

Doubt Comes In

“It’s a sad song, but we sing it anyway”

A game by Evan Saft (@NamesEquipped)

Inspired by Anaïs Mitchell’s *Hadestown*

Doubt Comes In is a two player game of love, loss, and uncertainty.

The players take the parts of **The Singer** and **The Lover**.

The Singer and the Lover were once together and happy, but The Lover has left, descending into **The Underworld**.

The Singer has no option but to journey to The Underworld to try to retrieve them.

What You’ll Need

- Two players
- An envelope, or a piece of paper and some tape
- A pen

Author’s Note: **Doubt Comes In** plays over three **Acts**, and it’s recommended that you don’t read through **Act III** until you reach it in play.

Act I: Introductions

Decide who will play The Singer and who will play The Lover. Then answer the following questions:

The Singer answers...

What first inspired you?
What do you want to change about the world?
What first struck you about The Lover?
What is your name?

The Lover answers...

What was your first great love?
What about the world will never change?
What first struck you about The Singer?
What is your name?

Act II: The Descent

We follow our characters’ separate, parallel journeys into The Underworld through a series of stages.

In each stage one player will take the part of The Underworld and describe an aspect of the journey, followed by the other player describing an aspect of their relationship. Then they will play out a short scene together.

The Ferry

The Singer

Sing of the dead’s transport to the underworld.
What form does it take? A boat? A carriage? A train? A road?

The Lover

Speak of the first gift The Singer gave to you.
What form did it take? Was it mundane? Lavish?
An item? An idea?

Together: Play out The Lover's departure from the world of the living. What price do they have to pay?

The Messenger

The Singer

Sing of your first conversation with The Lover.
Was it short? Long? Did they take a shine to you? Did you get off on the wrong foot?

The Lover

Speak of the god that delivers the message of your departure to The Singer. What do they look like? What are gods like in this world?

Together: Play out The Messenger's story to The Singer. How does The Singer convince them to reveal the way to The Underworld?

The Gate

The Singer

Sing of the dead's entrance to The Underworld.
Is it imposing? Inviting? Adorned with jewels? Sparse and plain?

The Lover

Speak of how The Singer won you over. Was it a long process? A grand display of affection? Something small?

Together: Play out The Lover's entrance into The Underworld. Are they alone? Are they determined? Are they regretful?

The Way

The Singer

Sing of the promises you made to The Lover.
Were they sincere? Were they realistic?

The Lover

Speak of the secret path The Messenger revealed to The Singer. How is it hidden? How is it dangerous?

Together: Play out how The Singer makes their way to The Underworld. How long does it take them? Are there others who have tried this same path and failed?

The Town

The Singer

Sing of those who dwell in The Underworld.
What do they look like? How is death unlike life? How is it similar?

The Lover

Speak of what you hungered for in life.
Why didn't your relationship sate that hunger?

Together: Play out The Lover's arrival amongst the dead. What do the townspeople beseech The Lover to eat? Does The Lover acquiesce, or refuse them?

The Guardian

The Singer

Sing of your first fight with The Lover.
What was it about? How did it end?

The Lover

Speak of what guards The Underworld. Is it a
beast? A construct?
How does it threaten The Singer?

Together: Play out how The Singer survives The Guardian. Does The Singer outwit it? Charm it? Evade it?

The Baths

The Singer

Sing of the pools the dead wash in and drink
from. What do those who drink from them lose?
Why do they still use The Baths, despite that?

The Lover

Speak of the compromises you made for the
Singer. What did you need to change?
Did The Singer ask you to?

Together: Play out how The Lover prepares to meet with the rulers of The Underworld. Do they indulge in The Baths? Do they avoid them?

The Shades

The Singer

Sing of concerns The Lover had that you
ignored. Why were they not important to you?
What were you preoccupied by?

The Lover

Speak of the denizens of The Underworld who
have forgotten who they were. Do they still
appear human? What do they endlessly seek?

Together: Play out The Singer's response to The Shades' influence. What do they try to take from The Singer? Does The Singer rebuke them? How?

The Queen

The Singer

Sing of The Queen of The Underworld. Why do
they continually return here? What passion did
they once hold?

The Lover

Speak of your departure.
Why did you leave?

Together: Play out The Lover's counsel with The Queen. Does The Queen show sympathy? Disdain? Do they see themselves in The Lover? How does The Queen advise The King?

The King

The Singer

Sing of what you would do to repair things between you and The Lover.
What would you lose? What could be enough?

The Lover

Speak of the ruler of The Underworld. Are they intimidating? Powerful? Charming?
How do they view humanity?

Together: Play out The Singer's confrontation with The King. Why do they let The Lover go? Is The King moved? Convinced? Tricked?

Act III: Doubt

Once the final Descent scene has played out, The Lover has a choice to make: will they follow The Singer back to their old life, or will they take their own path out of The Underworld? The Lover should not speak their choice aloud, but instead, write it on a piece of paper and seal it inside of an envelope.

The Singer chooses whether or not to look inside the envelope.

It's a long way out of The Underworld, take as much time as you need to decide.

If The Singer looks inside the envelope, The Lover is doomed to remain in The Underworld.

The Singer returns alone, but knows the answer.

If The Singer decides not to look inside the envelope, The Lover should destroy it.

The Singer will never truly know the answer.

***"It's a sad song,
but we sing it anyway
Cause, here's the thing:
To know how it ends
And still to begin to sing it again
As if it might turn out this time"***