



The Way Home



A ROLEPLAYING GAME
BY ERIKA CHAPPELL



The Way Home

A ROLEPLAYING GAME
OF
HORROR, SELF-DISCOVERY, & AMERICANA

BY
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POWERED BY THE
APOCALYPSE

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Heading Home

The path goes ever onward, worn deep over the years through the meadow and wood. Everywhere you go seems familiar, like you've walked here before, like you spent summers here long ago. Every tree has memories, every stream bubbles a familiar sound, the crunch of crisp the autumn leaves playing at memories half-formed.

You feel like around every bend, over every hill, you ought to round the corner and there would be your childhood home, from a storybook childhood you never had. Your pa chopping firewood, your ma laying a pie to cool on the sill, an old dog rushing to greet you.

If not this bend, the next. If not this hill, the one after.

This isn't a place, though you can touch it and smell it and taste the food pulled up from the soil. This isn't a time, though the nights and days pass like clockwork and the seasons go on around you. There are people here, and even though you know none of them, they aren't strangers, somehow. Every face feels familiar, every name feels right.

There are beasts, too. Terrors stalking your path, curses on tongues, the Devil on your heels and fear in your heart. They aren't strangers either.

You know this isn't where you belong. You have memories, just as distant as any other, of another place, one where you are supposed to be. Cities of light and noise, long roads traversed in a blink, a life faster than this. Was it a dream? Is this a dream?

Some days, you hitch a ride in a wagon or an old jalopy a-ways. Others, you board a raft or a paddle-wheel steamer and let it take you up the river. If you're lucky, you sneak aboard a train and ride the rails as far as it'll take you. But most days, you walk.

Every step takes you closer to home. You can feel it in your bones, deeper than the chill. You don't need a map to tell you where to go. Every mile is a mile closer. The path goes ever onward.

And so do you.

The Game

The Way Home is a roleplaying game for 1-4 players and a Game Master (GM). Players take the role of *The Lost*, people displaced in time and space. They are trapped in a vast and impossible *Wilderness*, a land populated by the folklore and imagery of classic Americana. They must make their way back to their real lives by overcoming their own personal faults, but the journey will be hard and there will be many obstacles.

The Way Home is a *Powered by the Apocalypse* system, but uses a few unusual tweaks of that system to better represent the tone. It is a game driven by imagery and feeling rather than narrative logic or consistency: you play to experience wonder, nostalgia, and dread.

A good soundtrack is vital while playing. Find yourself some gentle American instrumental folk music, with plunked guitar strings and violin. Light some candles at the table and keep your voices low. Lose yourself to the Wilderness.

The Conversation

Like all *Powered by the Apocalypse* games, *The Way Home* is built around a construct called The Conversation. This idea refers to the way we build stories while roleplaying, exchanging the familiar pattern of “What do you do?” and “What happens when I?” that drives the narrative.

The rules of a roleplaying game are what constrain the Conversation. In a game like this, where prior events can sometimes have a fairly loose connection to what comes after, these rules are especially important for keeping the storytelling compelling and consistent. The rules intrude into the Conversation in *Powered by the Apocalypse* games using a system called Moves.

A Move consists of two parts, a trigger and a result. The Trigger is a condition that is met in the narrative, like “When you are treated to the hospitality of the Folk”. When that thing happens in the fiction, the Move has been activated. You then read the move and follow the rules given by the result, rolling dice as needed. This will send the story in a new direction.

The players never say what move they want to use. Instead, they say what their characters do. Moves are used in accordance to their action, their actions are not dictated by moves.

Rolling Dice

Dice are used to provide uncertainty to the actions. Most moves, though not all, ask that players roll dice, with different results depending on what was rolled.

When you are asked to roll, roll two six-sided dice (2d6) and add the results together. When you are asked to roll + a statistic, add that stat onto the final result (or subtract, if it is a negative number.)

The Way Home is a roll-low game. That means that lower is always better. You want your stats to be negatives, not positives, and you want to roll the lowest numbers.

A final result on the dice of six or less is a hit. A roll of 7-9 is a partial failure. A roll of 10+ is a disaster. Each move will tell you what to do for each of these results.

Sometimes you will get modifiers to your results. A modifier forward means you must use that modifier the next time you make the appropriate roll. A modifier ongoing means you keep using the modifier as long as you meet the criteria, and then lose it once you no longer do. A modifier persistent means you keep the modifier indefinitely, as long as the roll in question meets the conditions. If the roll doesn't meet it, you don't lose the bonus.

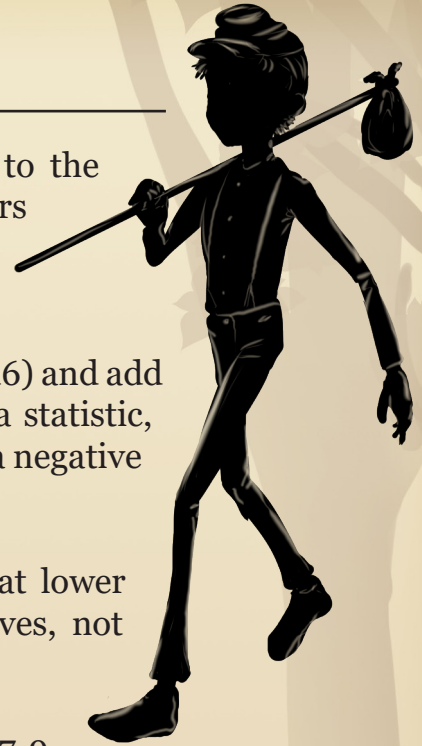
The GM never rolls dice for mechanical reasons, but may roll to randomly generate ideas.

Holds

Holds are a gameplay mechanic which is used to allow players to keep a modifier or narrative effect until they need it. You are holding onto it until you want to use it.

When you use a hold, you immediately gain the benefit it confers. This might be a modifier forward or ongoing, or simply a narrative change that takes effect immediately.

Holds are not generic or interchangeable. You don't spend a hold to do something, you spend *that* specific hold, or *those* holds, for an advantage.



Characters

Your character is the role that players take on in *The Way Home*. They are the Lost, the travelers who appear in the Wilderness seeking a way home.

Each member of the Lost was, at one time, from elsewhere. They are young Americans (teens and young adults) from various points of history from the modern day back to about the beginning of modern American society at the end of the Second World War. Through some sort of near-death experience, brought about by a personal failing or weakness, they found themselves trapped in the Wilderness, and now they seek to return home.

The Lost don't have complete memories of who they were before they came here. They remember their name and retain their personalities. If any of them knew each other before, they remember their relationships with them. Otherwise, though, they only have a vague recollection of their previous life, as though it happened in a dream.

Before anything else, your characters have a set of strong beliefs that keep them anchored and going forward. You don't necessarily know where these beliefs came from or why you believe them; it's part of the magic of the place, perhaps. These beliefs are...

1. I do not belong in the Wilderness.
2. If I keep moving, I will find the way.
3. The Lost must stick together.

Come up with the basic elements of your character. Give them a name, perhaps just a given name. Describe their physical appearance and mannerisms. Figure out where and when in modern American history they are from.



Statistics

Characters have five Action Stats, which are the statistics rolled on various Moves. All of them represent the weaknesses and shortcomings which lead to the character being trapped in the Lost.

Your stats are as follows.

- **Cowardice:** Your character's unwillingness to confront their fears.
- **Distrust:** Your character's hesitation to make a human connection.
- **Ignorance:** Your character's lack of knowledge and wisdom.
- **Indulgence:** Your character's greed and lack of restraint.
- **Anger:** Your character's lack of patience and calm.

Assign your stats the following spread in any order that you choose; -2, -1, 0, +1, and +3. Your highest action stat is your **Flaw**, the specific shortcoming that got you stuck in the Wilderness in the first place.

Finally, you have one last stat, called **Despair**. This is your character's unwillingness to keep trudging onward. Your Despair starts at -3.

Nature

Your character's Nature is the shadow of their personality, what is left of their skills, aptitudes, and temperament from the real world. Each Nature gives your character a single Move, and can be found on the next page.

Your Nature also determines your character's Flaw, the specific shortcoming that got you stuck in the Wilderness in the first place. This will be by far the lowest of your character's stats, and also the stat you need to roll on to grow as a person and eventually leave the Wilderness.

Many Nature moves ask you roll your Flaw stat. While you will frequently fail at these moves and have to deal with the consequences, this is a good way to use your Flaw frequently and thus gain the experience you need to overcome it. The consequence for failing Nature moves is usually less severe than failing a basic move.

Additionally, take a secondary Nature from any stat type. You don't take the associated Flaw; this one is just something you're good at, for a given value of good.

Natures

Select your Natures from the lists below.

COWARDICE NATURES

Fainthearted

You do your best not to be noticed in order to avoid danger or embarrassment.

Take -1 Ongoing to Withdraw if you have not spoken to any Wild in the scene.

Indirect

You have opinions about the conduct of others, but never have the courage to say it to their faces.

When you belittle or insult someone out of their earshot, take -1 forward to your next interaction with them.

If they overhear or learn what you said first, take +1 forward instead.

Insecure

You talk big, but talk is cheap. When you're called on your boasts, you fold like a cheap rug. Maybe one day you'll be able to back up your words.

When you boast or threaten, roll +Cowardice.

On a hit, your target backs down or backs away. On a 7-9, you falter or hesitate; either double down by putting yourself in danger, or withdraw. On a 10+, withdraw.

The Lost know your true nature; you always score a 10+ against other PCs.

DISTRUST NATURES

Cynic

You've always believed the worst in the people around you and have never hesitated to let them know what you think of them.

When you make a cutting remark at the expense of another, take +1 forward on your next Distrust roll and -1 forward to any other roll.

The penalty forwards on Distrust rolls can stack, creating a large modifier., while the bonuses to other rolls apply only once.

Pessimist

You've always expected to the worst outcome from any situation, and have, at the very least, learned to prepare for it.

When you go Onward, hold one. If you roll a 10+ on any of the following roll (except for the next Onward roll), state how it could have been worse to spend the hold, scoring a hit instead.

If you spend your Hold, take +1 forward to go Onward.

Skeptic

Unless you see it with your own two eyes, you don't believe it. Maybe not even then.

When you question how something can be possible, roll +Distrust.

On a hit, name a logical limitation of the event or creature you observed; it is true. On a 7-9, a lesser version of the limitation is true, at the GM's discretion. On a 10+, you are given immediate proof of just how wrong you are.

IGNORANCE NATURES

Know it All

You suffer from that terrible and common infliction of the uninformed: you act like you understand the world because the thing you are most ignorant of is your own ignorance.

When you offer nonsense advice to Assist another, the person you are helping suffers the consequences of a 6 instead of you.

Klutz

It's not your fault. You simply don't bother to pay attention to anything around you.

When you Press On, hold 3. Spend a hold before rolling a Move to take +1 forward, and gain 1 XP as compensation.

Insensitive

Social cues are hard, but you're particularly dense about them, and have a way of deeply offending everyone you come across.

When you blunder through a social interaction, roll Converse with +Ignorance. On a hit, you don't need to reveal a weakness to get 2 results. On a 7-9, you don't need to lie.

INDULGENCE NATURES

Libertine

You dislike rules and restrictions, and are much more likely to do something when somebody wants you not to do it.

When you violate a rule or request of your hosts, take +1 XP.

Restless

Waiting is the worst part.

When you let impatience get the best of you, Observe +Indulgence. If you find something juicy, take another XP.

Hungry

'Enough' is never a word that crosses your lips. You're never satisfied.

Ongoing while your Food and Rest Needs are unchecked, take +1 Indulgence and -1 to the stat of your choice. You may choose to erase any of your Needs at any time.

ANGER NATURES

Spiteful

Nothing is as satisfying, nothing tastes so sweet, as revenge.

If something Hurts you and unchecks your Health need, take -2 forward to Strike it.

Cold

Some people rage, they scream, they make their anger obvious. Not you.

Each time you go Onward, hold 1. Spend that hold with any roll to use Anger instead of whatever stat you are supposed to you.

Cool Off

Sometimes, you get so mad you don't know what to do. It overwhelms you entirely, and you must remove yourself or you don't know what will happen.

You can Withdraw with Anger: you'll always score at least a partial. If you do, ongoing until you go Onward, take +1 to Anger.

History

Before your character came to the Wilderness, they lived a normal life somewhere in the United States of America, roughly from 1950 to 2020. The Wilderness is a kind of collective unconscious manifestation of cultural nostalgia for that set of cultures, even if the individuals inside them might not have any nostalgia at all for the era and the horrors it represents.

The Wilderness smooths that over too. Makes it hard to think about. Nostalgia is awful that way, cloying, blinding. Buries the past in fog and lies.

Privately, think to yourself who your character was before they got here. Answer the following questions to yourself.

- When were they born, where did they live, and how did they identify?
- How did their Flaw lead to their near-demise, to the Wilderness?
- Who and what awaits them back home, that they want to return to?

Do not tell the other Lost, but in private, tell the GM. This will allow them to weave your character's true history into the narrative. Think hard about it, and consider playing someone whose stories are not usually told.

Possessions

You don't get to take things into the Wilderness with you from your old life, at least not directly, but the habits and patterns of your old life will often carry through.

Everyone is dressed appropriately for the Wilderness, in hard-wearing clothes of a style befitting the vague timeframe and location. They have a hat, a pair of decent shoes, and a coat or cloak to keep them warm. You probably have a walking stick of some kind.

The exact details will vary from person to person, and not always be comfortable to them. The Wilderness chooses clothes with the same kind of dreamlike logic as everything else.

Everyone carries with them a single valuable possession. This possession is something eminently useful to a traveler and vagabond, which will help you on your journey and be useful every day. They have to be small enough that you can carry it with you, and not something you can use up, though they may require fuel or other supplies to keep working.

Some examples might include a pocket knife, a fine watch, a reliable compass, or a musical instrument. Remember to stay within the bounds of the technological era. Instead of a flashlight, perhaps an oil lamp? Rather than a modern pistol, a cap-and-ball revolver?

If your possession could be used as a weapon, take +1 Despair. If it is a weapon, take +2 Despair.

If the possession has no use, but reminds you of home or the people you left behind, take -1 Despair.

Finally, choose 2 of the following.

- Preserved food, enough to feed the entire group in a tough spot.
- A matchbox with a single match, enough to start a cozy campfire.
- Three pennies, a fair sum of money in these parts.
- A horse or other riding beast, on its last legs.
- A map, sparsely labeled.
- A backpack or satchel which rests comfortably on your shoulders.

Remember this: when your Possession would be relevant to an action, take -1 to the associated roll. Otherwise, it is simply used in the narrative.

Write down your possessions, and you're ready to start play.

Game Rules

The Way Home uses a series of Moves to drive gameplay forward. These Moves interact with the Threats in the Wild to create a story, and drive the characters forward through the action.

Basic Moves

These are the basic moves everyone has access to, and can use at any time, providing the events of the narrative allows it. Remember: a Move is performed by invoking its Trigger in fiction, not by just saying what you're doing. Describe action, don't just list off the Moves you want to make.

Withdraw

When you attempt to leave a scene, roll +Cowardice.

On a hit, you make it free and clear and are back on your path. On a 7-9, you make it, but abandon all but one person or thing in the process. On a 10+, you escape, but find yourself alone and lost, and take +1 Despair.

A lot of the time, the players just want to escape and move on down the road, and Withdraw is how you do that. It's not a Cowardly thing, to withdraw, but when fear seizes your heart, you can do so without thinking and leave things behind.

Converse

When you try to connect with another, Wild or Lost, roll +Distrust.

On a hit, the conversation is enlightening and humanizing. Reveal a secret about your character and choose two:

- Take -1 to your next Despair roll
- Give -1 to their next Despair roll
- Compel the other person to tell a truth about themselves.
- Get a hint about a Wild's weakness
- Reveal the next Layer of a Wild
- Restore a previous Layer.

On a 7-9, tell a lie about your character, then choose one of the above. On a 10+, tell your lie, and take +1 Despair.

In the Wilderness, all you have is each other. By Conversing, with the other Lost, with the Wild, you can learn, grow, and support one another to make it through.

The nature of these conversations is determined by the topics you choose from the roll. Remember, the world works on a dreamlike logic of understanding and preconception, and logic matters less than comprehension and growth. A conversation with two friends about a being can reveal its true nature even if you haven't seen it, or clear up a misunderstanding that was as real as anything a moment before.

It's a strange world. Learn to think in strange ways.

Observe

When you cast about for information, roll +Ignorance.

On a hit, reveal the next layer of a Wild. On a 7-9, the next layer is revealed, but in a way that puts you in a position of powerlessness before it. On a 10+, the GM lies to you about the next layer.

Though the Wilderness doesn't make any sense, that doesn't mean that paying attention and trying to learn from your surroundings is worthless. There are little hints everywhere, and a strange logic that underpins everything which you can tease out, if you care to.

What you observe is up to you and the GM. In mechanical gameplay terms, it doesn't really matter, but it is a huge element of the narrative and you should take the time to craft it.

Strike

When you use physical violence, roll +Anger.

On a hit, you create a brief window, a chance to escape, or make another move. On a 7-9, you give time for somebody else to act, but you yourself are drawn in further. On a 10+, either you destroy your target, and take +1 Despair as you stand over it, or the GM may choose to reveal the next layer.

There are times where you will need to use violence, though you are ill-suited for it. Violence and anger can be destructive, but it can also be justice, and The Wilderness abhors both. Violence in its naked form breaks the illusion of peace. It lays bare the world as it is and it forces change onto an unchanging world, and that won't do in this dreamworld.

Hurt

When you are subject to violence, roll your Flaw.

On a hit, you press on. On a miss, erase your Health Need. If it's already erased, then on a 7-9, you hesitate, falter, or flee. On a 10+, you surrender, pass out, or give up.

Injury is as real and unreal as anything else in the Wilderness, as shaped by expectation and perception. Even pain can feel distant and hazy, retreating into that nebulous past, but a tragic condition of human beings is that sometimes we cling to the pain, we use it to justify ourselves and our Flaws.

The Lost can take one Injury without it affecting them too much in the moment, but that injury will come back. It should always be specific and colour their actions: at least specify a location for it.

Assisting Others

When you put yourself on the line help another, roll 1d6.

The player you're helping can opt to use your dice instead of theirs.

If the dice is a 6, you suffer consequences for intervening.

You can only get through this by working together, and everyone in the group knows it. However, there is always a temptation to be greedy and selfish, because helping others means putting yourself at risk.

Onward

When you press on, roll +Despair. Take +2 for each Need left unchecked.

On a hit, you trudge forward. On a 7-9, you falter or hesitate. Increase your Despair by 1. On a 10+, either another character takes +1 Despair for you, or you give in to the Wilderness and become part of the Wild.

Then, uncheck Food, Water, and Rest.

When you move on from a place entirely, not merely escaping but actually hitting the road again and moving on, you roll Onward. This is a good point for a session to end, but in any case it moves you onto the next 'episode' of your journey.

Two players can theoretically keep one another going forever by taking despair for one another, leaning on one another to press forward. It moves them farther and farther from home, but it doesn't matter if you have each other.

Needs

The journey does have a price, and you have to pay it if you want to continue onward. It's a continuous process.

On your sheet are five Needs: Food, Water, Rest, Health, and Love. These are the things that keep your character on the road, and without them the journey becomes that much harder. Without them, it becomes that much more tempting to stay here in the Wilderness.

When you fulfill a Need, you check that box off if it's empty. If it's full, it does nothing, but hey, you did it. Fullfilling a need requires something substancial: a drink from a river won't provide Water, but a full canteen will. An apple isn't enough Food, but a meal is. Rest requires shelter from the elements, Health requires medical treatment, and Love...

Well, Love is special, and personally defined. It can be the love of your companions around the campfire, it can be the validation of a community that offers you a place, it can be the touch of somebody who cares, even just for the moment. Love in the Wilderness is precious, rare, and always fleeting.

Advancement

You do make progress, even if it's hard to tell. The roads are taking you somewhere, after all, even if it is a winding and uncertain path.

You have a Progress track on your character sheet with three dots, which you will fill as you confront the Wilderness. Mark the track...

- ... when you roll with your Flaw.
- ... when you reveal the final form of a Wild.
- ... if you leave the world better when you press Onward.

When you fill the track completely, erase the dots and reduce one of your Stat by 1. This can be any of your stats, but you must do it: you can't avoid growing, even if you want to, except by giving in to despair.

If your Flaw reaches 0, you must make a choice. Either you choose to return home, or you choose to stay in the Wilderness forever to guide others.

This choice is final.

Anachronisms

An Anachronism is a piece of the a Lost's original life bleeding through into the Wilderness. It is a connection, however faint, to the world and memories that have been left behind. Anachronisms are never easy to find, and even hard to spend time with; the Wilderness likes to hide holes in its fabric. However, if there is one in an area when the Lost arrive, they'll soon learn about it.

Every Anachronism is unique and only affects a single Lost.

When you behold one of your Anachronisms, tell the table what it is and how it is personally connected to you. Reveal a memory of this object and the way it affected your life. Remove 1 Despair

If the Anachronism cannot be moved, or you refuse to move it, and name a Skill from your old life. Write it down on your sheet. Whenever that Skill would be relevant to a roll, take -1.

If the Anachronism is an object, add it to your inventory. It works like any other object, giving -1 in situations where it is relevant. As during character creation, if it could be used as a weapon, add +1 Despair, if it is a weapon, add +2.

If you leave an Anachronism behind, you'll never find it again.



The Wilderness

The GM takes the role of the Wilderness, the mysterious and non-place that the players are trapped. Your job is to play the world and everything in it, providing characters and events for the players to interact with.

In your identity as the Wilderness, you neither wish to best the players, nor make things easier for them. The Wilderness wants to keep people in it, but it also wants to see people grow, and these incompatible desires form the central and unresolvable contradiction of the unreality. It's the nature of nostalgia: it longs to stay with old things, but exists in certain knowledge that you cannot.

As the Wilderness, you must...

- Present a world that is familiar, beautiful, and sad.
- Populate it with twisted Americana.
- Leave the players never sure where they stand.
- Show the road going ever onward.

As the Wilderness, you have Moves, but not the way the players do. Your moves are all narrative and no mechanics: you simply describe it as the narrative whenever it is your turn to speak. You never roll dice or muck around with mechanics, you just say what's happened.

Speaking of, don't actually say the name of your Move. Treat it as a guide to inform the narration, not as mechanics you invoke in the game.

Unlike regular Powered by the Apocalypse games, you don't have Hard Moves (that is to say, nasty things to do to the players when they fail) because the consequences are built into every Player move. All you need to do is keep up the pace of the story.

Your moves are...

- Lure the Lost with temptation, easy solutions, and hope.
- Follow the purpose of the Wild you present.
- Establish a Wild, decide their Layers, and introduce them to the players.
- Tempt them with an Anachronism.
- Pull away a Layer when they let their guard down.
- Level consequences to erase one of their Needs.
- Remind the players that the Devil is on their heels.

The Wild

Everyone in the Wilderness is The Wild. They may not seem wild; they may seem like regular folks, even. But something is always off about them. Something is always hidden. Nothing is as it first seems.

We refer to the Wild has having *layers*, with identities nested and hidden inside one another. A Wild could be what it seems and have just one layer, but they'll usually have two, and maybe as many as five. Layers can be revealed by moves, or by the GM when they see a good chance in the narrative, and each layer has simple mechanical elements in the form of custom Moves.

The layers should not be spoken aloud to the players. The GM should simply tell the players what they see and let them come to their own conclusions.

The GM should generally know all the layers of each member of the Wild, and hint to them, but can play fast and loose, especially if an obviously new layer presents itself in the emerging narrative. The layers can be nested, and even loop back, as things turn out to be as the originally appeared despite it all.

When there are no layers left, what would expose the next layer instead exposes a *Weakness*. Taking advantage of the weakness will drive off or end the Wild.

A weakness can be a literal weak point, an action or item which will defeat or mollify them, something they fear, or, most appropriately, a Flaw that can be exploited. It can also simply be a truth that disarms them, as not all Wilds need to be defeated. If there's no problem, the players can simply choose to press Onward, and that's okay.

The Folk

Purpose: *To welcome travellers.*

All people, and things like people, in The Wild are the Folk, at least at first. They are kind, simple people who want to help, even if they have their secrets.

When you are treated to the hospitality of The Folk, roll +Distrust.

On a hit, you enjoy yourself, removing 1 Despair and giving a -1 Forward. On a partial, choose one. On a 10+, you find yourself refusing their hospitality, and in doing so reveal their next layer.

You may choose not to roll at all, taking an automatic hit, but taking +1 Indulgence.

The Beastial

Purpose: *To feed.*

The Beastial are mindless creatures who want nothing but to sate their hunger. They attempt to attack and physically hurt the protagonists, and are dogged in their determination. There is nothing to do but fight or run, as they do not stoop to conversation.

The Puritan

Purpose: *To confound the Devil and destroy His works.*

In reaction to the terrible things in the Wilderness, many turn to an extreme form of isolation. They are a manifestation of Distrust in its purest form, as the Puritan trusts not even their own senses.

The Puritan is often the most overly violent force in the Wilderness. Despite their best efforts, their methods do nothing but spread more Despair.

The Cursed

Purpose: *To take from others to help themselves.*

There are many ways to be cursed in the Wilderness, from magic and nature and accident of birth. The Cursed seeks assistance to rid them of their plight, but the act of lifting a curse always has a price: either you pay it, or you have to find somebody else that will.

The Cursed will use many methods to get help. They will play for sympathy, use deception, or mislead travellers. But while their methods are underhanded, their pain is real.

When you sacrifice to dispel a curse, roll +Distrust.

On a hit, the GM names what will burden you from now on. Accept it to free the cursed. On a 7-9, taking on that burden also gives +1 Despair. On a 10+, you lack the moral courage to take on the curse, and take +1 Despair from that realization.

If the Cursed is the final Layer of the Wild, it is pacified by this sacrifice. If it is not, the next layer is revealed.

The Dead

Purpose: *To get others to join them.*

When the Dead walk in the Wilderness, they reach out to the living. They desire company beyond the grave, and really, it doesn't seem so bad. The Dead are rarely overtly violent. Their invitation may or may not be hostile or lethally threatening, but they will rarely communicate this well.

When you ask the dead to yield, roll +Cowardice.

On a hit, they pause or hesitate, and attempt to communicate. On a 7-9, they move to trap or secure you so they may educate you, but you can react. On a 10+, your nerve fails, but the trap is already sprung.

The Fae

Purpose: *To trick others to stay in the Wilderness.*

The Fae don't want anyone to leave, but can't use force to hold people. Instead, they attempt to bind people into hidden contracts, to become timeless and a part of the Wilderness like they are. A Wild cannot lie if one of their layers is a Fae, unless their final level is the Devil.

When bound by the Fae, the GM holds 3 on you. They can spend this hold to make a request of you; to go somewhere or do something.

When you resist the requests of the Fae, roll +Indulgence. On a miss, you shake free of their compulsions. The hold is spent, but you need not do anything. On a 7-9, you are free to act as you choose, but the hold remains. On a 10+, you must do it, or take 1 Despair.

The Witch

Purpose: *To put others under their thrall.*

Those who have made deals with the Devil are Witches. They hold great power and knowledge of the world, but are burdened with their fealty to it. They lash out at their invisible shackles by attempting to ensnare others.

When the Witch dispenses advice, roll +Ignorance.

On a hit, the GM tells you what lies the Witch has told, and you hold 1. Spend your hold for a -1 at any time, or a -2 to act against the Witch. On a 7-9, accept the advice warily, taking a -1 forward. On a 10+, the advice is an order, and ongoing, you are at +1 to any action that defies it.

The Devil

Purpose: *To tempt, to deal, and to collect.*

The Devil lurks in many forms in the Wilderness. Some say this is His domain, and many forces here swear fealty to Him. His beasts and servants worm their way into everything. The Devil offers the easy way out, the fast way home, the simple solution. It will cost you nothing but your soul.

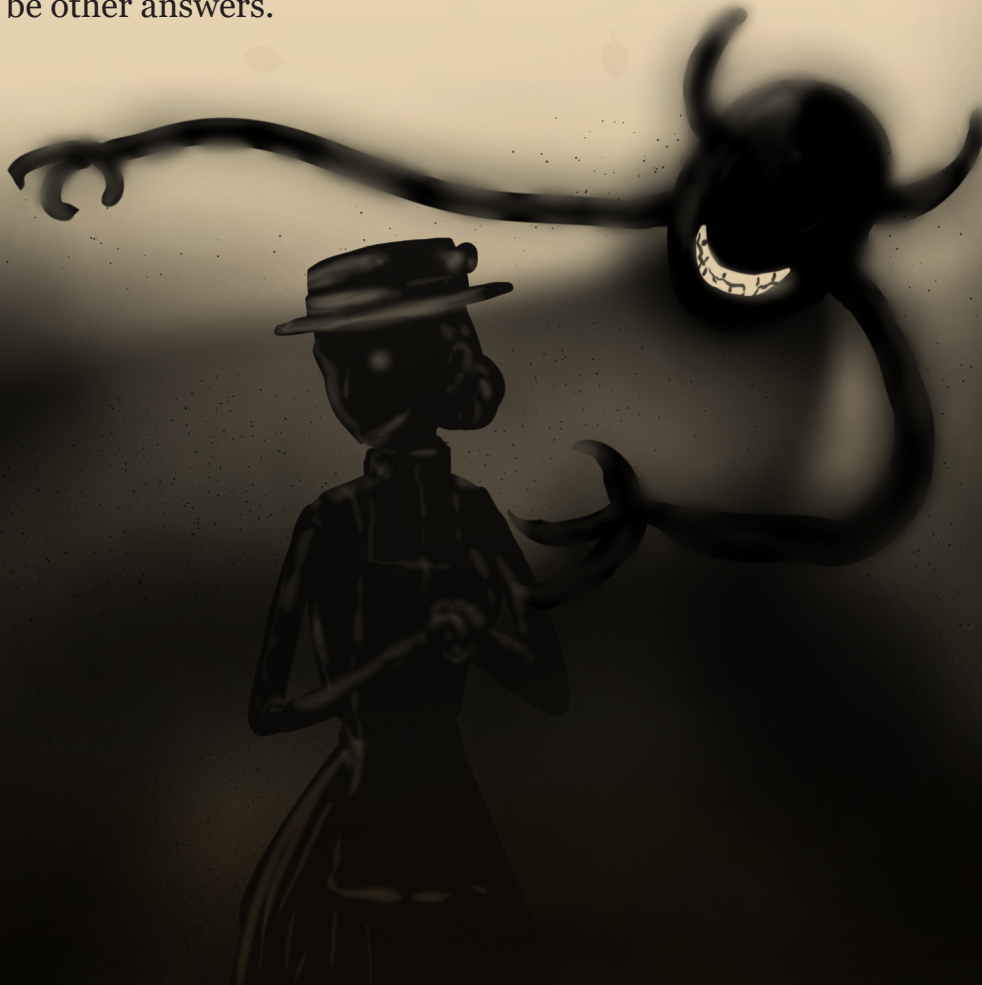
When the Devil makes an offer, make a choice. Take the deal and get what is offered, no tricks or hidden conditions. In exchange, you give up your soul, and you automatically score 10+ on your Onward rolls from now on.

The Devil can offer anything except a way out of the Wilderness. When the Devil makes an offer, it is always obvious what it is and the consequences are. The Devil does not trick you or get you on technicalities; He wants you to make the choice yourself.

The Devil knows the Lost value one another, and will always try to make the power they offer make it at least theoretically easier for the other Lost to get home, at the cost of one of their souls. Often, it can simply be to defeat another Wild that is blocking the path of the palyers outright.

The Devil is only ever the final layer of a Wild.

The Devil always has the same weakness: He can only ever offer a binary choice, yes or no, and is powerless if you choose a third option. Violence is a no, but there may be other answers.



Examples

It may be that the best way to understand this game is to see some examples, so here's some ways the game might work.

The players come upon a town of Folk, who offer food, drink, and lodging. Unable to leave well enough alone, one player investigates and reveals their next layer: the townsfolk are animated corpses, and they had free beds for them because every night they crawl back to their graves!

The Dead try to get them to stay in town, Tempting them to stay one more night, and one player is dragged drunkenly towards a grave. When they try to fight them off, the horrified reaction of the other corpses reveals they were really The Folk all along; their being dead doing nothing to hinder them just being nice and hospitable. A grave was simply a nice place to rest for them.

The players meet a scarecrow at an intersection. The scarecrow tells them she has been cursed by a witch to take this form, and as she is unable to move, she cannot go back to the witch to beg leniency. She begs the players carry her to the Witch's lair. They do, and when they reach the lair, it is empty.

The GM moves the scarecrow to the status of Fae, though the players are not told. The scarecrow tempts them with a lavish meal in exchange for their assistance, asking them to stay and eat their fill and implying the feast will last forever. Those that sample the food are bound by the fae, and must be freed by the others. One member pleads for the same mercy they showed her, restoring the scarecrow to The Cursed. The scarecrow admits simply being lonely, and frees them of their bonds.

The players encounter an old man raving about the influence of the Devil, who chases them and threatens them with an axe. When he has them trapped, he makes an offer to save their souls through work, giving advice that idle hands are the Devil's playthings. The GM has moved to treating the Puritan as a Witch and the players roll the move, some falling into his thrall.

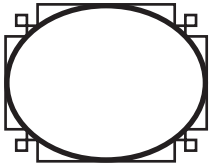
Later, a character has a chance to speak with the woodsman during work, and Converses, through doing so revealing their next layer. The Woodsman is revealed to be the Devil himself, and His secret revealed, the Devil makes an offer: he'll give one of the players His axe, which can clear a faster path through the forest, in exchange for one of their souls.

I am the Lost

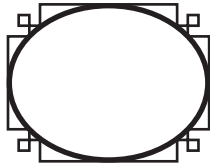
*I do not belong in the Wilderness.
If I keep moving, I will find the way.
The Lost must stick together.*

Primary Nature

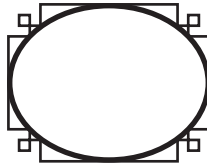
Secondary Nature



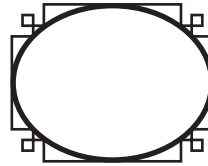
Cowardice



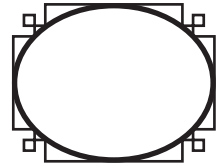
Distrust



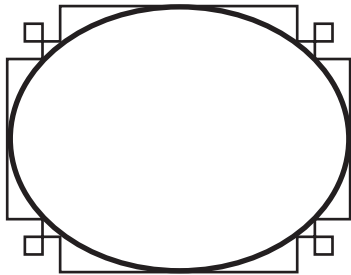
Ignorance



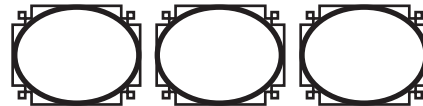
Indulgence



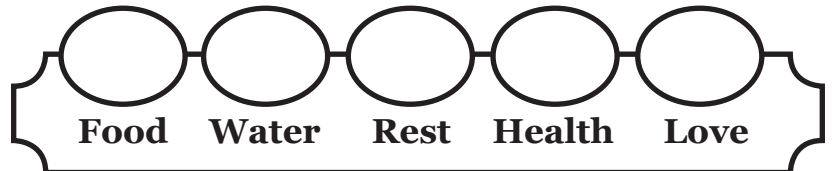
Anger



Despair



Progress



Food

Water

Rest

Health

Love

Needs

Once, long ago, my name was...

*By the strength in my limbs, the
will of my heart, and the grace of
God, I will be once again.*

And I will return home.

Inventory & Skills