

# *Pilgrimage*

a game by Bryan Hansel

*Everything is changeable, everything appears and disappears; there is no blissful peace until one passes beyond the agony of life and death.*

**NAME:** Bryan

**FEEDBACK GROUP:** Gamma

**INGREDIENTS USED:** This game uses all eight ingredients. But if you need just three to judge, then use Sacred, Rose, and Thread.

## **CAMP A**

**MEMORY:** The game is played through scenes that are the character's memory. By playing this way, the character is created during actual play.

**DRUG:** From the Cup of Life, the characters drink the serum of death, which is the drug that forces all the characters into a shared mind state that is necessary to reach into one's memories and walk the path to the Palace at the End of Time.

**PALACE:** The Palace at the End of Time is the goal that the characters are questing for. The players also physically describe it when their characters reach it.

**CURRENCY:** This term works on two levels. In the game fiction, a gold coin is passed from character to character when spent. It is also an out of fiction currency that helps drive the game and cooperation/betrayal between the players.

## **CAMP B**

**SACRED:** A couple of levels in the game. First, characters are seeking sacred roses in their memories. The goal is to find six of these. And also, the game is actually part of a religious ritual that incorporates what are mundane memories, transforming them into part of a sacred quest.

**ROSE:** Roses are physically described in the scenes and the players must have their characters find six of them before they pass from the cycle of life and death. Also, a compass rose is used in the game, as are the cardinal directions.

**THREAD:** The game is played via Ariadne's threads, which are logic threads, and on a second level, actual thread or yarn is used to tie together a character's scenes and future scenes.

**INCONSISTENCY:** Each character has his or her own thread, but if that thread ends before he or she finds six roses, then the character can move to another character's thread. By doing so, the two character's share whatever traits have been created in the game. Character creation via play can cause a character to become inconsistent from how they are being created.

**BACK COVER BLURB:** You're looking for enlightenment at the end of your life, so you spend your life savings on a drug that helps you travel back through your memories and find a pathway to emptiness - the legendary Palace at the End of Time. Once you find the Palace you're assured that after death, the self will dissolve and leave nothing. Along the way, will you help the others on their journey or will you devour more of the drug to make sure you succeed?



## *An Introduction*

“Welcome, old one,” says a little imp of a man. His dirty golden robe with the bright red sacred rose embroidered on its back drags on the floor as he leads you into a waiting room full of other wrinkled folks. You take a seat among the assembled people.

He addresses the whole room while looking down at the floor, his eyes dazed and the shrunken irises stand out against the white, “Welcome, this is your group and together, you will join to search out the Palace at the End of Time.” The robe snaps as he quickly folds his arms one over the other in front of him. “This journey is a dangerous one, but one with many rewards. As you know, if your group finds the Palace, you will forever pass from this world of suffering, but those who fail may die only to pass through this cycle again, and some may leave the sharing early if they are unable to stomach the choices that they have made for themselves. All three paths hold no shame – the crow holds no power here.”

A second man, much taller, enters the room through a door that you didn’t see moments before. He hands each of you a small booklet.

The imp of a man taps his foot on the floor. It almost echoes, but dampens just before the walls. The white light is overpowering coming from nowhere. “These booklets will help you prepare for the journey. As old ones, most of what they contain is but a reminder, and some of what they contain must be remembered if you are to seek the way. And remember, this is your choice to pass forever from the world of life and death.”

“Read now. When I return, payment will be accepted and you shall drink from the cup of life the serum of the end.”



## *The Book of Life and Death*

*A preparation guide for pilgrims to the Palace at the End of Time*

*You open your book and flip through it reading a few entries.*

**Importance of Visual Elements:** On your journey there will be two items in the shared dream that appear in color out of the black and white. These two items are the red Sacred Rose and golden coins. They both serve as significant symbols.

The rose serves as a pathway to unlock a memory, so that other memories may be traveled to. To reach the palace, memories from all stages of life must be traveled to and unlocked. Many pathways will appear from an unlocked memory. When a rose cannot be unlocked from a memory, travel must reverse to a previous memory that has untraveled pathways.

The coins are a plea for help. This is a shared journey, and at any time you need help pull a coin from your pocket and give it to one

of your fellow pilgrims. This will pull them into your memory where they can help you find the rose and unlock the memory. Giving a coin to a pilgrim will also empower them for their own further travels.

**Wealth, Society, and You:** It is important to understand that your standing in society will not affect your ability to pass from the grasp of the cycle of life and death. Those from the lower castes, as well as, those from the upper echelon of society will all receive a chance to journey from our world to the Sacred Palace. This is a sacred journey that will not be refused to anyone. Understand, that the collected wealth of your life, regardless of the level of the wealth, will be accepted as payment and donation in exchange for a drink from the cup

of life the serum of the end. Those that can donate more will be allowed a bigger drink than those who have earned less in this life.

**Importance of the Directions:** From our childhood, we have been brought up with an understanding of the directions of life and how life until the Palace follows a pathway centered on the Compass Rose. Each of the cardinal directions in our lives serves as symbolism for the circular nature of existence. As a quick overview, the meanings associated with the directions are listed below:

**North:** White, defeat, trouble, dreaming, winter, sadness, survival, waiting, warrior, earth crawlers, flying beings, water, body, cleansing, purity, renewal, white bear, elk, stamina, physical realm

**South:** Red, peace, happiness, maturity, summer, serenity, plenty, healer, rooted beings, earth walkers, earth, spirit, trust, love, growth, spiritual realm, healer, earth, sage, mother, trust, deer, moose, buffalo, gentleness, marriage, prosperity

**East:** Yellow, success, triumph, birth, spring, victory, power, re-awakening, new life, teacher, Ancestors, Stone Beings, air, illumination, wisdom, clarity, mental realm, air, sun, eagle, wolf, illumination, leadership, against evil, for the dead, blessings,

**West:** Black, death, fall, harvest, visionary, Rainbow Spirits, Water Beings, grandfather of winds, emotional realm, fire, moon, dreams, visions, raven, bear, orca, introspection, wealth, self-cultivation, mourning, penance

**Logic in Our Society:** Our society has always been based on logic and reasoning. We use it every day including in our games. Is it not true that the favorite pastime of the youth, Sudoku, uses Ariadne's thread to solve it? This is because from youth, we are prepared to take the pilgrimage to the Palace at the End of Time. When on the journey, after you find the

rose, you will follow that direction until it results in a failure or reaches the Palace at the End of Time. If you fail in unlocking a memory, you will fall back to the last unlocked memory and proceed down another branch from that memory until a failure or the palace is reached. When no branches exist in your line, you have failed, and will pass into the next life.

**Palace at the End of Time:** The ultimate ending destination of all life and death in the universe. All of us yearn to seek the palace from infants to adults. In our former lives, we have tried and failed to reach the palace. The old ones by spending their life's savings can attempt to reach the palace by consuming the sacred tonic from the cup of life. The serum of the end joins us to others as we search down the pathways of memory to reach the end of all human suffering.

**Worship:** In the morning, we bow to the east, then the south, then the west, and finally the north. Each day doing this is showing our worship for the powers that can end the circle of life and death. The directions are our compass along the pathway to the Palace.

**Redemption:** Often on the journey, an old one will come to a memory so powerful that when unlocked he questions his life and decide that redemption must come before nonexistence. Old ones seeking redemption can yield their serum of the end to their fellow travelers and awaken in the world of life and death.

**Enlightened Being:** At a point before finding the palace, those having only to step through the threshold of the palace may elect to stay and help their fellow pilgrims by leaving their thread and joining another to help them unlock memories and find the roses that they need to lead them to the pathway to palace. An enlightened being risks a guarantee of passing from the cycle of life and death, but in doing so may spread compassion to the other on the journey.

**Self Vs. the Whole:** As always, our society depends on the self-sacrifice to the whole for the betterment of the self. It is the self that causes the misery of the suffering in the cycle of the life and death, and it is this self that we must destroy when we pass through the great door of the Palace at the End of Time. On your journey, others traveling with you should help when needed. Call for help from these friends when you need it and offer your help when they need it too.

**Importance of Life Path:** Along the road to the Palace at the End of Time, a pilgrim will remember pivotal points from their life at the most important stages. It is in the understanding of what was important, at stake, and how the pilgrim lived with the outcome that the rose will be released, the memory unlocked, and you will discover an important trait that may help you along the pathway. We know many experience the following stages:

1. Youth
2. Coming of Age
3. Early Adulthood
4. Prime
5. Middle Age
6. Stately

**Sacred Rose:** The rose in the dream world represents different types of memories, and along the pathway to the Palace at the End of Time, you will encounter many types of roses. These roses have a general theme, but each is

personal in nature, as we all have our own memories. In our research with those seeking redemption, we have documented the following roses:

1. Rose of Battle
2. Rose of Birth
3. Rose of Cowardliness
4. Rose of Death
5. Rose of Depression
6. Rose of Doubt
7. Rose of Evil
8. Rose of Greed
9. Rose of Growth
10. Rose of Hate
11. Rose of Humility
12. Rose of Kingdom
13. Rose of Leading
14. Rose of Life
15. Rose of Love
16. Rose of Lust
17. Rose of Power
18. Rose of Recklessness
19. Rose of Revenge
20. Rose of Sex
21. Rose of Suicide
22. Rose of Terror
23. Rose of Vanity
24. Rose of Weakness

Although, these are the roses that we have documented over the last 16,000 years, you may encounter more. Many have passed beyond and have never been heard from again.

*Before you are able to finish read more, the imp and the tall robed monk reenter the room.*



## *The Beginning of the Ending*

### *Setting Up and Character Generation*

You feel a little uncomfortable under the glare of the imp monk, but all your life you have waited this minute. You have trained for this and now are ready to take the Serum of Death from the Cup of Life, and you are read to walk the sacred path to the Palace at the End of Time.

To play this game, you will need:

- 4 to 8 six-sided dice.
- Paper & pencils.
- A four-sided die (or a die with sides equal to the number of players) or the compass rose spinner. If a die is used as the compass rose, then designate each side of the die as a direction.
- Some thread, twine, or yarn
- A bunch of sticky notes or scraps of paper.
- A plate to place in the center of the table.

In addition, each player will need one character sheet or a blank piece of paper on which to make one.

The game is designed for play by four people, but additional people can play if they create new directions from those written in Importance of the Directions. To make new directions, select two overlapping compass points and mix the words taking every other one from each of the two compass points. Example: Northeast: white, peace, trouble, maturity, etc...

The taller of the two men tightly grasps a wooden cup. You can see a glow of soft golden light spilling over the edges to the floor. The light seems to trail after him.

The imp of a man sits in the center of the room lotus style, and he smiles a harmless smile, but despite his calm wrinkles appear on his face. He slumps slightly forward in his lotus. The tall man places the cup in front of him and pulls a collection plate from his robe. This he passes it to the first old one to your right.

The imp says, "Place your wealth on the collection plate, my friends."

Each player should roll 1d6 (one six-sided die). This is the character's wealth. After the roll, each player places an equal number of pennies or golden tokens into a collection plate in the center of the table. This plate serves as the number of gold coins that the players have.

Gold coins (see Importance of Visual Elements above and Gold Coins below) are used to buy an extra dose of the drug, the serum of the end, and they also draw another player's character into the current scene.

"Good, you will be able to afford a good dose of the serum," he says. The cup glows stronger and the light flows across the floor like water on the edge of steam. You watch the wave come to your feet and it oozes up your legs, into your lap. The room starts to go completely white and details become washed out. "As you fade out of this world and into the world of memory on the path to the Palace at the End of Time, you may feel disorientated. Your memory will be wiped clean. You will be empty, only remembering that you must unlock a memory from the six stages of your life to find one of the Sacred Roses. You will also remember the gold coins. By spending your coins, we will give you another dose of the serum. Remember, your name."

Each player should have a copy of a character sheet. The character sheet can be a simple piece of paper, with Youth, Coming of Age, Early Adulthood, Prime, Middle Age, and Stately written on it. These will be crossed off after a memory from them is unlocked. It should have a column for positive traits and negatives traits (see Traits below). It should also have six empty lines for filling in Sacred Roses

that are captured. It should also have a line for the character's name.

A compass may also be drawn on the character sheet with each of the players picking a different direction that they will be responsible for.

You may also photocopy and use the character sheet on the last page of this game. You are granted permission to photocopy this page for personal use.

You awake in a dark room; there is nothing around you. You cannot feel a floor or walls. You cannot remember yourself, but you can see a golden coin and a bright red rose, and on the tip of your tongue is a name... It's your name. You speak it.

All players must speak their character's name.

And after the name is spoken, record it on the character sheet.

Your name is spoken and some light comes into view. It's a tunnel into a world. You can hear noises, but a loud drum mutes them – a heart beat. Thump, thump. Thump, thump. And you slide out being squeezed as you go. Each push and squeeze is a bite of pain, but it's over and from your mouth exhales loud screams of agony. You are born.

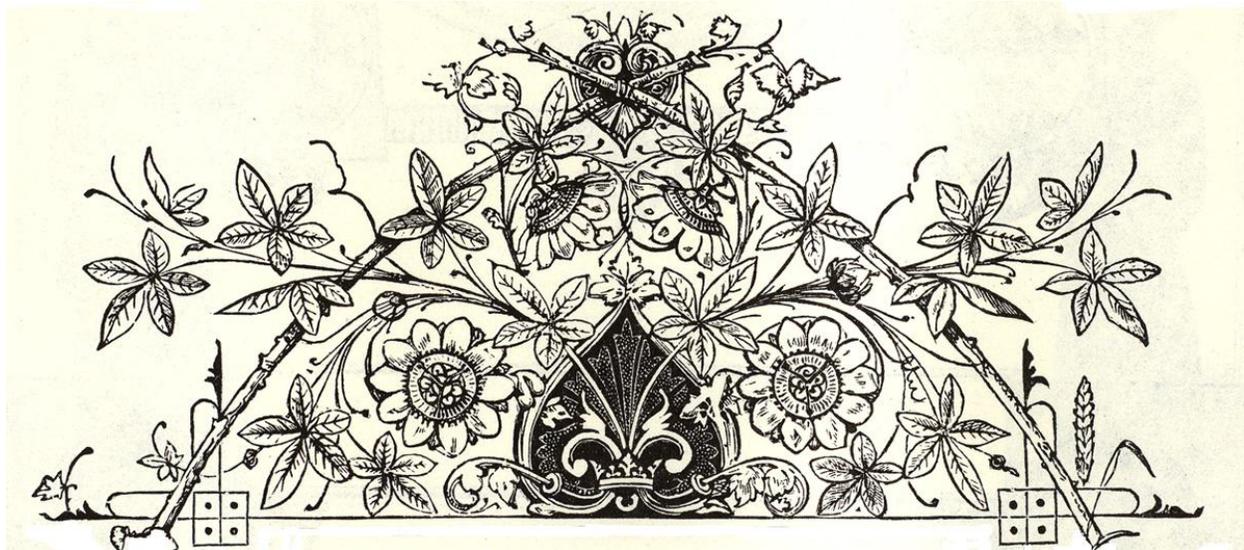
Designate which player is going to go first. Then all play proceeds around the table with each player receiving a turn. Play happens in scenes, which are the moments of memory that a character is remembering from his or her life. Each of these scenes will cumulate in an important moment called the Threshold, and dice will be rolled to determine the outcome. This is explained more below in the section called Walking the Paths.

Important to know here is that scenes are used both to define a character and also to help define the world that the characters live in.

Before moving on to the main part of the game, now is a chance for the players to describe the world that his or her character is born into. Discussion should occur about the setting that will be used or the mini game in Appendix One can be played to help discern a setting. The only set rule is that all people in this world aspire to take the journey to the Palace at the End of Time.

After a setting has been minimally outlined, each player should describe the circumstances that his or her character has been born into.





## *Walking the Paths*

### *Playing this Game*

A memory flashes into your head, you are young and being taught by someone in a robe how to work out the solution to a game using logic threads.

The overriding system for this game is based on Ariadne's threads, which are logic threads used for solving items like mazes, puzzles, and ethical dilemmas by applying logic to all possible routes leading to a solution until every possibility is exhausted or a solution is found.

For this game, the physical manifestation of the logic thread has two elements: a box and a thread. There are several ways to represent this, like just drawing it on paper, but the easiest is to use sticky-notes as the box and actual pieces of thread or yarn as the threads. An example of what an Ariadne's thread might look like for one character in this game appears on the next page.

In the game world, the boxes represent scenes from the character's memory (this is explained below). It is in these scenes that most of the action of the game occurs. It is during these scenes that the characters can find a Sacred Rose. The threads are the connecting lines between boxes and in the game world represent pathways that the characters can follow to the next memory where they can hope to find the next Sacred Rose.

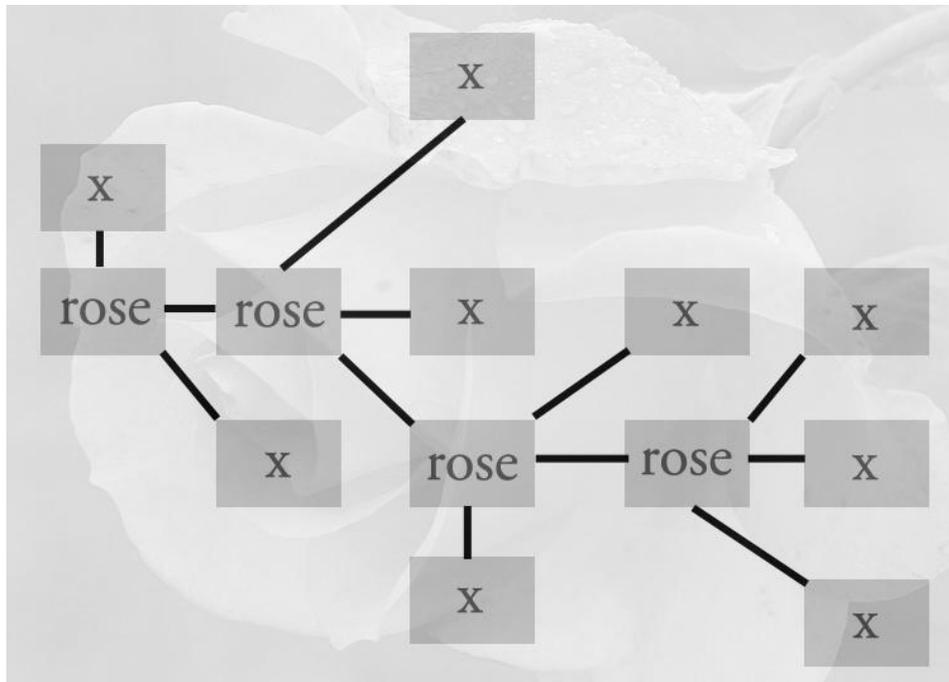
As a quick overview, in the scenes a character will learn about the character's past, learn something about the setting, if successful will gain a rose, gain a trait (explained below), and gain three new thread branches that lead to new memories and new scenes. When the

player loses in the scene, the box is crossed off, no threads branch off from it, and the character gains a negative trait. The players still learn about the character's past and a bit about the setting.

Scenes are played until certain conditions are met. These are:

- Each character wins six roses.
- All scenes are lost and no threads branch from them.
- A character seeks redemption.

All of these conditions will be explained in more detail below. As a quick summary, when six roses are won a final scene is played or the character becomes an Enlightened Being (explained below). When all scenes are lost and no threads branch from them, a player has a few options. He can jump to other player's open thread by mixing good and bad traits with the other player, be invited to an other player's thread, which adds three coins to the plate, or, as an optional rule, pass to a new birth and a new clean thread, name, character, etc...



**Example:** In this example, the character has found four Sacred Roses and has failed nine times. She will have four positive traits and nine negative traits. She will have played a total of 13 scenes before her luck ran out. Because there are no threads leading to unplayed scenes, she will not be able to gain any more roses by staying on her thread. She can become inconsistent and by using gold coins pass onto someone else's thread and play out their unused boxes if she wishes.



## *Playing Scenes*

*The Heart of the Game*

In your mind's eye, you see a thread of a pathway open before you, and at the end of that pathway, you see a bright red rose standing out among a black and white world. The world looks familiar and intimate, like you've been there before. Then you remember that you have. This is a memory of your past; something from your unconscious has selected this memory as important for you to understand along the path to the Palace at the End of Time.

Players take turns clockwise. The person who is playing their turn is called the active player. The person providing the situation is called the antagonist player. For each active player's first scene, this antagonist player is determined by a spin of the compass rose. Thereafter the thread the active player chooses to travel determines the antagonist player. Don't like the term antagonist player? Then substitute the term Game Master for it. The rest of the players may be supporting characters in the scene.

Scenes contain the action of the game. The goal of a scene is to capture one of six roses before your character runs out of threads

(one for each age of the character: Youth, Coming of, Early Adult, Prime, Middle, and Stately) and by capturing six roses, you find the goal, the Palace at the End of Time.

Scenes also serve to develop the character. The character remembers his past, remembers what he learned and gains traits that help or hinder in future scenes. Scenes also serve to develop what the world is like. In each scene, the active player must add a new element to the game world.

An outline of how a scene is played appears on the next page. More explanation and examples for each step also follows.

### Picking Scene Elements

1. The player starts a scene by doing:
  - Select the character's age.
  - Makes up a location where the memory occurred.
  - Picks a Sacred Rose from the list.
  - Narrates something new about the game world.
2. On the player's first turn, he or she spins the compass rose or rolls the compass die. Thereafter, the player selects a line to follow to the next scene.
3. Direction on compass indicates which other player will pick a word from his or her direction's list (see above for the list).
  - If after the first turn, the word from the connecting thread is used to determine who is the antagonist player.

### Describing the Scene

4. The antagonist player frames situation based on the word, rose, and age.
5. The active player reacts to situation. They go back and forth until a moment of two choices or a consequence of action results with two sides, or stakes of consequence are set, stakes that can change a character depending on the result. This moment is known as the **threshold**.

### Rolling Dice

6. The active player rolls dice.
  - 2 dice are the default number.
  - All the players help decide which traits are relevant to the scene.
  - Add or subtract dice based on traits. For each positive trait, add a die. For each negative trait, subtract one die. .

7. Also, the active player may add dice by spending coins.
  - Coins bring another player's character into the scene. They may help or not.
  - If they don't help, then the dice from the spent coins are not added to the scene.
  - Dice added from coins are not rolled unless all other dice fail.
  - Any unrolled dice go to the character that was brought into the scene for later use. Or that player may elect to return the dice to the plate.
  - If a player refuses to help, his or her character shares any resulting negative trait.
8. If a supporting player wishes, he or she may donate one of their held dice to the scene. This will result in two extra dice to be rolled.

### Reading the Results

9. Roll dice from step 6 and 8. If any result in a 5 or 6, the scene is won. If the scene is lost, then roll coin dice.
10. A win means the rose is captured.
  - The player narrates what happened to his or her character and what character remembers he or she learned during the scene.
  - Adds a 1-die trait based on what his or her character learned.
  - Three new threads branch off of the current memory box.
  - Each of these threads is assigned a word from a players list.
11. Failure means the rose is lost.
  - Scene's sticky-note is crossed off.
  - The player must use a different thread to capture the rose.
  - Player adds a negative trait based on what was lost in the scene.
12. Extra 5 and 6s rolled become coins.

## Example Scene – Cherak Comes of Age

The following scene is the first of a game. Two player characters appear in this scene: Cherak and Sheila. Cherak's player, Eric, is the active player and the direction south. Jody has selected north as her direction and plays the antagonist player in this scene. Sheila plays a character sharing the same name. She is a supporting player and the direction east. The forth player is Brad, and he's west. These players will be used for all the examples.

### **Eric** (Step One)

Cherak is Coming of Age at the edge of the river Styx; he finds his master's camp. The war is in full swing with the barbarians raging down on the lines. This is a scene for the Rose of Sex.

*Eric spins the compass, and it falls on north.*

### **Jody**

The first word that comes to mind is cleansing. Cherak's master invites the young lad into his tent for the nightly washing of his feet. As Cherak is cleaning his master's feet, the old man gasps and grabs his heart.

### **Eric**

Oh, man.

### **Jody**

He's gasping very deeply and can only speak in one or two words.

### **Eric**

I have to find help.

### **Jody**

Okay. How about if you win you find the King's doctor, if not your master dies.

### **Eric**

Dude. I have two dice as default, and one as Master of the Speed trait I won in my character's youth. I'm also spending a coin.

### **Jody**

Roll 'em. A 5 or 6 on any die wins for you.

*Eric rolls the three dice. He waits for the results before he rolls the die bought by the gold coin. he fails on all three dice.*

### **Eric**

No way am I getting a bad trait from this. I still get to roll that coin from the pot. Sheila enters the tent and I toss her a golden coin that I see on the floor as my master struggles and grabs his chest.

### **Sheila**

Sheila pockets the coin, and runs to Cherak's master a glow emerges from her.

*Sheila's player rolls a die. It's a 6.*

### **Eric**

The golden light penetrates the master's heart. As his master rolls over, on his black and white robe is a rose. Cherak picks it up and wipes the sweat off his master's brow with a petal.

### **Jody**

So what did Cherak learn?

### **Eric**

He learned that in war – trust no one. He gains the trait of Life-Saver. I also get three new threads leading from this box. Give me some words.

### **Jody**

If you follow the thread to the north, you will run into *Sadness*.

### **Sheila**

*Illumination* comes from the east.

### **Brad**

And from the west, you will face a *Bear*.

*The three words come from the direction list that appears above in **Importance of Directions**.*

## More Explanation and Examples

### Step One

#### Picking an Age

The age of the character is picked from this list of ages, which also appears on the character sheet: Youth, Coming of Age, Early Adulthood, Prime, Middle Age, Stately. A Sacred Rose must be captured from each of these ages. The players can determine if they want to play the list from Youth to Stately linearly or if they want to bounce around from age to age. It makes more sense in the game's fiction to play it linearly, but the most important issue is that the players are able to develop their characters as they see fit. When a rose is captured for an age, cross the age off on the character sheet.

#### Example – Picking an Age

##### Jody

Well, I've played Youth, Coming of Age, and Early Adulthood in that order, so I'm going to stick with it and play Prime next.

or

##### Brad

I think I'll play my second scene as the age of Stately. No need for me to stay in order.

The active player can pick any Sacred Rose from the list (see above) as long as any other player hasn't already captured it. The player also has an option of making up a new rose with the approval of the majority of the other players. If all the roses have been captured, then a player may also elect to choose any rose not already captured by him or herself.

## Example – Picking a Rose

### Brad

I really wanted to get the Rose of Battle, but Sheila already got it, so for this scene, I'll pick the Rose of Death.

Narration is an important part of this game, and by narration, this game means just description of what the characters are doing in the scene, what the antagonist player characters are doing in the scene, and general descriptions of what is in the scene. During each scene, the active player must describe something new about the game world's setting. These may be recorded so all the players remember it later if they want to add it to one of their own scenes.

In the above example of play, Cherak's player has added that a war was going on and barbarians were attacking his character's army. If another player wants to use this, he or she must add to it by adding something new. For example, Shelia's player adds this on her turn: After the first assault, the barbarians pushed back our front lines to the base of the impassable mountains. She has now added the barbarians winning and some tall mountains to the world.

#### Example – Narrating Something New

##### Sheila

At the edge of the precipices, Sheila stares down and notices an armor covered knight riding a giant yellow dragon.

### Step Two and Three

These two steps determine who is going to be the antagonist player for the scene. The first scene, like in the *Cherak Comes of Age* example, uses a random method. Simply, spin the compass rose or roll the compass die and the antagonist player will be chosen.

After that, the thread that the active player chooses to follow determines the

antagonist player. A thread is assigned a direction and a word in Step Ten.

Example – Who is the Antagonist Player?

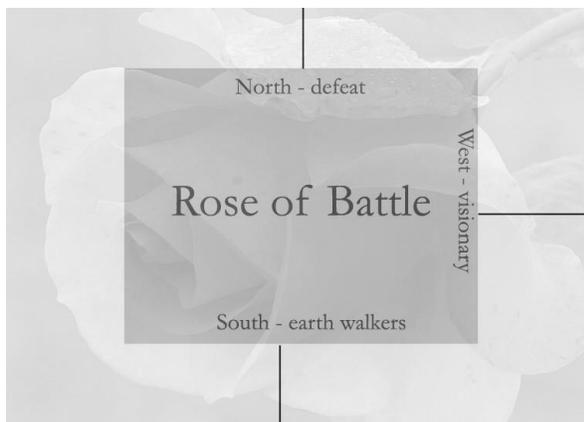
*The picture below is from the game the players from above were playing. This was Sheila's first scene. She has won the Rose of Battle. It is now her second turn and she has to pick a word and thread to follow to the next scene.*

**Sheila**

I like the look of earth walkers to the south, so that's the thread that I'm going to follow. Eric are you ready to be the antagonist?

**Eric**

I think I have a really good idea for the Rose of Terror. You should pick that one!



### Step Four and Five

The next step is that the antagonist player is going to take the description given by the active player in Step One and frame a situation around it that the active player can't ignore. The two players role-play back and forth until a situation arises that the active player must face and that the two outcomes will both be stunning enough to change the character and add a trait to the character. This situation is called the threshold for convenience of conversation.

Example – Coming to a Threshold

*In this example, Sheila has decided to take Eric's suggestion that she seek the Rose of Terror.*

**Sheila**

At the edge of the precipices, Sheila stares down and notices an armor covered knight riding a giant yellow dragon. I'm heading south looking for the Rose of Terror.

**Eric**

That description doesn't really work for what I had in mind, but I can work with it. What age?

**Sheila**

I'm going in a linear path, so Coming of Age is next. We can change my description a bit if you want.

**Eric**

No, I have a cool idea.

**Sheila**

Right on.

**Eric**

Okay, as you are looking over the edge, you hear something like rock hitting rock.

**Sheila**

I'll turn around and look.

**Eric**

As you look, you see a towering giant made of rock. It's moving towards you. It has no mouth and no ears. You recognize it as a rock golem.

It must be here to change your passage from childhood to adulthood.

**Sheila**

I have me sword, so I'll draw it on him.

**Eric**

You feel the hair on the back of your neck raise, and behind you, the knight on the dragon rises on the wind. He has a lance in hand.

**Sheila**  
Oh, crap.

**Eric**  
You have to fight one or the other at some point, because the knight doesn't look anymore friendly.

**Sheila**  
I can't win this fight, so I'm going to bow down. Can I roll dice yet?

**Eric**  
Not yet, because there really is no consequences to your actions. The golem picks you off the ground and starts to squeeze.

**Sheila**  
I want help from the knight. Can we do that?

**Eric**  
That sounds good. The knight comes in to help after he saw you bow down. This is the threshold – if you win, the knight saves you and you convince him to be a friend. If you lose, you become his slave.

**Sheila**  
That's cool.

### Steps Six to Eight

These steps determine exactly how many dice the active player throws to resolve the threshold. The default number is 2. The players will add and subtract dice based on traits that can be brought into the situation.

For example, a positive sword trait could be used in hand-to-hand combat to add a die, whereas a negative missing leg trait could subtract a die in combat. All the players can look at the active player's character sheet and elect to determine what gets used. The antagonist player resolves all disagreements. A player will always be able to roll one die regardless of how many negative traits are brought into the scene.

### Example – Traits and Dice

*This example is from much later in the game. Jody's character, Lock, has two positive traits: Fast Runner, Good with Bow. He also has three negative traits: Fear of Water, Hatred of Peace, and No Compassion.*

*In this scene, he has come to a threshold dealing with saving orphans to gain him favor with a king or letting them die, which will end with him being stripped of his wealth.*

*Sheila is the antagonist player.*

**Sheila**  
What traits do you think you can use?

**Jody**  
I can definitely use my Good with Bow trait to stop the explosives from blowing up. And with Fast Runner, I can run up to the explosives and move them away from the orphanage. I don't think any of my negative traits are relevant here.

**Eric**  
Well, you have No Compassion, so why would you try to save these kids.

**Sheila**  
I agree with the positive traits. And Eric is right.

**Eric**  
He doesn't like peace and this is a peaceful action.

**Jody**  
No way. This is the middle of a war zone.

**Eric**  
Ya, but you're trying to stop destruction.

**Sheila**  
My ruling on that is that Jody doesn't have to be affected by the peace trait.

**Jody**

So, I get two dice for free, and because I'm using two positive traits, I get two more dice. But the negative trait of No Compassion takes away a die. So, I get to roll three dice.

**Sheila**

Yep. Two plus two is four and minus one is three. There's a few gold coins left, you're not going to spend them are you?

In addition to the above dice, the player may elect to spend coins from the center plate. Each coin is equal to one die. And each coin is given away to a supporting player's character. These are spent before anything is rolled, and they are only rolled if the initial roll fails. A player may refuse to help and for that refusal will gain the same negative trait as the active character gains. But he or she also gains dice that can be used on their turn to help their character out.

If a character chooses to help, then they are narrated into the scene and can describe what their character is doing to help out. This can happen before or after any roll depending on the whims of the active player. This is a nice way to tie all the characters together also. A gold coin must be passed to the character in the scene.

If the coin dice are not rolled, the supporting player can choose to keep the dice, or give them back to the plate. One nice thing about keeping these dice is that when given away in a future scene they double. For example, if a supporting player gives the active player one kept die, the active player gets two to roll.

**Example – Gold Coins**

*This example is a continuation of the above scene with Jody trying to decide if he will spend gold coins.*

**Brad**

Before you spend any gold coins, let me give you one of mine. I got this one back when

Sheila spent a coin, but she didn't need to have it rolls.

**Jody**

Thanks, Brad. That's two extra dice, so I'm up to five. That's a 86% chance that I'll roll a 5 or 6 on, at least, on one die. Sweet. But, I'm going to spend a gold coin from the plate. I'm so far behind everyone and my threads are almost gone.

**Eric**

Dude. We don't have many left.

**Jody**

Brad, I want Hammer to come into this scene and help out.

**Brad**

I just gave you a coin. I think your chances are high enough and I'm not going to help you out on this one. I see you with your bow and running, but I'm just going to lean up against the wall and tap my foot.

**Jody**

That's harsh.

**Brad**

Sorry, but you're not going to lose and I'm not taking the chance that we all lose this coin.

**Eric**

Harsh.

**Jody**

I'm spending another one. Eric, will you help?

**Eric.**

That's two! But I'll help. I want Cherak to run with you a grab a second bunch of explosives.

**Jody**

Lock digs a coin out of his pocket and tosses it to Cherak.

## Step Nine to Twelve

After the number of dice to roll is determined, roll any non-coin dice first. If any of them land on 5 or 6, the scene is won. Describe what happened, and add a positive trait to the character's sheet. Also, write the rose in the box on the thread and add three new branches to the player's thread.

If none of the initial dice are a success, roll the coin dice and allow the supporting players to describe what their character is doing to help the scene along. Or they can decide not to help. If these result in a 5 or 6, then the scene is won. Only one 5 or 6 is required for a win, so extra 5 and 6s are converted to coins and added to the plate.

If the scene is lost, cross off the box, and add a negative trait to the character and any characters that refused to help. For the active players next turn, he or she will have to fall back and try another open path on his or her thread.

The active player also gets to narrate what happened.

### Example – Rolling the Dice

*This example continues where the last left off.*

#### **Jody**

I'm rolling my five dice. That's three for traits and two that Brad gave me.

*Jody rolls the five dice and rolls a 1, 5, 5, 6, and a 6.*

#### **Sheila**

Nice roll. So, you succeed, and because you rolled four successes and only needed one, we get to add three coins to the plate.

#### **Eric**

And I get to keep this coin.

#### **Jody**

With my bow drawn tight while running towards all the explosives, I launch an arrow and it severs the fuse. Since this was done to gain the kings favor, I want a trait of Friend of a King.

#### **Sheila**

Sounds good.

*Let's redo the example, but this time with all the initial rolls coming up as 1, 2, and 3s.*

#### **Sheila**

I'm sorry, Jody.

#### **Jody**

Eric, I'm tossing you a coin.

#### **Eric**

Cherak runs into the scene, catches the coin, and heads towards the explosives.

*Eric rolls his coin die. It comes up as 3.*

#### **Jody**

Well, another loss for me. Too many more, and I'll have to seek redemption. The orphans die in a bloody explosion, and an evil king steals my wealth from me. I don't know what negative trait I should make.

#### **Eric**

How about Hates Children?

#### **Jody**

I suppose that means as Lock moves into Early Adulthood, he'll not have kids, huh? I'll take it. And guess what, looks like Brad's character will have to hate his own children. That's good material for his one remaining rose.



## *Clarity and Vision*

*Other Explanations of Rules*

With the clarity and vision gained from the six roses, you stand triumphant upon the golden six steps of the Palace at the End of Time. You climb each step, placing a rose on the step and listening to voices from your past tell you about the good and bad accomplished in your life. At each step, you let these pass from your memory. Little is left but the glory of the palace. Once the six rose is laid, you are gone.

Following are more elaborations on the rules outlined above. Like a sacred holy book, you are to interpret them for play.

### What are the Coins

In this game, the coins are used to buy dice. In the game world this is the effect of spending more money to acquire more of the drug that is used to force the characters into the mind state that allows them to explore their memories, find the roses, and pass the threshold of the Palace at the End of Time.

### The Coins

In play, the coins are used to bring help into the scene. To frame and describe help being brought in, the player describes a gold coin passing from his or her character to a supporting player's character. A coin adds one die to be rolled after the initial roll.

The tricky part about using coins is that the supply is limited and determined randomly at the beginning of play when wealth is rolled. So, use them wisely.

The other tricky part about using a coin is that the active player never knows what the supporting player is going to do with them. The supporting player has two options: help or refuse to help. By helping, the coin is converted into a die that can be rolled. By refusing to help, the coin is converted into a die that the supporting player can use for his or her own character when he or she is the active player. The problem with the later choice is that his or her character will also gain any negative traits that arise from the scene.

Unspent coins from a scene go to the supporting characters in the scene or if the supporting players choose, they are put back into the plate.

### Spending Personal Coins

Any coins gained by refusing to help someone or by not having to roll them are considered personal coins. These can be spent in two ways. The first is to benefit yourself on your turn. You just roll them with your first roll. The second is to give them away. When you give them away, you double their power, so two coins become four dice, and three coins become six dice.

### Gaining More Coins

Coins can be gained during the game, but only up to a maximum level as determined by the total wealth of all the players. Or in other words, the plate of coins can only have at maximum the same number of coins that the game started with.

Coins are gained when a player rolls extra successes. Because a player only needs one roll of a 5 or a 6 to win a scene, any other dice that come up as a 5 or a 6 are converted into coins and added to the plate in the center of the table.

### Enlightened Being

After a character has gained six roses, instead of passing into the palace, he or she

may elect to become an entity that is known as an Enlightened Being. An Enlightened Being is a person who just moments before they were to pass into nothingness decide because of his or her compassion to stay behind and help others reach the palace.

Enlightened Beings gain two dice that they can lend to any other players during a round (a round is the term for when each player has had one turn). These dice are rolled in the initial rolling round and the Enlightened Being adds narration to the game about why these are added. This should be mystical and spiritual, but doesn't have to be.

If the scene is won, then the Enlightened Being gains an extra rose. If the scene is lost, then the Enlightened Being loses a rose. If he or she drops under six roses, then he or she falls back to an open thread on his or her line and must regain that rose.

Enlightened Beings may elect to play their final Threshold Scene at any time.

### Final Threshold Scene or What Happens After Six Roses

After six roses are captured, the player moves onto his final threshold scene. In this scene, the player describes standing at the base of the Palace at the End of Time, he or she describes the six steps in front of the character. Then using the roses gained during play, sums up what type of person that character was and narrates placing a rose on each step.

Then the other players get to describe something about that character's life for each trait. They can each describe one thing for each trait or they can split up the duty. These descriptions must be geared towards a lesson learned that help the character reach the palace.

For example, a character has the traits of Swordmaster, Empty Eye Socket, and a player describes the following: Through the mastery of the sword, Thelon learned the discipline necessary to pass forever from the cycle of life and death, and because of his weakness of missing an eye, Thelon learned to tune his life to use other senses and these other

senses allowed him to follow the path to the palace.

After everything is described, the active player narrates his or her character passing across the giant palace door and into nothingness.

### Gaining Traits

During play, traits are gained. These traits will help or hinder the character in future scenes by adding or taking away dice. Negative traits arise from scenes that are lost and these subtract one die when brought into play, and positive traits arise from scenes that are won. positive traits add one die when brought into play.

The traits gains should somehow relate to the scene being play and can relate to the direction word used to frame the scene. It's good to pick traits that will come into play later, because then they will be relevant to the character's performance in those scenes. If an active player is having a hard time coming up with a trait, the other players should help out.

Basically, a trait should be one to three words describing a special skill, ability, physical feature, or relationship that the character gained from a scene. Sample traits: Swordmaster, Powerful Lover, Lost Leg, Eagle Eyes, Mother's a Whore, Soldier, Soothing Voice, Diplomatic, etc...

### Using an Inconsistency to Jump Threads

When a character's thread runs out and has no more threads that are open on it, the character can use the inconsistency of the

As you look back through the doorway that you have just passed, everything fades from view to pure white and then white to black and then nothing and you are gone.

serum of death to jump onto the thread of another character. The shared mind state of the drug will mix the character's minds and traits. The players must share one half of the total of each of their traits with the other player's character. To jump a thread in this manner cost one half of all the coins on the plate.

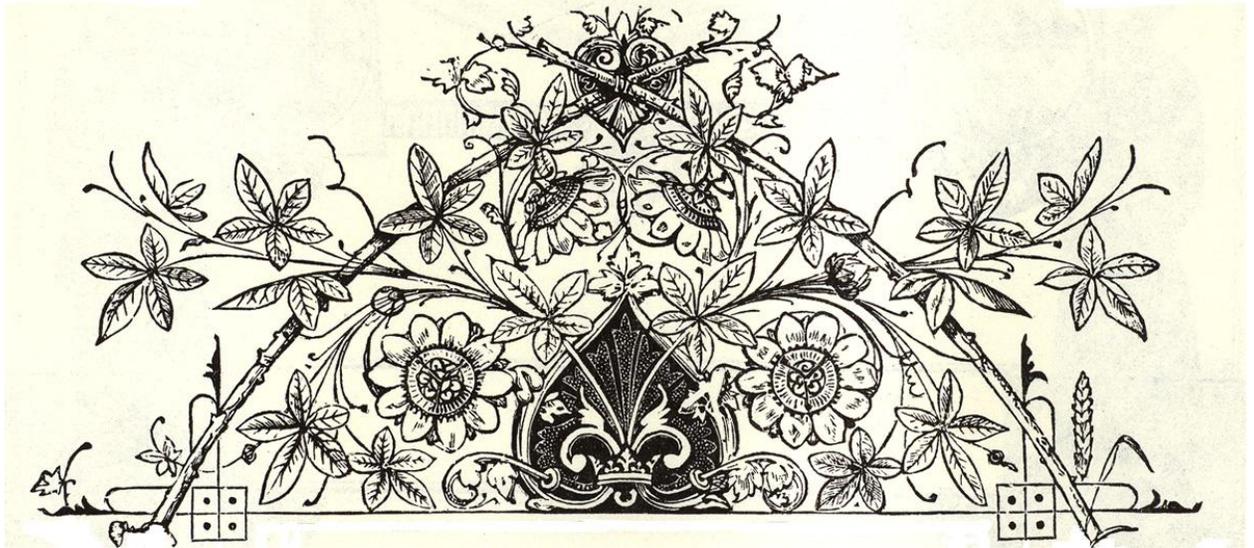
To avoid spending coins, a player may invite a character to his or her thread. This adds three coins to the plate, and traits are still shared.

### Seeking Redemption

At some point in the game, a player may determine that their character has too many negative traits to make it to the Palace at the End of Time. This character can then leave the game and seek redemption. Any open threads on this character's line are converted into gold coins and placed on the plate for use by other players. Although the character has left the path to the Palace, he may still be called upon to help the other characters when they spend gold coins.

### Alternative Ways to Play

I designed this game to be played without a Game Master, but it can easily be converted into a game that uses one. This is handy for groups larger than four or smaller than four. It is also handy for groups that like games that are more traditional. To convert, just have one player be the Game Master and he or she takes on the role of the antagonist player in every scene.



## *Appendix One: Setting Design*

This setting design system is blatantly stolen from Jonathan White with permission from the thread: <http://www.indie-rpgs.com/forum/index.php?topic=22124.0>

Each setting is made up of seven elements (see the next page), plus the religion outlined in the game text. To make a setting, each player is given eight cards numbered 1 to 8. On these cards, the players write one setting element per card in rank from least important (1) to most important (8). This is a ranking of how important the element is to a player. Players needn't fill all the cards out at once. They can save cards for strategic moves later in the setting creation.

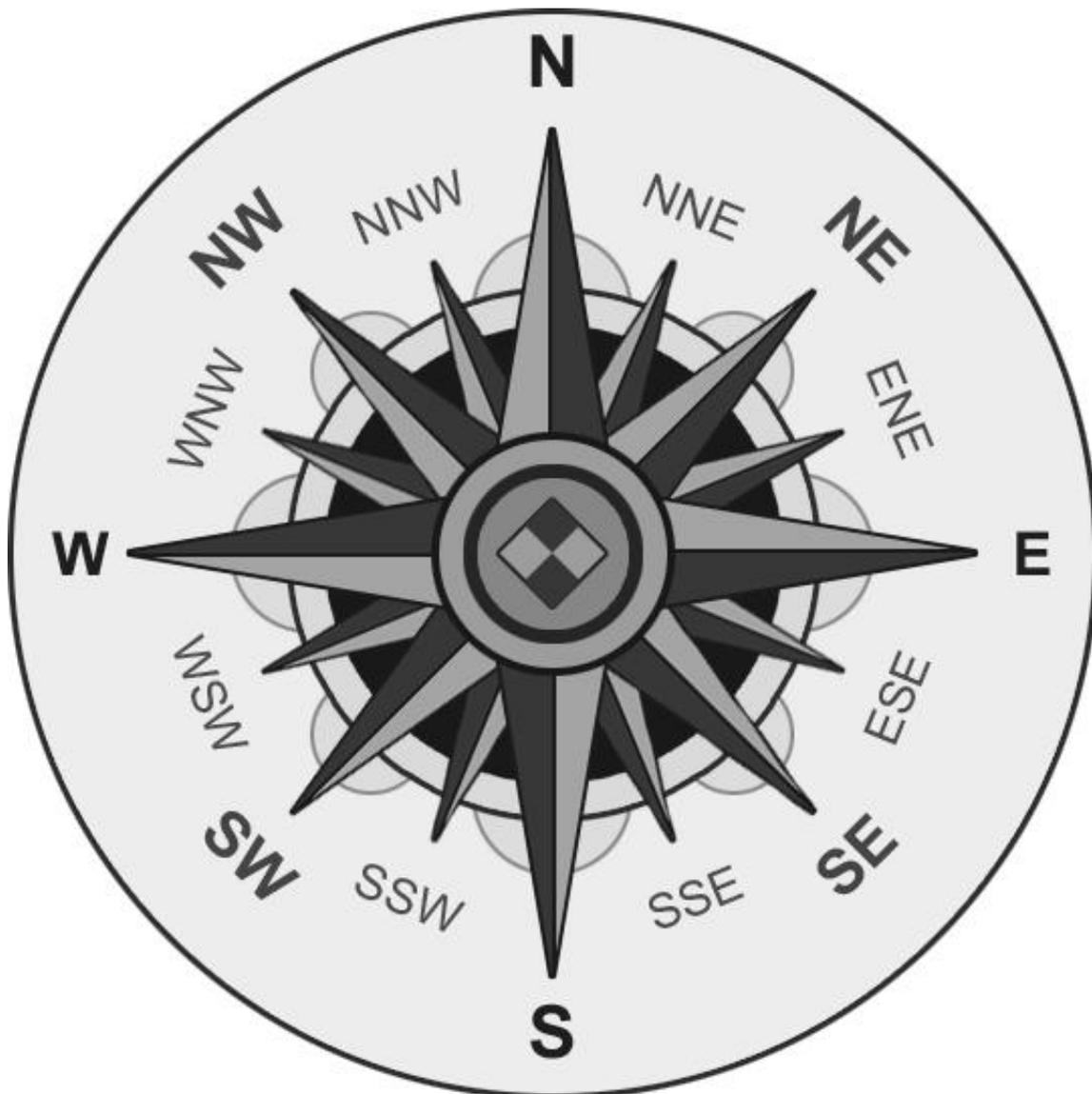
In addition, on each card, the player writes the specific types of items relating to the setting element that he would like to see in the setting. The number of items that can be written is equal to the ranking of the element. Example: One player may pick Technology as the most important to him. He writes Technology at the top of his number 8 card, and then writes some items that are important to him, like swords, iron age, horse draw carts, magic, war. Another player may rank Technology at 3 and write starships, alien creatures.

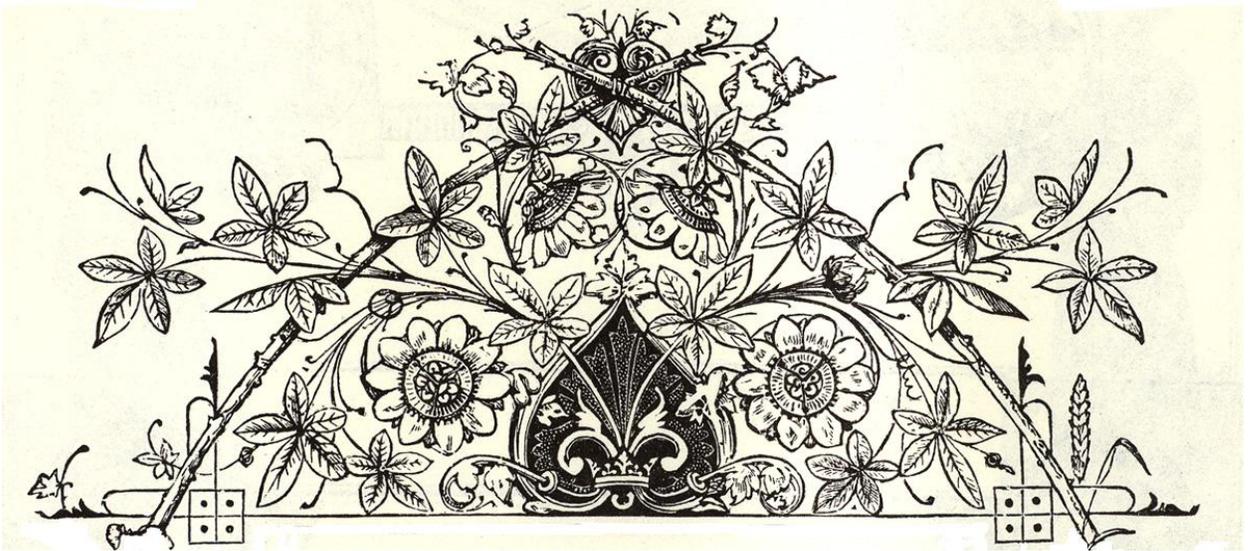
To play, proceed one category at a time, with each player ranking a category and writing down setting items and then unveiling the elements. When the cards are unveiled, the person who ranked the setting element the highest triumphs all others. These items will be included in the game. This winning player can also decide if other elements from those below him are allowed in the game. The goal should be to incorporate as many of the items as is possible.

A final rule allows a player to designate a card as a veto card. The rank of the veto card is equal to how many words can be crossed off. Like the other ranking cards, once the veto is played, it is used and cannot be used again.

The setting elements are as follows:

1. Technology (level of scientific advancement)
2. Geography (physical surroundings)
3. Physiology (physical bodies of the settings inhabitants)
4. Population (density, organization, dispersion and quantity of the settings inhabitants)
5. Politics (distribution and management of power amongst the population)
6. Supernatural (the nature of the unexplainable)
7. Conflict (the focus of tension and drama for the characters)





## *Appendix Two: Compass Rose*

Above is a compass rose that you can cut out and make into a spinner. The way to do this is get a piece of cardboard and a sewing pin. Print the compass rose out, glue it to the cardboard, cut it out. Then stick the pin through the center of the rose and stick it into another piece of cardboard. Make one line on the bottom piece of cardboard. This line is the pointer that will determine the antagonist player of the first scene for each of the players.

Youth  
 Coming of Age  
 Early Adulthood  
 Prime  
 Middle Age  
 Stately

Character's Name

Positive Traits	Negative Traits
Rose Of	Rose Of
Rose Of	Rose Of
Rose Of	Rose Of