



# Growing Up in Flames

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## Materials

GM guide this document (2-sided)

[Name tags](#) (2-sided)

Pens

Sound effects from <https://azalea.dance/flames>

Hat



## Age chart (for GM quick reference)

	Avocet	Brant	Chukar	Dunlin	Egret	Finch
1. b-day	<b>6</b>	18	33	46	63	75
2. adoption	16	<b>28</b>	43	56	73	6
3. retirement	28	40	<b>55</b>	68	11	18
4. wedding	40	52	67	4	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>
5. naming	54	66	14	<b>17</b>	37	43
6. hospice	<b>74</b>	8	32	38	57	64

## Lists of birds (for helping players rename themselves)

Accentor, Albatross, Anhinga, Ani, Antpitta, Antshrike, Antvireo, Antwren, Aracari, Avadavat

Falcon, Fantail, Fieldfare, Fiscal, Flamingo, Flatbill, Flicker, Flowerpiercer, Flycatcher, Fody, Francolin, Fruiteater, Fulmar

Eagle, Earthcreeper, Eider, Elaenia, Emu, Emerald, Euphonia

Dacnis, Dipper, Diucon, Donacobius, Dotterel, Dove, Drongo, Duck, Dunnock

Cacique, Canary, Canastero, Caracara, Cardinal, Cassowary, Chachalaca, Chickadee, Chicken, Chiffchaff, Chilia, Chlorophonia, Chough, Cinclodes, Condor, Conebill, Coot, Cormorant, Coronet, Coucal, Crane, Crane, Crossbill, Crow



# 2 Minutes





## GM Guide

### Casting

Select a page from the table. There is a seating order - A C F E B D. Encourage people to stick to the words at the top and not try to read the entirety of all the sheets.

### Intros

People should introduce themselves as players (not characters yet). Name, pronouns if you like, favorite bird. You can start.

### Safety

- Go back over the content warnings, make sure everyone knows they are here for a sad and emotional game about intergenerational relationships, grief and mourning, and self-definition.
- Pass out the papers for people to write lines and veils. Lines are topics they don't want to come up at all, veils are things they want to happen only offscreen. For example, transphobia, cruelty to animals.
- Decide on default touch boundaries for the group. Go with whatever is the most restrictive someone wants, everyone is allowed to negotiate up or down in play.
- Go over the safety mechanics you're using. I usually use:
  - ◆ OK check-in.
  - ◆ Cut and break.
  - ◆ The door is always open.
  - ◆ I'm here if you wanna talk about anything.

### How this will go

- There will be 6 scenes, with journaling in between.
- Your character sheet is an outline, but you can take the character in any direction you like. Your character sheet has notes of what the story beats they have written in are.
- Journaling in between scenes. Write a few sentences about your character's changes in the interim. You can ask other players questions but try to keep it quiet so people can journal

### World introduction

- **We're birds.** This is a world largely like our own. Phoenixes are the species that occupies a similar niche in this world to the one that humans occupy in our world. They have schools and glasses and careers and birthday parties and so on. They can, however, fly. Phoenixes usually live 70-80 years, though occasionally they live older or die younger.
- **Flocks.** The flock (extended family – 50-100 people) is the main social unit of phoenix society. Most of your social life is likely within the flock, though this doesn't apply to everyone.
- **Molting.** When you die, you go up in flames and molt. A baby phoenix is born from the ashes. This baby acts much like a human baby in function and abilities.
- **Adoption** - When a phoenix molts, they need a parent or parents to take care of them. If someone is older or knows they're going to die soon, they will often arrange to be adopted by a friend or family member. It is considered a very meaningful bond, to offer to raise someone in their next life. It's also a socially delicate thing for either party to ask. Adoption of someone in a different flock is unusual and noteworthy but not unheard of.
- **Families.** Raising a kid as one parent is the norm, but households with two or more parents are not particularly unusual. Marriage is available but it is less central to this society than our own; getting married is not uncommon but not expected of anyone. Queerness and polyamory are accepted as normal and fine.



- **Fledgelings.** Children in phoenix society are known as fledgelings. They keep the memories (including skills and knowledge, but only the brain part and not the body part) from the phoenix that came before them, slowly forgetting them over the course of their childhood and adolescence. Different phoenixes take to this forgetting differently; some welcome it and throw themselves wholeheartedly into their new life; some try their hardest to remember everything from before. It is commonly accepted that you will forget everything from your previous life by the time you are seventeen years old.
- **Name day.** When a phoenix turns seventeen, they choose a new name for themselves. There is a ceremony to celebrate their coming-of-age and they are no longer considered a fledgeling at this point. They usually give a speech to the flock about why they chose their new name.

**Now it's everyone's turn to describe the world we're in.** I have some questions for the group; I'd like each person to answer one question.

- Where are we? Somewhere in the world we would recognize? Or a different place entirely?
- We're all part of a flock. What's our last name?
- Someone in the flock died a few years ago, and they were adopted outside the flock. We're all still missing them. What were they called?
  - ◆ And why were they important?
  - ◆ Who has filled in for them and why isn't it quite the same?
- What's the favorite family pastime?

### Sound Cues

There are a couple of sound cues we'll be using in this game. I'm going to play them for you now:

- This sound means to swap who is answering questions, if you haven't yet. 🔊 **swap.wav**
- This sound means you have about thirty seconds and you should wrap up the discussion. We'll also use it to cue you to bring scenes to a close. 🔊 **wrap-up.wav**
- This sound means that the discussion (or, later, the scene) is over. 🔊 **end.wav**

### Character Workshop

- *I'm going to ask you a bunch of questions about your character. Discuss with the person next to you. Think about whether you want to play close-to-home or not. Alternate left and right. You can write answers in the space on your sheet, if you like. You have one minute for each discussion. If it's too loud, feel free to spread out. (30 sec, swap, 30 sec, end)*
- Let's start with more prosaic things. **If someone were to describe you in a few words, how would they do it?** For all these things, you can share if you like, or just write it down for yourself. But this is a high transparency game, you can feel free to share even if your character wouldn't.
- Talk about family. **What is your relationship with the flock? With your place in it?**
- Talk about life stages. **How do you feel about being your age?** Do you wish you were older or long for days gone by? Or are you feeling good about your current place?
- Talk about grief - **How do you relate to grief?** Are you a loud griever? A quiet griever? Do you dive into distraction or do you sit and feel your feelings?

### Interpersonal Workshop

- Each pair of characters has some questions to answer about the relationship between those two characters. **You don't need to answer all of them!** Choose one that's interesting to you, or answer them all, or discuss whatever you feel called to. Feel free to write stuff down in the space on your sheet if you like.
- I'll give you 3 minutes to discuss. I'm going to play the swap sound halfway through, but you don't have to wait until then for both people to talk. (90 sec, swap, 60, wrap up, 30, end)



**Bio break.** We're going to start playing soon; take a bio break if you need one and do anything else you need to do to get ready.

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I'm going to play a song. While you listen to it, think about your character and their life. Try to get into their headspace and listen to the song as them, if you like. When the song is over, we'll get ready to start the first scene.

### 🎵 Circle Game 🎵

## Scene 1: Avocet's Birthday.

Please take a look at the back of your nametag for the next scene and consider any prompt on it. Get any materials you need, and put on your new nametag. Let's do a go-round where everyone can share their name and age. We'll start the scene in a moment.

Avocet is turning 6 today and Chukar, their parent, is throwing a party for the whole flock. Six-year-olds are running about but it's really just an excuse to gather. **Avocet, what's the party like?** You all remember the old Avocet, but they're six years old now; they're a new person. How much have you moved on? **This scene ends when people go outside to hit the piñata.**

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Before we get ready for the next scene, I'd like you to take a moment to pause and think about what your character has been up to and how they've changed over the course of the 10 years we're skipping to the next scene. I'm going to give you two minutes to write. You can talk to other players to coordinate, but try to be quieter so people can journal.

## Scene 2: Brant's Adoption Ceremony (10 years later)

Please take a look at the back of your nametag for the next scene and consider any prompt on it. Get any materials you need, and put on your new nametag. Let's do a go-round where everyone can share their name and age. We'll start the scene in a moment.

We'll start the scene in a moment. Since phoenixes molt but don't die permanently, funerals are usually combined with an adoption ceremony. Last month, Brant's friend Lark died. The funeral was yesterday, and Brant is now adopting them as a child. **Brant, how did they die? Did everyone here know them? What was the funeral like?**

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Before we get ready for the next scene, I'd like you to take a moment to pause and think about what your character has been up to and how they've changed over the course of the 12 years we're skipping to the next scene. I'm going to give you two minutes to write. You can talk to other players to coordinate, but try to be quieter so people can journal.

## Scene 3: Chukar's retirement party (12 years later)

Please take a look at the back of your nametag for the next scene and consider any prompt on it. Get any materials you need, and put on your new nametag. Let's do a go-round where everyone can share their name and age. We'll start the scene in a moment.

Chukar is retiring and they've called the flock together to celebrate. **Chukar, what was your career like? When you're ready, you can start the scene with a speech.**



**Bio break.** We're about halfway through play; it's a good time to take a bio break if you need one.

Before we get ready for the next scene, I'd like you to take a moment to pause and think about what your character has been up to and how they've changed over the course of the 12 years we're skipping to the next scene. I'm going to give you two minutes to write. You can talk to other players to coordinate, but try to be quieter so people can journal.

### Scene 4: E and F's wedding (12 years later)

Please take a look at the back of your nametag for the next scene and consider any prompt on it. Get any materials you need, and put on your new nametag. Let's do a go-round where everyone can share their name and age. We'll start the scene in a moment.

E and F are getting married today. **E and F, what is the wedding like?**

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Before we get ready for the next scene, I'd like you to take a moment to pause and think about what your character has been up to and how they've changed over the course of the 14 years we're skipping to the next scene. I'm going to give you two minutes to write. You can talk to other players to coordinate, but try to be quieter so people can journal.

### Scene 5: D's Naming (14 years later)

Today, the phoenix who up until now was called Dunlin has turned 17. As is tradition, they get to choose a new name for themselves. They have chosen a name and written a speech to give to the family, as we honor them today.


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Before we get ready for the next scene, I'd like you to take a moment to pause and think about what your character has been up to and how they've changed over the course of the 20 years we're skipping to the next scene. I'm going to give you two minutes to write. You can talk to other players to coordinate, but try to be quieter so people can journal.

### Scene 6: A\_\_\_\_\_ in Hospice (20 years later)

Please take a look at the back of your nametag for the next scene and consider any prompt on it. Get any materials you need, and put on your new nametag. Let's do a go-round where everyone can share their name and age. We'll start the scene in a moment.

Avocet has been slowly dying for the last couple years, and yesterday you got a call that there wasn't much time left. The six of you, all people important to them, have come to their bedside in this, one of their last hours. You've been here a while; death is simultaneously too sudden and remarkably slow. But you have the sense that they won't be here much longer. **Avocet, can you describe the hospital room?**

When the moment comes in the scene for A\_\_\_\_\_ to die, play  **milk\_carton.wav**. Take the hat from Brant's player and place it on top of A\_\_\_\_\_ 's chest. When the song ends, **that's game**.

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**Debrief.** How are you feeling?    When felt most connected to character?    Thank someone.  
Describe experience.    Share a moment that came up from your life.    Introduce players



## Avocet

6 years old at game start. Coming of age, dealing with leftover perceptions, then eventually saying goodbye. More scaffold at game start. Center of first and last scenes. Game is framed around their growing up and then growing old. Molts at the end of the final scene.

### Individual Prompts

- How would someone describe you, in a few words?
- What is your relationship with the family? With your place in it?
- How do you feel about being your age?
- How do you relate to grief?

### Relationship Prompts

*just answer any that seem interesting! One or all.*

**Brant:** You're cousins, 12 years apart.

- What did Brant teach you?
- What makes you jealous of Brant?
- What do you recall from your past life about Brant's youth that they'd rather you not?

**Chukar:** Your parent.

- What is your parental relationship like?
- Who asked whom to adopt? Why?
- What do you admire about Chukar?

**Dunlin:** older cousin of some sort.

- Dunlin didn't like your old self. Why?
- What has this relationship been like now that you're a kid? Has it been healing?
- You remember the argument from before but not your feelings. What is that like?

**Egret:** Great pibling (aunt/uncle).

- Egret was (friends? lovers?) with your old self. Have you stayed in touch?
- What did Egret get for you as a gesture of remembrance? Do you still understand it?
- Do you want to remember or to move on?

**Finch:** Grandparent

- Finch is newly your grandparent. They used to be old you's younger sibling.
- What has the forgetting been like for Avocet?
- You used to be more or less equals and now you have this power imbalance. What do?



# Avocet / A\_\_\_\_\_ - Journaling page

## Scene 1: Birthday

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## Scene 2: Adoption

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## Scene 3: Retirement

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## Scene 4: Wedding

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## Scene 5: Naming

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## Scene 6: Hospice





# Brant

18 years old at start. Center of adoption scene. Spends most of game in this life.

## Individual Prompts

- How would someone describe you, in a few words?
- What is your relationship with the family? With your place in it?
- How do you feel about being your age?
- How do you relate to grief?

## Relationship Prompts

*just answer any that seem interesting! One or all.*

**Avocet:** You're cousins, 12 years apart.

- What did you teach Avocet
- What makes Avocet jealous of you?
- What does Avocet recall from their past life about your youth that you'd rather they not?

**Chukar:** A cousin.

- You and Chukar see each other regularly for some reason - why? Volleyball teammates? Coworkers?
- What do you do that annoys Chukar?
- What does Chukar do that feels so outdated to you?

**Dunlin:** Older cousin, or something.

- Dunlin played some role in your naming ceremony last year. What was it?
- You've always looked up to Dunlin. Why?
- Dunlin is keeping a secret from you. What?

**Egret:** Parent.

- Egret adopted you fairly old. Why?
- What was the parent-child relationship like?
- Was Egret ready to get you out of the house or are they really sad to see you go?
- You feel like you're going to disappoint Egret. How justified is this?

**Finch:** Elderly relative.

- You take care of Finch sometimes. How? What is that like for you?
- You're old enough now that you don't remember death. Seeing Finch falling old and frail scares you. How do you deal with this?



# Brant - Journaling page

## Scene 1: Birthday

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## Scene 2: Adoption

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## Scene 3: Retirement

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## Scene 4: Wedding

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## Scene 5: Naming

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## Scene 6: Hospice



# Chukar

32 years old at start. Parental relationships in both directions. Balance work and family. Terminal illness (in a later scene). Often a glue member of the family.

## Individual Prompts

- How would someone describe you, in a few words?
- What is your relationship with the family? With your place in it?
- How do you feel about being your age?
- How do you relate to grief?

## Relationship Prompts

*just answer any that seem interesting! One or all.*

**Avocet:** Your 6 year old kid.

- What is parental relationship like?
- Who asked whom to adopt? Why?
- How do you relate to young Avocet compared to old Avocet?
- What does Avocet admire about you?

**Brant:** A cousin.

- The two of you see each other regularly for some reason - why? Volleyball teammates? Coworkers?
- What does Brant do that annoys you?
- What do you do that feels so outdated to Brant?

**Dunlin:** Childhood friend.

- The two of you grew up together. What do you reminisce about?
- You've been a little less around now that you're a parent. How has the relationship suffered?
- What does Dunlin want to spend time doing with you?
- What's stopping you from reaching out?

**Egret:** Pibling.

- Why don't the two of you get along? How does this cause tension at flock gatherings?
- What does Egret think you are doing wrong?
- How do you wish Egret treated you better?

**Finch:** Parent.

- Finch adopted fairly old. Why?
- How has the parent-child relationship evolved in adulthood?
- Are you meeting Finch's expectations?
- How are you reacting to Finch's decline?



# Chukar / C\_\_\_\_\_ - Journaling page

## Scene 1: Birthday

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## Scene 2: Adoption

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## Scene 3: Retirement

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## Scene 4: Wedding

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## Scene 5: Naming

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## Scene 6: Hospice



## Dunlin

46 years old at start. Center of naming ceremony scene. Fewer direct family relations. Restlessness, slight isolation, mild abandonment. Themes of rebirth and self-definition.

### Individual Prompts

- How would someone describe you, in a few words?
- What is your relationship with the family? With your place in it?
- How do you feel about being your age?
- How do you relate to grief?

### Relationship Prompts

*just answer any that seem interesting! One or all.*

**Avocet:** Your 6 year old cousin.

- You didn't like the old Avocet. Why?
- What has relationship with new Avocet been like? Have you been healing?
- You know it's a different person but they still remember some of the fights. Have you been able to separate them in your mind?

**Brant:** A cousin. 18 years old.

- You played some role in Brant's naming ceremony last year. What was it? Why was it so meaningful that they asked you?
- Brant has always looked up to you. Why?
- You're keeping a secret from Brant. What?

**Chukar:** Childhood friend.

- The two of you grew up together. What do you reminisce about?
- Chukar has been less around now they're a parent. How has the relationship suffered?
- What do you want to spend time doing with Chukar?

**Egret:** Slightly older family member.

- The two of you had a chance to become close, maybe 10 years ago, but it passed you by. What was it?
- What does Egret have that you desperately want?
- How do you remind Egret of their late spouse?

**Finch:** Cousin who is now in old age.

- You went on a trip together last year. What was it?
- How do you see it differently from Finch?
- The previous version of you asked Finch to be their parent, 50 years ago, and Finch said no. Why? Does Finch regret this? Do you know this?



# Dunlin / D\_\_\_\_\_ - Journaling page

## Scene 1: Birthday

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## Scene 2: Adoption

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## Scene 3: Retirement

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## Scene 4: Wedding

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## Scene 5: Naming

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## Scene 6: Hospice



# Egret

63 years old at start. Parent at start. Has a lot of ties to people's past lives. Gets married to F later.

## Individual Prompts

- How would someone describe you, in a few words?
- What is your relationship with the family? With your place in it?
- How do you feel about being your age?
- How do you relate to grief?

## Relationship Prompts

*just answer any that seem interesting! One or all.*

**Avocet:** Your 6 year old cousin

- You were (friends? lovers?) with old Avocet. Have you stayed in touch?
- What did you get for new Avocet as a gesture of remembrance?
- Does Avocet want to remember or move on?
- How does it feel for you for this person who used to be close to you to now be in such a different life stage?

**Brant:** Your kid. 18 years old.

- You adopted fairly old. Why?
- What was the parent-child relationship like?
- Were you ready to get Brant out of the house? Or are you really sad to see them go?
- Brant feels like they're going to disappoint you. How justified is this?

**Chukar:** Nibbling.

- Why don't the two of you get along? How does this cause tension at flock gatherings?
- What do you think Chukar is doing wrong?
- How does Chukar wish you treated them better?

**Dunlin:** Slightly younger family member

- The two of you had a chance to become close, maybe 10 years ago, but it passed you by. What was it?
- What do you have that Dunlin desperately wants?
- How does Dunlin remind you of your late spouse?

**Finch:** Cousin and lifelong friend

- What does Finch know about you that nobody else does?
- You're 60 years old; plenty of people in your life have died. But none of them have felt like a peer in your own generation. Finch has a few years left to live. They'll be the first of your peers to die, probably. Is that scary? How are you handling this?



# Egret / E\_\_\_\_\_ - Journaling page

## Scene 1: Birthday

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## Scene 2: Adoption

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## Scene 3: Retirement

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## Scene 4: Wedding

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## Scene 5: Naming

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## Scene 6: Hospice





# Finch

75 years old at start. Has a lot of ties to people's past lives. Grandparent at start. Terminal illness. Gets married to E later. Molts early on. Close with Egret. Sees the most of the next life.

## Individual Prompts

- How would someone describe you, in a few words?
- What is your relationship with the family? With your place in it?
- How do you feel about being your age?
- How do you relate to grief?

## Relationship Prompts

*just answer any that seem interesting! One or all.*

### **Avocet:** Grandkid

- Avocet used to be your sibling before they molted. What's the transition been like?
- What has it been like for you when Avocet has started to forget you and only remember you as a grandparent?
- You used to be more or less equals and now you have this power imbalance. What do?

### **Brant:** Young relative. 18 years old.

- Brant takes care of you sometimes. How?
- Brant is old enough now that they don't remember death. Seeing you falling old and frail scares them. How do they react? How does that make you feel?
- What wisdom do you want to impart before they go?

### **Chukar:** Your adult child.

- You adopted fairly old. Why?
- How has the parent-child relationship evolved in adulthood?
- Is Chukar meeting your expectations?
- How is Chukar reacting to your decline?

### **Dunlin:** Your younger cousin

- You and Dunlin went on a trip together last year. What was it?
- How do your perceptions of the trip differ?
- Previous Dunlin asked you to be their parent, 50 years ago, and you said no. Why? Do you regret this? Does Dunlin know this?

### **Egret:** Cousin and lifelong friend

- What do you know about Egret that nobody else does?
- Egret is 60 years old; plenty of people in their life have died. They see you getting old and frail and they're scared. What does it feel like for everyone to be projecting their fears about death onto you?



# Finch / F\_\_\_\_\_ - Journaling page

## Scene 1: Birthday

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## Scene 2: Adoption

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## Scene 3: Retirement

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## Scene 4: Wedding

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## Scene 5: Naming

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## Scene 6: Hospice