

**THE MANY DEATHS
OF
DR. LIVINGSTONE**

**AND THE CELESTIAL COMMITTEE
OF THE ETERNAL CIRCLE OF SUFFERING**

The Many Deaths of Dr. Livingstone and the Celestial Committee of the Eternal Circle of Suffering

A Game in Ten Acts
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Limitations and Ingredients

Time Limitation: Ten sessions of one-hour duration each

Glass: Dr. Livingstone's glasses, through which players see through his eyes

Ancient: Livingstone's ancient soul, burdened by the cycle of reincarnation and worldly suffering

Committee: The celestial committee that sits in judgment on Livingstone's karmic balance

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On the morning of April 30, 1872, golden with the glory of the tropical dawn, Dr. David Livingstone leaves this world of suffering. Kneeling at his bedside his head falls to his chest, his glasses slipping gently from his hand onto the floor of the tent as with his last breath his ancient soul departs at long last from his tortured body.

The jungle around him fades slowly, blurring into a jungle of tall skyscrapers, pinpoints of light pouring through glass looming up into the sky. The pinpoints of light become the stars behind an unfathomably massive, looming, shape, larger than a moon, spinning and lurching rebelliously through the void of space. The great wheel rotates beyond the heavens, blurring once more as the wheel of a chariot appears, skittering over the bodies of the fallen, blood spraying into the air. Grief, anger, and above all an overwhelming fear drive its riders into acts of great heroism, an arm thrusting a great spear. Hurtling through the air the world spins and blurs again, and a stone tip strikes into a great bison as a young hunter shouts with the thrill of the hunt. The shout echoes through the night until it comes from a dark alley, a young woman screams out what may be her last breath at the mercy of her jealous rival.

Dr. Livingstone reaches down, picks up his glasses, and puts them back on.

"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" The familiar voice causes his consciousness to focus suddenly on another place, a place outside of time. He sees the face of Henry Stanley.

"Yes." Dr. Livingstone reaches up to tip his hat, only to find that he is not wearing one.

The face blurs. Other faces appear around it, blurring and twisting, each new shape sending a wash of conflicting emotion over him. They sit facing him from up above behind a long and austere row of raised desks, furiously scribbling down notes as they begin the interrogation.

One of them speaks again. "Dr. Livingstone, we wish to discuss the events of January 19th, 2284. It is your third day as governor of the British colony on Mars, the life support system for the biosphere is running at 30% capacity and steadily dropping, and you are presented with a most unfortunate dilemma. Do you recall this day? Please describe to the committee what you do on this day."

Dr. Livingstone remembers. He wishes that he did not.



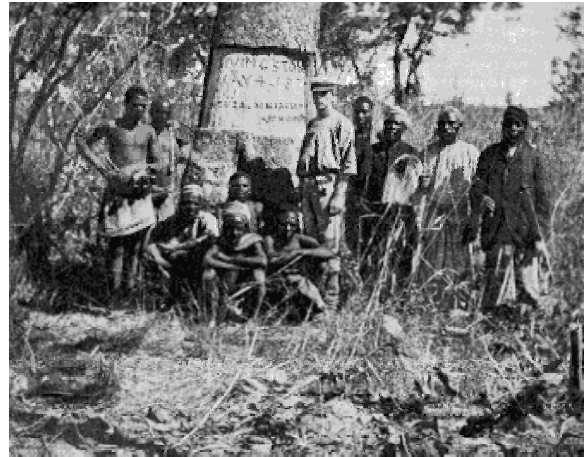
What Is This Game?

This is a game for four to six players. In it, each player takes on the role of one of the members of the Celestial Committee of the Eternal Circle of Suffering. As a member of the committee, it is their job when a person dies to evaluate all of the lives that a soul has experienced, tally up their karmic balance, and determine what their next fate will be. The players also take turns seeing through the eyes of Dr. Livingstone's soul as the committee reviews the highlights and turning points of one of its many incarnations.

The game is broken into ten sessions, each an hour in duration. During each session the committee members take turns interrogating the soul on certain events, seeking to clarify what happens, and why, and then evaluating the impact that this event has on his karma.

At the end of the game, one player has the privilege of determining Dr. Livingstone's soul's ultimate fate, based on his karmic balance. Will his soul be condemned to rebirth as a lower form of life? Will it be reborn in a better form? Is its karma great enough that it can finally escape the great circle of suffering and become an enlightened soul?

Throughout the course of the game, players will become engaged in a dialog about morality as they are forced to define, compare, and defend their views regarding what is right and wrong and assign quantitative values to various situations.



Which Verb Tense Do I Use During Play?

The Celestial Committee of the Eternal Circle of Suffering exists in a space beyond time and place, where all things that have been and could be exist simultaneously. As a result, all events in the game should be referred to in the present tense, regardless of when they happen.

What Do I Need to Play?

1. Four to six people.
2. A notepad and writing device for each person.
3. A pair of glasses. Antique costume glasses work well and can be obtained cheaply (i.e. under \$5). In a pinch, however, sunglasses will do.
4. One die (or any other method of randomization) to determine who goes first.
5. Ten sessions worth of time, with each session lasting one hour. This can be broken up over several days as best meets the scheduling needs of the various players.

How Does the Game Start?

The first session of the game is very nearly like any other session of the game. There are only a few minor preliminaries to be addressed beforehand:

1. Dr. Livingstone's soul begins the game with no traits.
2. All players roll the die. The player who rolled highest is selected to first play the role of Dr. Livingstone's soul. The player who rolled second highest will have the first turn as interrogator. Ties are broken using re-rolls.

How Does Each Session Start?

1. At the beginning of the session the player of Dr. Livingstone's soul gives a brief description of the incarnation that will be under review for the session. The birth date must be given first, followed by a name and a general overview of what the person's life entails and what kind of environment the person lives in. This initial description should be given in very broad strokes. The details will be filled in and elaborated on through the course of the session.
2. The player of Dr. Livingstone's soul recites the following: "On the morning of April 30, 1872, golden with the glory of the tropical dawn, Dr. David Livingstone leaves this world of suffering. Kneeling at his bedside his head falls to his chest, his glasses slipping gently from his hand onto the floor of the tent as with his last breath his ancient soul departs at long last from his tortured body."
3. The session up to this point is considered to be out-of-character activity. The player of Dr. Livingstone's soul for this session then puts on the glasses and from this point until the end of the session all players are considered to be in-character.
4. The first interrogator asks: "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"
5. Dr. Livingstone's soul responds with: "Yes."
6. The first turn starts.

What Kinds of Lives Do I Create?

There is only one real restriction as to what kinds of incarnations can be created when a player begins their turn as the soul of Dr. Livingstone: No life can overlap any previous life temporally. Players are required to keep track of the birth dates of all incarnations to insure that this rule is upheld.

Other than that players are free to have their incarnation exist in any point in time: Past, present, or future. An incarnation can be a real historical figure or someone currently living or can be entirely an invention of the player. Players are also free to place their incarnations in alternate histories and, if using a historical figure, have them act in contradiction to how the figure actually acted in our history. Incarnations are an exercise in speculation and players are free to go wherever their interests and creativity leads them.



After some time collecting his thoughts, Dr. Livingstone responds. "You must understand the limitations under which I make my decision. It certainly would not be better that I let everyone die, would it?"

"When you learn, however," interjects one of the members of the committee, "that due to the short duration of the outage your emergency measures prove unnecessary, does that not change the situation?"

Dr. Livingstone becomes visibly agitated. "Though it will prove the wrong one, it is the best choice I can make at the time. I am faced with the chance that the entire colony will die, and I simply can not let that..."

Another committee member interjects forcefully. "Exactly how many people will you kill, Dr. Livingstone? Please enlighten the committee." He scribes into his notebook as he writes, finally pausing in expectation of the answer, the pen hovering, ready to commit the number to paper.

"One thousand, three hundred, twenty five, but if I do not I will risk nearly sixty thousand. I only do what I consider to be the right thing at the time."

"That will be sufficient, Dr. Livingstone. The committee will now take this event under consideration." The committee members then turn toward one another and begin to discuss the situation.

The first to speak says "one thousand, three hundred, twenty five, dead. I think that is clearly worse than the murder of three people, so his soul earns more negative karma from this than from the murder. I see no good that comes of this terrible error."

Another quickly responds. "It is just that, though, an error. His intent is good, even if his judgment is flawed. I do not think this is as bad as the cold-blooded murder of those three people at all. Furthermore, I think that his intent is worthy of some amount of positive karma, even if only just a little bit."

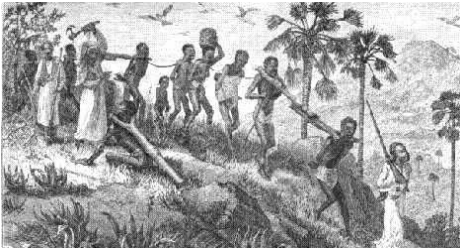
The first responds in turn. "You place far too much weight on intent. I believe we are responsible for the results of our actions. My decision will not change."

"...and neither will mine."

The judges each give their own scores, quickly tallying the soul's karmic balance, adding it to the previous balance, and recording the new sums of positive and negative karma in their notebooks.



How Does Each Turn Work?



Each turn in the game consists of an interrogation phase followed by a judgment phase. In the interrogation phase, the committee members discuss a specific event, called a crisis, in the current incarnation's life and try to explore as many aspects of it as they can. In the judgment phase, the committee members confer and come up with a karmic score based on the event under scrutiny. After the judgment phase, the player whose turn is next becomes the interrogator and a new turn begins. After the last player has taken a turn, the role of interrogator returns to the player who had the first turn. In this way, an indeterminate number of turns repeat until the final reflection phase is initiated before the end of the session.

How Does the Interrogation Phase Work?

The current interrogator initiates the interrogation phase by saying the following: "Dr. Livingstone, we wish to examine the events of DATE." In place of "DATE," the interrogator will state the day on which the crisis to be presented reaches its point of climax. The interrogator then presents a crisis. The crisis is some pivotal moment in the character's life where his/her decision presents the opportunity to generate good and/or bad karma.

Dr. Livingstone's soul then responds by describing his incarnation's response to the crisis, elaborating as much as desired on the results. All of the committee members are free to interrupt to ask questions as much as desired.

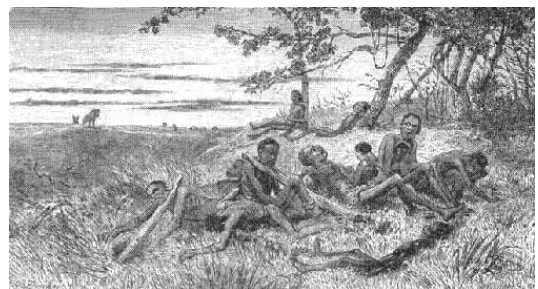
When the interrogator is satisfied with the answer and does not desire any more questions, he says: "That will be sufficient, Dr. Livingstone. The committee will now take this event under consideration." This initiates the judgment phase.

What Makes for a Good Crisis?

Crises that yield large amounts of good and/or bad karma from fellow committee members during the judgment phase yield the largest point rewards. An interrogator seeking a large score reward will often be best served by presenting ambiguous situations with the most extreme possible results, both good and bad. A crisis can also be used to attempt to steer the player of the soul toward a desired outcome. An interrogator wants to improve the soul of Livingstone's good karma could create a crisis in which it is far easier to perform an act with a positive consequences than one with negative consequences.

How Does the Judgment Phase Work?

During the judgment phase each player other than the interrogator and the person playing Dr. Livingstone's soul must decide on the amount of karma, both positive and negative, generated by Dr. Livingstone's soul's response to the crisis and assign a point value to each. It is perfectly valid to assign both negative and positive karma simultaneously to the same crisis response. Once a player has determined their score they must present their decision to all of the players and explain why they scored it the way they did. Other players are free to discuss or dispute this score, but ultimately all players can only directly influence their own score. Players may later change this score, if desired, based on what is subsequently said during the judgment phase, but must announce it to the group whenever they do. Once the judgment phase ends, however, they may no longer change the score they have assigned.



Judging karma, ultimately, is a subjective exercise left to each individual player. However, there are some brief principles by which a score is generated. The first score that a player assigns for both negative and positive karma has a value of 1. Thereafter the score can gradually increase as circumstances permit. As the player assigns larger and larger scores in negative and positive karma respectively, he must keep track of the current highest total and any responses to crises that met that total. These notes serve as a benchmark to measure future karmic rewards. The following scale is used:

Opinion on the Response	Point Value
Worse than the previous worst	Previous maximum negative karma + 1
Roughly equivalent to the previous worst	Previous maximum negative karma
Not as bad as the previous worst	An amount less than the maximum negative karma
No particular impact	Zero
Not as good as the previous best	An amount less than the maximum positive karma
Roughly equivalent to the previous best	Previous maximum positive karma
Better than the previous worst	Previous maximum positive karma + 1

When assigning an amount less than the previous maximum, the exact amount assigned should be scaled according to how it measures up to the previous maximum in question.

Once all of the judges are satisfied with their scores, the total of all positive and negative karma assigned by all players for the current crisis are added together. The total assigned by all players for both negative and positive karma individually are added to a running total kept by all players, with positive and negative karma each recorded separately. This running total represents the running karmic balances, positive and negative, for Dr. Livingstone's soul across all incarnations.

In addition to the soul's karmic balance, the interrogator and the player of Dr. Livingstone's soul get a number of points added to their running total score for the session equivalent to the sum of both positive and negative karma generated during this crisis. This number is modified as follows:

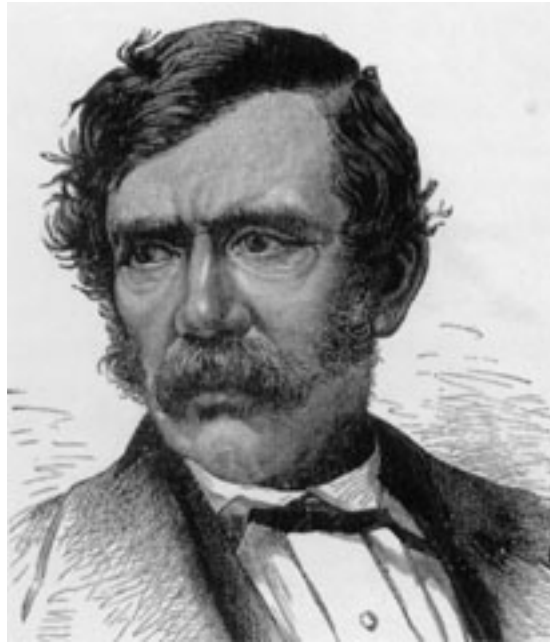
Modifier	Award
The response mirrored one or more of the soul's traits	The score of the trait(s) mirrored
The soul has more positive than negative total karma and the current crisis yielded negative karma	20% bonus (round up)*
The soul has more negative than positive total karma and the current crisis yielded positive karma	20% bonus (round up)*
The current crises yielded both positive and negative karma	20% bonus (round up)*

*Only one 20% bonus can be applied toward any single crisis. The 20% bonus is calculated before any trait bonuses are added.

After this is complete, the judgment phase ends and the role of interrogator passes to the left, clockwise around the table. The new interrogator initiates the next interrogation phase.

How Do I Judge Karma?

Presenting judgment, discussing it, defending it, and revising it is the focus of this game. While some guidelines are presented, ultimately the only true guidelines you have with which to pass judgment are the ones you carry around in your everyday life combined with the influence of your peers playing the game. Players are free to establish their own criteria for assigning and comparing positive and negative karma.



"That will be all for now, Dr. Livingstone. We will continue at our next hearing."

Dr. Livingstone lets out a soft sigh. This session has not gone as well as he would have liked. Perhaps next time they will have a chance to discuss one of the better events in his many lives.

He cannot think of that now. His thoughts drift back to Mars, and the colony that is placed under his stewardship, if only for a few brief days before he has to resign. He remembers the shock of the people under his direction, the refusal of the engineers to reroute the power from sector 5 and his calling in of the militia to force their hand.

This is not the only time his flawed judgment ends in unnecessary tragedy he reflects with regret.

Women and children of Nyangwe huddle in the hut around him, fear in their eyes, as he stands by the door, pistol primed and ready. He is filled with rage as he listens to the sounds of the slavers shooting the people who try to flee into the river. He can defend so few while hundreds are dying or being carried off.

The village of Nyangwe will be a scar on his mind forever and he can no longer abide this hellish place. As he leaves this tragedy behind, he does not realize that the slavers had not, in fact, left as he had thought.

After watching him depart, the slavers return to Nyangwe. There is nobody there to remember this, though, this second tragedy that is lost to history as the dense growth of the jungle forever swallows up the screams of men, women, and children in the dark African night.

If only he had stayed but one day longer...



How Does Each Session End?

Starting at five minutes before the end of the session, any of the interrogators can at any point end the current turn, whether it is finished or not, by saying: "That will be all for now, Dr. Livingstone. We will continue at our next hearing." This phrase initiates the reflection phase. If the judgment phase of an interrupted turn has not been completely finished, no karma scores are assigned for the turn in question.

After the reflection phase is complete, all players compare their total scores for the session. The character with the highest score will play the soul of Dr. Livingstone during the next session. The player with the second highest score will have the first turn as interrogator. The player who played the soul of Dr. Livingstone during this session, however, is exempt from winning either of these privileges. In the case of a tie in either case, the players roll dice.

After player roles are established for the next session, the session ends.

How Does the Reflection Phase Work?

The player of Dr. Livingstone's soul controls the reflection phase. This phase of the game serves to tie together Dr. Livingstone's various incarnations by assigning new traits to the soul. During each reflection phase, the player of Dr. Livingstone's soul chooses something that happened in a response to one of the crises of the current session and declares it as a new trait of Dr. Livingstone's soul. When assigning this trait, the player of Dr. Livingstone's soul must narrate an event, real or fictional, that occurs in the life of Dr. Livingstone himself that parallels the event that happens in the soul's other incarnation.

The point value assigned to the trait is equivalent to the total score that the respective crisis generated for the player of Dr. Livingstone's soul (assigned during the judgment phase), divided by the total number of players, always rounding up. All players record this new trait and its point value.

How Does the Game End?

The last five minutes of the tenth and final session are different from the last five minutes of a typical session. Instead of the usual phrase that initiates the reflection phase, the last five minutes are initiated with: "That will be all Dr. Livingstone. Please wait while we prepare our final judgment." The final session has no reflection phase, and roles are not established for the next session. Instead, all players sum their total score from all sessions. This is their final score for the game. The player with the highest total score gets the privilege of determining Dr. Livingstone's soul's ultimate fate.

First the player examines the karmic balance of Dr. Livingstone's soul. This determines the general fate of Dr. Livingstone's soul:

Ratio of Positive to Negative Karma	Fate
3:1 or greater	The soul leaves the cycle of suffering and is enlightened
At least 1.5:1 but less than 3:1	The soul is reincarnated in a superior form
More than 1:1.5 but less than 1.5:1	The soul is reincarnated in a similar form
More than 1:3 but less than or equal to 1:1.5	The soul is reincarnated in an inferior form
1:3 or less	The soul is reincarnated in a form of pure suffering

The player with the highest total score may move this fate up or down by one step if desired. The player then has the privilege of describing the specifics of what exactly happens and the manner in which it occurs.

What Do I Record in My Notepad?

The following items are to be recorded by each player through the course of play. The manner in which they are recorded is left to the devices of each individual player.

1. A Timeline of previously created incarnations so as to avoid overlap when creating a new incarnation
2. Your highest assigned positive karma to aid in judging
3. Your highest assigned negative karma to aid in judging
4. Your score for the current session to determine what role you will be playing during the next session
5. Your total score across all sessions to determine who will get to determine the final fate of Dr. Livingstone's soul
6. Dr. Livingstone's soul's traits and the point value of each to aid in the summation of karma totals
7. Dr. Livingstone's soul's positive karma total to track how the game ends
8. Dr. Livingstone's soul's negative karma total to track how the game ends
9. General notes and thoughts arising from play to assist memory faculties which are, after all, only human

The player of Dr. Livingstone's soul should record only #4 - #8. All other necessary note taking should be deferred until after the session is over (copying from other players if needed).

Why Do I Take Notes?

The Celestial Committee of the Eternal Circle of Suffering is a meticulously bureaucratic body and does not miss any detail, no matter how small. Not only is note taking mandatory, but all players with the exception of the one playing Dr. Livingstone's soul are encouraged to take notes as frequently, voluminously, and conspicuously as possible throughout the first 55 minutes of the session.

Key Phrase Cheat Sheet

Starting the session, Dr. Livingstone's Soul's Opening Statement

"On the morning of April 30, 1872, golden with the glory of the tropical dawn, Dr. David Livingstone leaves this world of suffering. Kneeling at his bedside his head falls to his chest, his glasses slipping gently from his hand onto the floor of the tent as with his last breath his ancient soul departs at long last from his tortured body."

Starting the Session, Interrogator's Response

"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

Starting the Session, Dr. Livingstone's Soul's Response

"Yes."

Starting the Interrogation Phase

"Dr. Livingstone, we wish to examine the events of DATE."

Starting the Judgment Phase

"That will be sufficient, Dr. Livingstone. The committee will now take this event under consideration."

Starting the Reflection Phase

"That will be all for now, Dr. Livingstone. We will continue at our next hearing."

Starting the End of the Game

"That will be all Dr. Livingstone. Please wait while we prepare our final judgment."