



Told by
Starlight



Stories Told by Starlight

The Listener looked up at the sky, taking in the stars, trying to find the heroes, villains, and deities. The Teller looked down at The Listener.

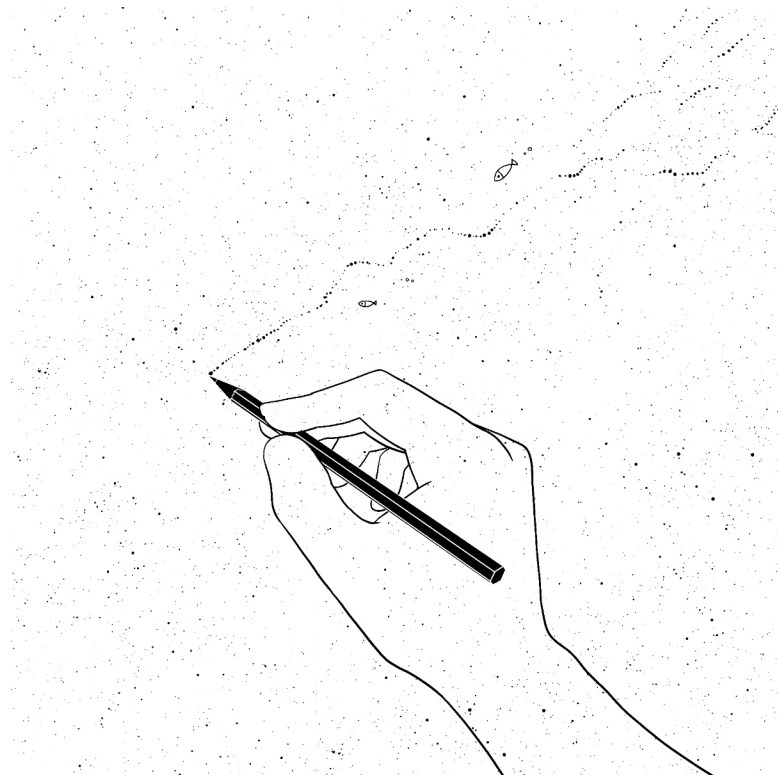
"All our stories are kept in the sky. The stars group together to remind us of these tales."

The Teller gazed upon the stars, seeing the paths between them. The Teller saw the tapestry in the heavens. The characters of legend and their stories etched in the blues and blacks. The stars pulsed, and the stories danced on The Teller's tongue.

"Do you know the tale of Olivae Factus?"

The Listener huddled closer to The Teller while gazing at the sky.

The Teller began...



Overview

Told By Starlight is a game about drawing constellations and creating the tales behind them. You will create a mythology and all the characters therein. The game is played without a game master and relies on the fact that we are all natural storytellers. You will have the opportunity to be both a storyteller and a storylistener.

The game ends when you look around the table and you agree that you have finished telling stories for now. Make eye contact with everybody at the table. When you see smiles and nods, and everybody can agree that they are finished telling stories, it's time to stop. While the end of the game is flexible, a typical session lasts between 2 and 3 hours.

Materials

Told By Starlight requires two or more people, and at least half an hour to play.

In addition you will need:

- Paper (ideally black)
- Pens of two different colours (ideally silver and gold)
- A stack of index cards
- Deck of playing cards (Jokers removed)

Safety

Playing Told by Starlight means sharing creative space with the other people at the table. Storytellers have the opportunity to tell a tale while others listen. Some of these stories may include content that some players may not be comfortable exploring. During play it is important to keep the other people at the table in mind.

To this end, have a frank and honest conversation about content that you do not wish to be a part of the game. There are several safety tools available that can help you with this process. I recommend the use of the X Card. This tool allows any player to remove any content that they are uncomfortable with.

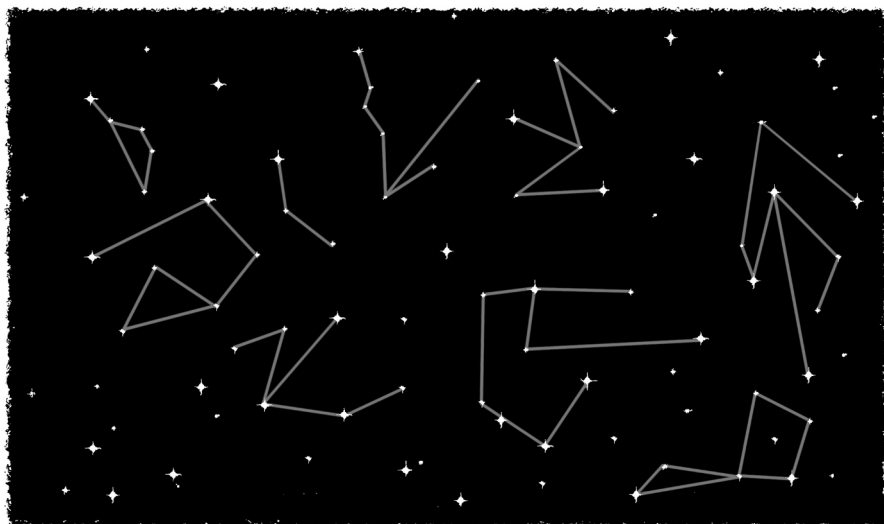
On an index card, write a large X, and place it within reach of all players. When a player touches the card, play stops. The player who touched the card says what they would like to remove from the game. They are under no obligation to share why they want it removed. As a table, discuss how to change what happened, whether that means rewinding and trying again, or just moving forward. Then continue to play the game, knowing that it is a safe space for everybody at the table.

Creating the Star Chart

Take your blank piece of paper and place it within reach of all the players. This piece of paper will become your Star Chart. This is a record of all your tales. To create the chart, each player makes a series of dots on the page. These dots represent the stars in the sky. When drawing your stars, vary the amount of space between them. You want your page to be full of stars, but with enough space to draw lines between them. When it comes time to create constellations, you will be drawing lines between the stars.

Drawing Constellations

Select one colour to use when drawing constellations. Constellations consist of 2 to 10 stars. Connect stars by drawing straight lines between them, without passing over other stars or constellations. A single star can have multiple connections. All stars in a constellation must be connected to the other stars in a constellation by a line.



Icons and Archetypes

Your mythology will be populated with Icons: incredible individuals who play a role in making your world what it is. Each of these Icons are based on a character archetype. Each archetype helps colour who the Icon is, and their role in the stories. It shows how they might relate to other characters, and what motivations they may have. You can find all the archetypes at the end of this book.

Creating the First Icons

To begin creating your own mythology, all players create an Icon. First, draw a constellation on the star chart using between 2 and 10 stars and write the name of the constellation on the star chart next to your constellation. On an index card record the name of your Icon and select an archetype for them. Write the name of their constellation at the bottom of the card.

When everybody is finished, introduce your Icon. After all the Icons have been introduced, take turns telling a tale describing your Icon's relationship with one other Icon. Note this relationship on each Icon's index card. When all the stories are complete, place the index cards near the star chart. This is your Cast of Characters.

The Cards

Told By Starlight uses a standard deck of cards to determine various aspects of the game. At the beginning of each turn a card is drawn. Cards indicate how many stars to use when drawing a new constellation. The card's suit indicates the main theme of the story associated with that constellation. Numbered cards ask you to make a constellation using the same number of stars. Twos, aces, and face cards have different rules for changing constellations that have already been made. A full description of each card and the suits can be found at the end of this book.

Creating Mythology

The last person who spent time looking at the stars is the first Gazer. The person sitting on their left is the First Listener. Continuing around the table, the next person is the Teller. If there are more people at the table, they are Listeners.

On each turn:

- The Gazer draws a card and draws a constellation on the star chart
- The First Listener names the constellation
- The Teller tells the story of that constellation
- The Listeners ask questions about the story
- Reflect on the story and add any important characters to the Cast of Characters

The Gazer

The Gazer's job is to create constellations. Draw a card and follow the prompt to draw a constellation on the Star Chart. Create any figure that seems interesting to you, but do not explain your drawing. Simply make the connections and allow the others to interpret your creation as they will.

Outside of these jobs, you are also considered a Listener.

The First Listener

The First Listener's job is to look at the Gazer's constellation and name it. Interpret the shape of the constellation and give it a fitting name. It can be the name of a character, an event, an object, or anything else that calls to you. Write the name next to the constellation on the star chart.

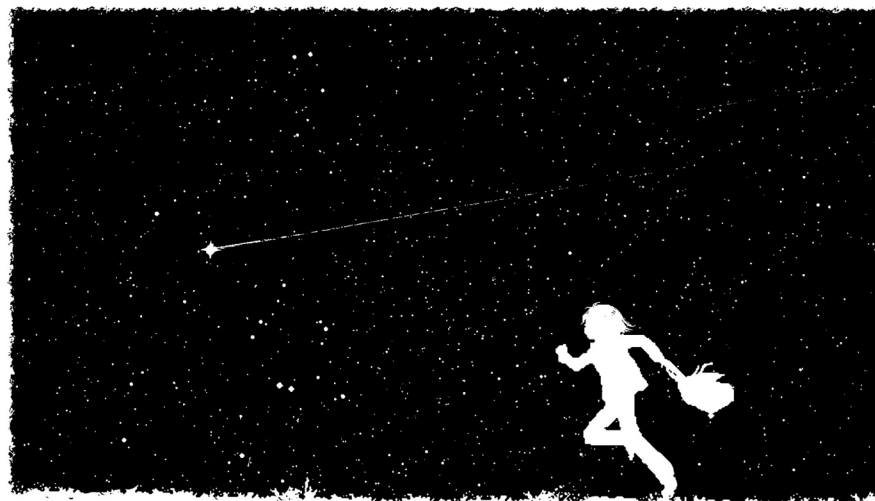
Your other job is to ask the first question after the Teller has finished speaking (see *Listeners*).

The Teller

The Teller creates the story associated with the constellation. You get to dictate the characters in the story and what happens to them. The Listeners may ask questions about the story, and as the Teller, you are the final voice on what takes place.

When you tell a story, consider one main conflict to portray and conclude in your story. Feel free to add other threads that won't be tied up in your story as a hook for future Tellers. You are also free to put old stories in a new light through your telling.

As the Teller, you get to introduce characters and complications to the story. Any character in the Cast of Characters are free to use. You can also create new characters. Characters who play a major role in a story are Icons and are assigned one of the archetypes. Take an index card, write the character's name on the top and their archetype underneath. Finally, add the constellation to the bottom of the card. Add this card to the Cast of Characters.



Listeners

When the Teller is spinning tales, the Listeners' job is to take in the story. What happens in the story is up to the Teller. However, Listeners may have suggestions for the story, or ideas for how the story can be expanded. Listeners have two tools for adding to the story: *interruptions*, and *questions*.

When you have a suggestion for how the story could unfold that you want to share immediately, you may interrupt the Teller. When you interrupt, phrase your suggestion as a question. This could be a yes/no question or an open-ended question. The Teller still has final say in what happens, but this is your way of sharing your ideas. Each person may interrupt the Teller only once.

"The hero distracted the great beast before they walked through the cavern."

"Excuse me, Teller, did the hero use their legendary flute to distract the great beast?"

"In fact, they did! They played the song their learned from their best friend, which lulled the great beast to sleep."

After the Teller has completed their tale, you may want to know more, or have ideas to expand the story. You may ask questions at the end of the story to learn more details, or get a little bit more story from the Teller. The Teller has the final say in what is a part of the story. The First Listener asks the first question. After that, anybody may ask questions.

When nobody has any more questions, the tale is completed.

Reflecting on the Story

After the story is complete and all questions have been asked, it is time to reflect on the story. For any new characters, or characters who have become important, take an index card and write their name at the top, and the name of the constellation at the bottom. Add some notes about the character's role in the story. Don't worry about adding a lot of detail. This is just to remind you of what happened.

Place these index cards in the Cast of Characters. For characters who already have an index card, record the name of this new constellation on their card.

Once this process is complete, play resumes with the person left of the previous Gazer.

Rules for Two Players

Some adjustments can be made to play with only two players. When creating the first Icons, both players make two deities. When telling stories, the Gazer is also the First Listener. They will both draw and name the constellation. They may also make two interruptions during a story.





Consulting the Muse

As the Teller, you may be unsure of where to start your story, or want some inspiration to get your imagination going. When this happens, you may consult the Muse. The Muse is a list of prompts, organized by subject matter. Draw a card from the deck and consult a table to take inspiration from the Muse.

The Relationships table can help you establish the nature of a relationship between two characters. Take each result liberally, and allow it to add drama to your story. Results from red cards are generally positive, whereas black cards are more fraught.

The Personality Traits table is useful for giving some colour to a new character. Draw a card and give a character that trait. Consider it when spinning your tale.

The Themes table adds a secondary theme to your story. It pairs with the theme determined when the Gazer drew their card. Use the combination to fuel your tale. The prompts are open to interpretation and only meant to help inspire your own storytelling. Novel uses of the prompts can lead to dynamic stories.

The Muse is intended to support your storytelling. If you find that a card just doesn't work for your story, or doesn't inspire you, disregard it. The goal is to tell a story that you are excited to tell.

Relationships

Choose two characters and draw a card to determine their relationship.

	    Positive Relationship Negative Relationship
2	Siblings
3	Parent and child
4	Distant family members
5	Leader and subordinate
6	Rivals
7	Friends
8	Compatriots
9	Collaborators
10	Master and student
Jack	Lovers
Queen	Indebted and benefactor
King	Taboo friendship
Ace	Bound by fate

Personality Traits

Choose a character and draw a card to determine their personality.



	 	 
2	Stubborn	Calm
3	Placid	Vigilant
4	Short-tempered	Smug
5	Brave	Soft-spoken
6	Optimistic	Weary
7	Foolhardy	Pessimistic
8	Eccentric	Charismatic
9	Aloof	Boisterous
10	Crafty	Wise
Jack	Easygoing	Self-indulgent
Queen	Wrathful	Inquisitive
King	Introspective	Bored
Ace	Sly	Confident

Themes

Draw a card to determine another theme for your story.

		
2	Comfort	Community
3	Revolution	Collection
4	Perseverance	Protection
5	Triumph	Moderation
6	Ambition	Perfection
7	Growth	Extravagance
8	Novelty	Devotion
9	Opportunity	Solitude
10	Passion	Power
Jack	Beauty	Secrets
Queen	Intuition	Promises
King	Authority	Tradition
Ace	Rules	Departure

Themes Cont'd

		
2	Indulgence	Reflection
3	Judgement	Illusion
4	Transformation	Surrender
5	Justice	Balance
6	Potential	Regret
7	Isolation	Failure
8	Negligence	Destruction
9	Humiliation	Doubt
10	Sacrifice	Loss
Jack	Temptation	Decay
Queen	Desperation	Stagnation
King	Futility	Defeat
Ace	Hypocrisy	Persecution

Archetypes

The Hero

Leaving home in search of something else. What awaits their return?

The Scorned

Victim of a broken promise. What will justice look like?

The Betrayer

A deep bond torn asunder. Perhaps for a greater ideal, perhaps self-serving.

The Lover

Steadfast devotion, even if it is not warranted. Even if it is unwanted.

The Outsider

Coming from outside gives certain insight. Mistrusted and misunderstood.

The Oracle

Flashes of insight that some call divine visions. The burden of knowing.

The Trickster

Wresting power from those who value it most. Making those on top feast on their own hubris.

The Artist

The bringer of beauty to the mundane world. Such skill draws attention from others.

The Protector

The shield that guards against danger. A life of self-sacrifice.

The Fool

Disguising advice as humour. The truly foolish are revealed.

The Healer

Mending the body, mending the mind. The one whom people seek in troubled times.

The Destroyer

All things come to an end. Sometimes we must make space for what will come next.

Rules Reference

Cards:

2

Gazer - Draw a constellation with 2 stars -OR- add one line to a constellation that began with 2 stars.

Teller - Tell the story behind the constellation -OR- tell a story explaining the new form of the constellation.

3-10

Gazer - Draw a constellation with that many stars.

Teller - Tell the story behind the constellation.

Jack

Gazer - Using a different colour, add to an existing constellation using between 2 and 10 stars.

Teller - Tell a tale explaining the relationship between the original and new constellation.

Queen

Gazer - Point to one constellation. Then, using between 2 and 10 stars, draw a new constellation distant from the one you pointed to.

Teller - Tell a tale explaining why the two constellations are distant from each other.

King

Gazer - Using a different colour, connect two constellations using between 2 and 10 stars.

Teller - Tell the tale that connects these two constellations.

Ace

Gazer - Create a new Icon. Draw a constellation using between 2 and 10 stars.

Teller - Tell a tale showing this Icon's relationship to at least one other Icon.

Suits:

Hearts – love, jealousy, relationships

Diamonds – luck, trickery, guile

Spades – creation, discovery, invention

Clubs – bravery, adventure, war

Starting the Game:

- Draw your star chart
- Each player creates an Icon
 - Draw a constellation
 - Select an archetype
 - Name your Icon
- Add your Icon to the Cast of Characters
- Introduce your Icon and tell a story detailing their relationship to another Icon

Turn Sequence

- The Gazer draws a card and draws a constellation
- The First Listener names the constellation
- The Teller tells a story
 - (Optional) The Teller consults the Muse
- The Listeners ask questions about the story
- Reflect on the story and add to the Cast of Characters