

UNDER THE SNOWFLAKES AND STARS

A game hack by Nick Wedig, combining *Under the Autumn Strangely* by Graham Gentz with *Polaris* by P. H. Lee

Once upon a time, before knights fought with demons, before battle, before war, and before the sun, there was a great city at the top of the world, shining throughout the night that had lasted forever. Built of ice and starlight, full of elegant palaces, shimmering statues, it was home to a people whose splendor we are not given to understand.

And so it was that the Dawn came to Polaris, and the noble King fell into a mania, exalting the coming sunrise and constructing the great Calendar to track the sun's coming and going. Soon all the nobles of Polaris were transfixed by the many colors of the sunrise, and refused to hold court while the Dawn colored in the sky, even as their city of ice melted beneath the sun's angry glare.

But hope was not yet lost, for there were some amongst the people that did not love the Dawn. The Queen herself and her guardians held a shadow court, where each swore ancient oaths by the highest star, oaths to stop the dawn's fell influence. This was the origin of the Knight of the Order of the Stars.

And some say this was the beginning of the Mistake.

Many stories are told about the Mistake, its nature, its origins, and its history. No one remaining among the people knows the truth, but everyone knows that before the Mistake, the city was perfect, the sky was dark, and the people had no fear. Now, their city is left a smoking crater, the sky is haunted by a brilliant sun and ghostly moon, strange-formed demons pour forth from whence the palace once stood, and the people have learned of terror.

Under the Snowflakes and Stars is a storytelling game of chivalric tragedy in the utmost north. 3 to 6 Players take one of three roles to collaboratively tell a story of the Knights of the Order of Stars.

To begin play, recite the ritual phrase **LONG AGO, THE PEOPLE WERE DYING AT THE END OF THE WORLD**. Then each player defines details for when they play each of the three roles.

Players take turns framing scenes. To frame a scene, they need to establish three things: the scene type, where and when the scene occurs, and a question that will be answered by that scene.

Each scene, you will take on one of three roles, the **KNIGHT**, the **STARLIGHT** or the **MISTAKEN**. Once the scene is framed, each player chooses a role, negotiating to make sure at least one of each role is present in the scene.

Each scene has a type that is chosen by the framing player. The number of Change tokens a player receives depends on their role and the scene type. It's good to have a mixture of scene types.

STARLIGHT scenes:

Change: Starlight 2 Knight 3, Mistaken 1

KNIGHT scenes:

Change: Starlight 2, Knight 2, Mistaken 2

MISTAKEN scenes:

Change: Starlight 2, Knight 1, Mistaken 3

Play until the scene's question has been answered. Then the scene framer says **BUT THAT WAS LONG AGO, AND THERE ARE NONE WHO REMEMBER IT** to end the scene.

KNIGHT

The Knight

The **Knight** (or Knights) are the Point of View characters for our tale. The Knights of the Order of the Stars are the great heroes of the people, the only line between them and total annihilation at the hands of the mistaken. Each one is bold and brave and true, and you should mourn at their inevitable passing into corruption, despair, and death, and not make light of it. And yet each Knight shares in the same immutable destiny, to fall victim to their passions and become one of the demons the Knights fight against.

The Knight(s) are the closest thing *Under the Snowflakes and Stars* has to a traditional Player Character.

If you want to struggle nobly against certain doom, then the Knight is for you.

The duties of the Knight are to provide tragedy and nobility in their descriptions and interactions.

The duties of all Roles is to provide elegance and beauty and the unexpected.

Each player makes three sets of Details for their Knight:

1. **Name and Pronouns** (*the people of Polaris take their names from the proper names of stars*)
2. **How They Appear to Others and How They See Themselves**
3. **What oath have they sworn, and what moral failing will inevitably lead to their tragic downfall?**

Once all players have created their Details, each player introduces their Knight by saying the ritual phrase **BUT HOPE WAS NOT YET LOST, FOR {NAME} STILL HEARD THE SONG OF THE STARS.**

Each player will create their own Knight complete with Details. Players may coordinate their details if they wish. Or not.

During a chapter

The **Knight** may **Contradict** the **Starlight** by spending one Change token — “No, but...” — but can only **Confirm** the **Mistaken** — “Yes, and...”.

The Starlight

The **Starlight** is the remnants of Polaris itself and the barren wastes in between. Once these were the lowest parts of the city, the furthest away from the royal court, the least majestic and most southward. But, even now, if you looked upon those glowing citadels crafted in ancient age from ice and silver starlight, you would know beauty and wonder at its inhabitants. You will also largely (but not exclusively) portray the characters native to the remnants of this once-great civilization. These people, who were once great, have become decadent and dissolute.

The Starlight is the closest thing to a traditional GM in *Under the Snowflakes and Stars*. If you like playing NPCs like a jazz solo, then the Starlight is for you.

The duties of the Starlight are to provide Decaying Beauty in their descriptions and interactions.

The duties of all Roles is to provide elegance and beauty and the unexpected.

Each player makes two Details for when they are Starlight:

1. An Image of Wondrous Beauty

Examples: *A statue carved of ice, the secret dance performed under the stars, oaths sworn, a song that makes all who hear it weep*

2. A Sign of Ruin or Decay, physical or moral

Examples: *Empty and abandoned palaces, rusted and piecemeal armor, atonal singing, political corruption, paranoia and fear spread among the people, abandoned duties, shallow graves*

Be simple. Be evocative. Don't overthink it. Draw upon these details throughout play to shape the setting and tone. These details are kept secret during set-up.

During a chapter

The **Starlight** may **Contradict** the **Mistaken** by spending one Change token — “No, but...” — but can only **Confirm** the **Knight** — “Yes, and...”.

MISTAKEN

The Mistaken

There is a creeping shiver in the back of every interaction that Isn't Quite Right. That is the **Mistaken**. Something lurks in the barren wastes. The feeling that something is deeply wrong. You control any demons in the scene, and otherwise represent the forces that drive the Knights toward their own destruction, and the destruction of the remnants of Polaris.

You push the Knights ever closer to ruin and evil. The Mistaken is intended to grow overtime. They sow deceit. They boil and brood and build. They pull everything down with them so that none may escape. If you like prodding and coaxing and suggesting from the shadows, then the Mistaken is for you.

The duties of the Mistaken are to provide Omens and Temptations, and to drive the Knights into difficult situations.

The duties of all Roles is to provide elegance and beauty and the unexpected.

Each player makes two Details for when they are the Mistaken:

- 1. A general Theme for the Demons of Blood and Flesh.**
Examples: *Blood. Bone. Earwigs. Disease. Eyes. Teeth. Hair. Breath. Fungus. Scales. Many limbs. Flame. Yellow. Burrowing.*
- 2. A general Theme for the Demons of Soul and Heart.**
Examples: *Reflection. Memory. Regret. Envy. Temptation. Misjudgment. Misplaced joy. Dark pacts. Time.*

Write them down and keep them secret. Do not reveal your theme to the other players. You are patient. All will come to you eventually.

During a chapter

The **Mistaken** may **Contradict** the **Knight** by spending one Change token — “No, but...” — but can only **Confirm** the **Starlight** — “Yes, and...”.

KNIGHT

I. Name and Pronouns

2. How They Appear to Others
and How They See Themselves

3. What oath have they sworn, and
what moral failing do they fall
victim to?

Other details

STARLIGHT

I. An Image of Wondrous Beauty

2. A Sign of Ruin or Decay,
physical or moral

Other details

MISTAKEN

I. A general Theme for the Demons
of Blood and Flesh.

2. A general Theme for the Demons
of Soul and Heart.

Other details