

Next Step

If you are resentful of this change; proceed to [Prompt 15](#)

If you are excited about this change; proceed to [Prompt 16](#)

If you feel melancholy over this change; proceed to [Prompt 9](#)

Prompt 9

What is it that makes the future of your charge feel so bright? How does the community come to celebrate the departed?

Next Step

If you continue as you have; proceed to Prompt 17

If you decide to take part in the celebration; proceed to Prompt 18



Prompt 10

An elder or respected leader under your charge has departed. Melancholy sweeps through the community. How do people grieve? How do you think things will change?

Next Step

If you believe things will change for the better; proceed to Prompt 18

If you brace yourself for the worst; proceed to Prompt 19

Prompt 11

An outsider came and died while under your charge. How were they different than those you know? How did they make you think of the world outside your charge?

Next Step

If you were repulsed by their strangeness; proceed to [Prompt 19](#)

If you were intrigued by their differences; proceed to [Prompt 20](#)



Prompt 12

There is no departed. No death. An unnatural stillness has descended onto your charge and you are unsure how to proceed at the moment. What is causing this stillness? And how do you feel about your current uselessness?

Next Step

If you find comfort in your temporary reprieve; proceed to [Prompt 20](#)

If you find yourself wishing for the familiarity of death; proceed to [Prompt 21](#)

Prompt 13

Tragedy strikes and a situation worsens. Write more than one letter as deaths pile up while under your charge.

Next Step

If you keep your distance from the calamity; proceed to [Prompt 21](#)

If you approach and see if you can assist; proceed to [Prompt 22](#)



Prompt 14

Things descend into chaos. A body was found and was beyond recognition. You send the departed's soul on but do not know who they were. How do you feel about the situation? What suspicions do you have about their identity and cause of death?

Next Step

If you feel you did the best you could; proceed to [Prompt 22](#)

If you are left frustrated by the situation; proceed to [Prompt 23](#)

Prompt 15

An unfair death. Someone departed in another's place. An innocent lost what life they had ahead of them. How do you feel about this and how do you manage?

Next Step

If you accept that life is unfair; proceed to Prompt 23

If you believe they deserved more; proceed to Prompt 24

Prompt 16

You've seen death your whole existence but this is something new. A cause of death you haven't seen before. Do you expect to see more death like this in the future?

Next Step

If you believe this is the start of something sinister; proceed to Prompt 24

If you believe this to be a singular occurrence; proceed to Prompt 17

Prompt 17

You found yourself drawn into those under your charge. One was of particular interest and you found yourself conversing with them. You are feeling emotional. What are these emotions? How do you proceed?

Next Step

If you interfered by reaping someone you shouldn't have; proceed to [Prompt 25](#)

If your interference did not involve death; proceed to [Prompt 32](#)

Prompt 18

You found yourself drawn into those under your charge. One was of particular interest and you found yourself conversing with them. You are feeling emotional. What are these emotions? How do you proceed?

Next Step

If you give in and pursue emotion; proceed to [Prompt 25](#)

If you push them away; proceed to [Prompt 26](#)

Prompt 19

There are more dead than you can count. What cataclysm has descended on your charge? How do you proceed? Do you give up?

Next Step

If you continue in your task; proceed to Prompt 26

If you give up; proceed to Prompt 27

Prompt 20

Rather than departing, someone is struggling to live. Others would have already passed on, but they remain. How do you feel, and what do you hope for? Do you take them anyway?

Next Step

If you allow them to fight on; proceed to Prompt 27

If you perform the reaping despite as ordered; proceed to Prompt 28

Prompt 21

The departed took their own life. Who? Why do you think they did it?
How do you feel about what they did?

Next Step

If you understand why they killed themselves; proceed to Prompt 28

If you cannot comprehend such action; proceed to Prompt 29



Prompt 22

Someone in your charge is in pain and will continue to be for the rest of their life. Do you reap them early to ease their suffering? And why do you make that choice?

Next Step

If you prolong suffering by waiting for their death; proceed to Prompt 29

If you grant mercy by taking them early; proceed to Prompt 30

Prompt 23

With this latest departed, you are left with only a single person left under your charge. Why do you resent them? If you were to reap them early what future could you avoid?

Next Step

If you reap this hateful person before their time; proceed to Prompt 30

If you let them live their life; proceed to Prompt 31

Prompt 24

Someone in your charge is causing harm to others. You can help save lives if you took this one early. Why do you choose what you do?

Next Step

If you do not reap them early; proceed to Prompt 31

If you kill them now; proceed to Prompt 32

Prompt 25

You have interfered with your charge and broken the rules. You have been ordered to reap yourself. Do you run or obey? Either way, your death may be soon and this is your last chance to be remembered by your fellow.

Prompt 26

You bury the last person under your charge. How did you feel about them? How do you feel about moving on to something new? What do you hope for?

Prompt 27

You have done the unthinkable and abandoned your charge. You just couldn't do it anymore. What pushed you over the edge? What will you do now?

Prompt 28

The deaths have been constant for some time now. A wheel of death that you can feel pressing down on you. The cycle has broken many before you. How do you handle it? How long will you last?

Prompt 29

The departed is the last of those under your charge. But no new assignment has come in. Instead, you seem to be expected to continue watching. Why do you think this is the case? How do you fill your days?

Prompt 30

Your crime has been discovered and soon you will be reaped. These are your last words. How do you want to be remembered? Are you honest about who you were?

Prompt 31

Your hateful charge has continued doing evil and affecting others. How do they finally die? What legacy do they leave? Who was hurt because you did nothing?

Prompt 32

No one discovered your interference. Does no one care? Is no one watching? How do your actions change if you are now free from reprisal? Do you stay the same or were you simply holding yourself back?

The Path Ends Here.