

The Null Order: Erase the Past. Control the Future.

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Forward

I created the Null Order for ProWritingAid's Novel November - the replacement for National Novel Writing Month. I've always done the renegade route, even when it wasn't officially sanctioned, and am doing it again, creating a TTRPG. The idea for the Null Order has been percolating for a while. I have an entire section dedicated to my inspirations, but the idea of the control of time and the flow of time being tied up into conspiracies has fascinated me for a while. I've just never acted on it before, but this seemed the perfect opportunity.

My goals in creating the Null Order are threefold. First, there's the idea of creating a fluid game where time itself is up for grabs and the players have a real impact on the events of the world, without giving them too much power. The second is to create a system where players can affect the narrative in play and direct the GM (or TimeMaster in this game) towards the events that they think are the most interesting, while placing them at actual risk in doing so- rewarding them with power at the possible expense of their character. The last is purely because of the types of games that I gravitate towards- I wanted to make the system simple in concept, but more expansive in options. It's the type of game that I've been iterating over in my prior designs, but with the word count required for this particular endeavor, hopefully I'll complete the task.

Introduction

The Null Order: Erase the Past. Control the Future

History is a weapon. And someone's already pulled the trigger.

In every era, they've operated in silence — rewriting records, vanishing dissidents, and reshaping reality to fit a hidden agenda. You were never supposed to know they existed. But now, fragments of truth are surfacing: a censored memo, a forgotten photograph, a name that shouldn't be remembered. As timelines fracture and trust erodes, you and your team must uncover the conspiracy that spans centuries. But be warned — the deeper you dig, the more you risk becoming part of the archive they've already erased.

🎬 Sidebar - Trailer Script: *The Null Order*

[Black screen. A faint ticking sound.]

NARRATOR (V.O.):

"History is written by the victors. But what if the victors were never real?"

[Cut to grainy footage: a medieval scribe's ink fades mid-sentence. A Cold War reel burns in reverse. A futuristic city flickers like corrupted data.]

NARRATOR (V.O.):

"Across centuries, one force has erased revolutions, rewritten betrayals, and buried the truth beneath layers of silence."

[Quick cuts: a woman in 1940s Berlin decoding a cipher; a hacker in 2025 decrypting a corrupted archive; a rebel in 2147 dodging surveillance drones.]

NARRATOR (V.O.):

"They are The Null Order. And they were never supposed to exist."

[Music swells. A redacted document flashes. A voice whispers: "They're watching."]

NARRATOR (V.O.):

"You are the anomaly. The glitch in their system. The last chance to restore what was lost."

[Title appears: THE NULL ORDER. Subtitle fades in: ERASE THE PAST. CONTROL THE FUTURE.]

🗨️ Opening Scene: *The Archive Breach*

Setting: A dimly lit vault beneath the ruins of an abandoned library in Prague. Dust hangs in the air like memory. The PCs have just arrived, summoned by a mysterious signal.

Scene:

A flickering terminal hums to life. A voice — distorted, ageless — speaks through the static.

VOICE:

"You've made it. Good. They've already rewritten this place twice. But some truths refuse to die."

A hidden panel slides open, revealing a cache of artifacts: a medieval dagger etched with coordinates, a Cold War reel labeled "OPERATION: NULL," and a futuristic data shard pulsing with encrypted light.

VOICE:

"You've been chosen because you remember. Because you question. Because you don't belong in their version of history."

Suddenly, the lights flicker. A shadow moves across the wall — not a person, but a distortion. Reality bends.

VOICE:

"They're coming. Take what you can. The past is bleeding into the present. And the future is already compromised."

[Cue first mission: escape with the artifacts before the Null Order agents arrive.]

The Null Order is a cinematic thriller TTRPG of paranoia, power, and time-bending intrigue. Play across historical, modern, and futuristic settings as operatives, whistleblowers, or pawns in a game where reality itself is up for grabs. **The Null Order** operates across centuries, but the player characters are rooted in a single era — whether it's medieval, Cold War, modern day, or cyberpunk future. They uncover traces of the Null Order's influence through historical artifacts, corrupted records, urban legends, and encoded transmissions. Their mission: expose and dismantle the conspiracy *from within their own time*.

The organization at the root of this conspiracy is a shadowy, byzantine network of cells that uses unknown methods to affect time, editing events using its influence over governments, cultures and even language to cause alterations to ripple through time. How do they do it? That's just one mystery the characters have to unravel.

The Null Order is a game of fractured realities and cinematic paranoia. Players step into the roles of operatives, archivists, and whistleblowers who uncover anomalies that hint at a conspiracy spanning centuries. Every artifact, every corrupted record, every urban legend may be a thread in the Null Order's tapestry of control. Their mission is not only to survive,

but to decide whether truth itself is worth saving — or whether rewriting history is the only way forward. What if your past was rewritten? What if the revolution you fought for never happened? What if the truth you uncover destroys the world you know?

The Game Master weaves stories across historical, modern, and futuristic settings, anchoring the player characters in a single era while the conspiracy stretches across centuries. The Null Order manipulates governments, cultures, and even language, using unknown methods to edit events and ripple changes through time. The GM's role is to present anomalies — Echo Artifacts, corrupted archives, urban legends, and encoded transmissions — that hint at the Order's influence. Each clue pushes the players deeper into paranoia and power struggles, forcing them to decide whether to expose the truth, preserve the illusion, or rewrite history themselves. The mystery of how the Null Order operates is left deliberately unresolved, giving the GM freedom to tailor the conspiracy to the table's themes: psychological horror, espionage, political intrigue, or cosmic manipulation. Above all, the players' introduction to the setting should set the tone: reality is fragile, trust is scarce, and every choice has consequences across time.

The Null Order and the Mnemosyne Initiative

You begin to notice the cracks. A childhood memory doesn't align with the photographs in your family album. A news broadcast references an event you lived through — but with details that feel wrong. An old friend insists they never met you, though you recall years together. These discrepancies grow sharper, fragmenting your sense of self. Dreams bleed into waking life, and whispers of erased timelines haunt your thoughts.

This bleeds into your life, inevitably affecting your relationships and your touch with sanity. This grasping of the fragments of your life and memories continue until the fateful time that you are contacted by the Mnemosyne Initiative — a clandestine network sworn to resist the Null Order. They know what you've seen. They know your memories are splintering. And they believe you can help. Mnemosyne agents offer you a choice: continue living in a world rewritten by unseen hands, or join their fight to expose the conspiracy and preserve what remains of the truth. Your recruitment is not a rescue — it is an invitation into a war for reality itself.

They inform you that the Null Order is not a government, not a corporation, not even a cult. It is a shadow that stretches across centuries, rewriting history with invisible hands. They edit events, alter records, and bend language itself until the past you remember no longer matches the world around you. Their methods are unknown, their motives obscured, but their influence is everywhere — in the gaps of archives, in the contradictions of folklore, in the sudden silence of erased revolutions. The question is not whether the Null Order exists. The question is: how much of your life has already been rewritten?

Though the Mnemosyne Initiative has resisted the Null Order longer than any other force, their knowledge remains fragmentary. What they do know is unsettling: the Order rarely moves in the open, preferring to act through mercenary networks, governments, and corporations. At the center of their operations is a figure known only as the Archivist — a faceless presence said to direct timeline edits, though whether they are human, machine, or something else entirely is unknown. Supporting this shadow are Echo Engineers, specialists who forge artifacts and records to seed false histories, and Temporal Cells, operatives embedded across eras to ensure those edits ripple forward through time.

To oppose an enemy that rewrites history itself, the Mnemosyne Initiative had to adopt similar methods: secrecy, misdirection, and the deliberate clouding of its own truth. To survive, it hides not only from the public and world governments, but from the very possibility of being erased. Power is never centralized; authority is scattered, so that no single strike can dismantle the whole. Even veteran agents rarely know more than a handful of their peers. Cells disperse when no threat looms, living ordinary lives or pursuing quiet investigations to monitor the timeline. When danger surfaces, they are drawn together by a handler—or act on their own initiative—using dead drops and cut-outs to ensure no trail leads back to the source. The irony is stark: Mnemosyne's agents often know more about the Null Order than about their own organization. Its leadership, its structure, even the way it exerts control remain mysteries, guarded as tightly as the truths they fight to protect.

Recognizing and resisting timeline edits is only the first test for a potential agent. The Mnemosyne Initiative recruits prospects only after proving they can withstand the work and the unconventional demands of the cause. Most candidates are drawn from federal agencies or special forces — professionals hardened to stress, danger, and deception. At times, recruits come from other disciplines such as science, anthropology, or medicine, where specialized knowledge is vital. Yet above all, the Initiative values secrecy. An agent must be able to conceal the group's aims and missions even from those closest to them. Without that discipline, otherwise qualified candidates are passed over. And if a recruit cannot maintain secrecy once inside — or uncovers the Initiative without sanction — the organization's survival may demand their removal.

When a timeline anomaly surfaces, one agent receives the briefing first — the incursion, the stakes, the protocols. If the team uncovers the anomaly themselves, their role shifts to monitoring its progress while Mnemosyne compiles the action briefing. Only then are they cleared to move. Acting without authorization is more than reckless; it risks sanction. Operational security is absolute, and the timeline itself is the priority. Any lapse in discipline is treated as betrayal.

Briefings include protocol checkpoints to track ripple effects and echoes, safeguards against the backflow of time stream corruption. Without them, the mission collapses under shifting realities. To assemble a team, strings are pulled: covert reassignment orders, restricted classifications, or sham task forces staged as training exercises. Embedded agents at the highest levels of government ensure the cover holds. Every mission is a game of shadows, and every move is watched.

The Tools of the Trade

Agent Countermeasures Against the Null Order

Though the Null Order bends history to its will, Agents of the Mnemosyne Initiative are not without defenses. These instruments of resistance are fragile, dangerous, and often costly — but they are the only means by which the timeline can be stabilized.

Ripple Events

- **Narrative:** Actions seeded in prior eras ripple forward, destabilizing the present. These inconsistencies harden into “truths” unless intercepted.
- **Faction Role:** The Pale Institute catalogs these disturbances, issuing briefing packets that may reveal the *cause*, the *effect*, or cryptic *intermediate anomalies*.
- **Mechanic:**
 - GM introduces a **Ripple Clock**: each tick represents the change solidifying.
 - Players can investigate, trace the source, and attempt to undo the event before the clock fills.
- **Thriller Tension:** Agents never know if the intel packet is complete — the Institute is neutral, and its omissions may be deliberate.

Memory Palaces

- **Narrative:** Agents resist temporal corruption by constructing mental fortresses — Memory Palaces built from key events. These serve as wards against waves of rewritten history.
- **Faction Role:** The Mnemosyne Initiative trains operatives in this dangerous discipline. The Seraph Syndicate, when hired, often weaponizes Memory Palaces to destabilize rivals.
- **Mechanic:**
 - Players declare **Anchor Events** (personal or historical) to form their palace.
 - When a timeline shift occurs, roll against the palace’s integrity. Success resists the change; failure risks collapse or paradox backlash.
- **Thriller Tension:** A palace can disrupt a wave — but at the cost of psychic strain. GM may advance the **Paranoia Clock** whenever a palace is invoked.

Timeline Integrity Meter

- **Narrative:** A device that sifts through touchstones of history, measuring decay. It cannot be trusted alone — it requires the Archivist’s oversight.
- **Faction Role:** The Pale Institute designed the prototype, but only Initiative Archivists can interpret its readings.
- **Mechanic:**

- GM tracks **Timeline Integrity** as a hidden meter.
- Players may consult the device, but results are filtered through the Archivist's roll.
- Misreadings create false confidence, escalating risk.
- **Thriller Tension:** The ticking meter is a visible countdown — every mission is against time itself.

Echo Artifacts

- **Narrative:** The timeline resists corruption by manifesting anomalies — Echo Artifacts. These are fragments of past Null Order operations, encoded with warnings or contradictions.
- **Faction Role:** The Seraph Syndicate traffics in these artifacts, selling them to the highest bidder. The Initiative seeks to decode them before they vanish.
- **Mechanic:**
 - Artifacts are discovered during missions. Each is tied to a source era.
 - Decoding requires investigation rolls; success stabilizes local reality, failure deepens corruption.
- **Thriller Tension:** Every artifact is a puzzle — is it genuine resistance, or bait planted by the Null Order?

Temporal Anchors

- **Narrative:** Unlike Memory Palaces, Anchors are external bonds — relationships, groups, or proto-artifacts that tether Agents to their true selves.
- **Faction Role:** The Initiative encourages operatives to cultivate Anchors; the Null Order seeks to sever them.
- **Mechanic:**
 - Players designate **Anchors** during character creation.
 - When memory shifts threaten identity, Anchors can be invoked to resist.
 - Overuse risks burning the Anchor — permanently severing the bond.
- **Thriller Tension:** Anchors are personal and fragile. Losing one is a narrative wound as deep as any betrayal.

Past Lives

- **Narrative:** Agents are not created, but reborn. Their resistance to timeline edits stems from echoes of prior incarnations.
- **Faction Role:** The Memosyne catechism teaches operatives to call upon these lives. The Pale Institute theorizes this is a natural defense mechanism.
- **Mechanic:**

- In dire circumstances, a player may invoke a **Past Life**.
 - This grants skills, intel, or even insertion into a prior era.
 - Each use advances the **Fracture Clock**, risking collapse into Null Order-style edits.
- **Thriller Tension:** Past Lives are powerful but perilous — every invocation edges closer to the same manipulations the Null Order wields.

The Mission

The Game's Core

The Null Order is a story of uncovering terrifying lies hidden in plain sight. Agents work backwards from fractured clues to expose the source of corruption and decide how — or if — the truth can be preserved.

Every mission reveals more of the Order's influence, and each discovery threads into the **Shadow Lattice**: a player-facing web of connections that charts the unfolding conspiracy. The lattice is both map and trap, guiding agents deeper into the mystery while threatening to collapse under the weight of disinformation.

Building the Shadow Lattice

Three operations define how players interact with the lattice:

- **The Lattice** — A geometric web of interlocking nodes. Each node represents a clue, contact, or anomaly. Placement matters: the path through the lattice determines which layers of the conspiracy are exposed.
- **Thread Linking** — When agents connect two seemingly unrelated clues, the lattice snaps into place, unlocking new missions or insights. These links are breakthroughs — but also risks, as they may reveal dangerous connections.
- **Disinformation Rolls** — Every clue carries uncertainty. Agents roll to determine if intel is genuine, planted, or distorted by the Null Order or rival factions. Integrating false nodes destabilizes the lattice, leading to dead ends, paranoia spirals, or traps laid by enemies.

Mission Briefings

Each operation begins with the detection of **Ripple Events** — distortions caused by timeline edits. These may arrive as:

- Encrypted communiqués from Mnemosyne.
- Recovered diaries or intercepted broadcasts.
- Handler reports or field clues.

Briefing packets include:

- **Local targets** (a museum, politician, tech firm, etc.)
- **Null Order traces** and suspected **Echo Artifacts**.
- **Ripple Effects** destabilizing the present.
- **Timeline Integrity calculations** — a ticking clock before changes harden into reality.

If Integrity advances too far, agents may need to forward their incomplete work to a future cell, hoping the damage can be undone there.

Agent Operations

Agents must act with precision. Overexposure risks alerting the Order and jeopardizing the mission. Intel gathered may reveal new lattice nodes or forge Thread Links, pushing the investigation forward.

Once enough evidence points toward the Order's true objective, agents face a critical choice:

- **Sabotage the Operation** — Disrupt the Order's plan so the ripple never manifests.
- **Coopt the Operation** — Twist the Order's tools to undo past changes. Dangerous, as agents risk becoming editors of history themselves.
- **Expose the Conspiracy** — Reveal the operation to the public. Collective awareness can paradoxically erase the Order's edits, but this path is perilous. Exposure must be carefully managed to avoid revealing the war itself.

Fallout

The Null Order does not suffer interference lightly. Any threat to its operations triggers retaliation, often devastating in scope. Fallout may include:

- **Attacks on Support** — Framing or discrediting agents, targeting allies, severing bonds, or undermining financial and logistical lifelines.
- **Moves Against the World** — Rewriting public records, manipulating legislation, or embedding obstacles within government agencies to hinder agent activity.
- **Activation of Sleeper Agents** — Operatives embedded in positions of power may be unleashed. These assets are reserved for catastrophic contingencies, but if the Order's plans are damaged enough, they will be deployed.

Tone at the Table

Every mission is a race against time, every clue a potential trap, and every choice a gamble between secrecy and exposure. The Shadow Lattice ensures players feel the weight of paranoia: each node they place could be the thread that unravels the conspiracy — or the snare that destroys them.

The Consequences

The Weight of Mnemosyne Operations

The Mnemosyne Initiative's mission is simple in theory: preserve the timeline and prevent tampering. In practice, it is anything but. The Null Order wields tools beyond Mnemosyne's reach, shifting tactics constantly to frustrate resistance. To counter them, agents must adapt endlessly. Yet every operation, no matter its form, leaves agents with common scars and shared experiences.

Investigation and Observation

Timeline edits often hide in the smallest details — a phrase altered, a date misplaced, a photograph that shouldn't exist. Agents are trained to notice what others overlook, to research obsessively even when not on assignment, and to remain vigilant for irregularities that betray the hand of the Null Order.

Time-Bending Suspense

Edits can make the impossible real: technologies appearing decades early, events unfolding in ways that defy logic. Agents must abandon their sense of what is possible and confront the reality before them, stretching comprehension to its breaking point.

Isolation and Disbelief

The public cannot see the fractures. They do not remember what agents cannot forget. This secrecy isolates operatives, forcing them to carry unbelievable truths alone. The longer they serve, the deeper the solitude grows.

Impossible Choices

Not all edits are overtly destructive. Some appear beneficial — cures, advances, victories. Yet agents know these changes carry hidden costs downstream. Missions demand flexible morality: preserving the timeline often means undoing what looks like progress.

Strain on the Psyche

Anchoring oneself in the “true” timeline is exhausting. Agents juggle conflicting realities, eroded relationships, and the constant fear of losing their grip. The lure of alternate possibilities has broken many, some even defecting to the Null Order.

Personal and Professional Consequences

The work destroys lives. Agents face divorce, ruined careers, lawsuits, even prosecution. They are conspirators by necessity, expected to break laws and codes — and to cover their tracks. If exposed, the Initiative offers no rescue. If secrets are revealed, the agent becomes a liability.

Every mission is a test of endurance, secrecy, and loyalty. To serve Mnemosyne is to live in shadows, knowing that the fight for the timeline will cost you pieces of yourself.