

THE JOURNEY

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A desolate and barren winter landscape. Metal wheels against rusty rails and an eternal pendulum motion. Hungry and exhausted. Strangers and shadows. Carrying shards from the past. Is it only a dream? The hope fades and disappears. Only the name remains. The Turning Point.

Introduction

The Journey is a scenario that takes the players on a quiet and increasingly darker journey through a frozen landscape, in the aftermath of civilization's doom. The focus of the game is to interpret an ominous feeling with brusque dialogues and an ever-present silence. The Journey is loosely influenced by Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, jeep-form and classic Swedish freedom role-playing á 2010. It is designed for four players and takes about four hours to play.

This guide is intended to you who want to be a game master of The Journey. Your role as a game master will be limited in this scenario, but of great importance to the game. The format of The Journey enables the players to practically play it through without you as soon as the scenario is started and up and running. It can in some ways be compared to a pianola. On the other hand you play a crucial role to get a beautiful, memorable and coherent story. Your task is to enhance the mood of the game, and the poetic elements by introducing and ending scenes, to lift up the inner sadness of the storyline and being an ever-present audience. The role as the game master I hope you will take on with joy.

This guide consists of the following parts:

1. Synopsis of The Journey
2. How you prepare to lead The Journey
3. How you prepare the participants for the Journey
4. How to game master The Journey
5. Conclusion
6. Attachment with all scenes

1. Synopsis of The Journey

Atmosphere

The Journey is about four tattered, frozen and hungry souls travelling to a place called The Turning Point. The Turning Point is not a place in its physical sense but rather a symbol for the strive towards hope and promises of salvation. A place that maybe doesn't even exist.

The scenario builds around the players interpreting the characters' journey and the closer they come to the place called The Turning Point, the darker and more ominous, more discomforting the scenario develops into. The setting is a barren winter landscape where the civilization has vanished a long time ago. The atmosphere should be almost poetical and tranquil but intimidating and furthestmost the pressure of the omnipresent secluded silence. Every character has a unique emotion and function in the tale. The players are lulled into The Journey with every scene the tale becomes darker and the ominous passages appear more clearly.

Scenes

The story consists of 26 predestined scenes that the characters are to display. The scene dialogues shall be short and the players will try to interpret the dense atmosphere with so few words as possible. The scenes shall be played as if in front of an audience (the other players and the Game Master). It will encourage a more theatrical discreet acting. An important feature to The Journey is that the scenes are not about what happens in the scene since that is already predestined, but rather how the scene is conveyed.

Gaming techniques

Every scene clearly states which characters participate in that scene and what their objectives in the scene are. Different gaming techniques that are being used in The Journey are monologues, storytelling monologues and shadows.

Monologues

A player gives a monologue to the rest of the players. The rest of the players are the audience. In some scenes several players give monologues and it's important that the players do it in the right order which the scene states.

Storytelling monologue

This technique means that a player gives a monologue. When the player reaches a specific part of the monologue a new player continues the monologue. The scenes involving this technique clearly describe what the monologues are about and when it is time to change player to continue the story. The scenario uses this technique for example handling action sequences.

Shadows

It means a player takes the role of a shadow in a scene when other players are acting. The purpose is to enhance emotions or to stress certain actions. For example the shadow can whisper or put a hand on the shoulder of the other players and in that way affect the scene.

Music

A good thing to use in the Journey is a music soundtrack. It only consists of three different tracks. One track starts and ends the scenario, the second track is used in the most hostile scenes involving the stranger and the third track is used and looped in all other scenes.

The game master (GM)

The GM's task is to guide the players through the scenario by giving short introductions to establish the scenes and to end the scenes by short monologues. The purpose is to establish and enhance the atmosphere of the scene. It is also important that the GM helps the players to understand and follow the scene instructions.

The main theme in the story is that Death is accompanying the group journey towards the Turning point. Ever since the Daughter became sick he has been travelling with the party. Death is symbolized by a grey invisible boy ever present. He is not hostile but rather friendly, tenderly and dreamily waiting to finally embrace the daughter. For every scene the Grey Boy is coming closer to the Daughter and finally takes her hand and wanders off with her. It is a good idea to incorporate the Grey Boy in 7-8 scenes, more seldom at first and more often towards the end.

The Roles

The Journey consists of four characters. It is the Mother, the Daughter, the Man and the Stranger. How they evolve during The Journey is the central part of this game.

The Mother is a woman who lives to save her daughter. The Daughter is ill, dying even. The Daughter is somewhere around 12-14 years and should be played as a young woman, not as a child. The Man has been travelling with the Mother and the Daughter for some time. He is in a relationship with the Mother, but is not the father of the Daughter. He is a responsible man that dreams of the Turning Point. The Stranger has just shortly assembled to the group and has made the promise of taking them to the Turning Point.

Description of the characters

The Mother

The knowledge is ruthless. Not being able to protect what you love more than yourself. Your daughter.

To drag a suitcase towards a nonexistent dream.

The harshness of the past, and soothing tears of a grieving lie caressing your cheek.

Not having the strength any longer. It hurts, it hurts so much.

A whispering endlessness. Solitary vastness. Ashes in the wind.

Knowing that the journey has come to its end.

The Daughter

Lungs that ache. The hand holds a doll tightly. The mouth is filled with blood.

“Mother, why does it hurt so much?”

Frozen, fragile, pale. Almost nothing left. Maybe twelve, maybe fourteen.

“Mother, when are we there?”

Fleeing memories. Dreams about things that no longer is.

“Are all people dead, mother?”

“I don’t know.”

The Man

The fragileness of dreams. Wandering ahead without asking. Fearing getting a truthful answer.

Repeating the repetitive. Never look back. There are only memories and ashes.

Promise you won’t hesitate. The dream is just out of reach. Soon. The Turning Point.

I promise.

Remember. To survive is a nightmare. But the fear of waking up is greater.

The Stranger

“A beast they said and I beast I was”

A lone wolf. That hungry returns to the same spot. After the same prey. Again and Again.

A false prophet that lets the lost ride upon the pale horse. And his name is Death.

Turning Points is his creation. Built from lies and deceit. A place where only broken dreams reach.

Do as the realm of death and follow his long shadow. Into the darkness. Towards the Turning Point. Follow him.

The Stranger.

The main parts of the Scenario

The scenario consists of 26 scenes.

Act 1 The Journey Scene 1-2

The first scenes set the ominous mood of the scenario that is central to the coming scenes. The characters are presented and the place the Turning Point as well. The hunger and the cold lies as a wet blanket over the atmosphere. The Game Master is setting the tune by describe death in the shape of the grey boy. The boy has been following the Daughter ever since she became ill. Important parts of these scenes are the Mother's promises to the Daughter that everything will be fine, the Stranger's empty words and the Man's increasing urge to reach the Turning Point.

Act 2 The Turning Scene 3-11

The scenario accelerates with the group's encountering with other people and are forced to escape. The Stranger hurts the Man and forces him to give the Mother to the Stranger for a night. The Man sees no other way out than consent to this and persuades the Mother. After this the party is drawn more and more under the Stranger's power. A situation of explicit assault and power arises.

Act 3 The Cottage Scene 12-16

They are exhausted and without food. They seek refuge in an abandoned cottage. There they find food and shelter, warmth. A temporary sanctuary. The Stranger disappears from the cottage for an unknown period of time. A few moments of peace, but the reality comes back. The Man tries to persuade the Mother to run. She can't due to the Daughter's worsened

state. The Daughter tries to convince the Man to kill her. She can't handle to suffer any longer. He refuses. They are snowed in. The Stranger finally comes back.

Act 4 The Settlement Scene 17-26

Everything is forced to a conclusion in the cottage. They have run out of food. The Stranger gives his proposition to the Mother. They must kill the Daughter and eat her. Her life can save the others. No decision is made. The Mother then takes a horrific decision. She and the Man escape and leaves the Daughter behind. They fail when the Man goes through the ice. The Stranger takes them back to the cottage. The Man's knee is mutilated by the Stranger. The Daughter is killed and eaten. They survive. The Stranger and the Mother leaves the Man behind to die in the cottage, alone. The last scene is when the Mother, with the Stranger with his head in her lap, tells other survivors about the Turning Point and how they can take them there.

2. How you prepare to run the Journey

Below is a checklist of what is important to think about when running the Journey:

- Read through the synopsis of the Journey. It'll give you a good understanding of the scenario, its structure, mechanics and the tune that ought to be conveyed.
- Think thoroughly about how the scenes are constructed to be conveyed. Brusque but quiet dialogues. A lot of silence. A sense of theatrical drama. The gravity should be on how to convey what happens more than the action itself.
- Read through the Scene Guide that'll give you more details regarding every scene. It'll be your tool when playing the scenario. There it is clearly stated what happens in every scene.
- The next step is to read through all characters and their instructions. It is a lot of pages but most part of it is the same for all characters and there are a lot of spaces between the texts. However it is very important that you understand every character's journey from start to end and its mood. Please put some effort into this necessity.
- Make sure you're aware of all happenings and the general storyline. Don't feel that you have to know about every detail since the players are responsible of put it into the game through their scene instructions.
- Have knowledge about the characters relations between each other and how they evolve as the game moves on.

- Think through how to express the mood of the game. Reasoning around words as desolation, hunger, fatigue and weakness, a fading hope. How will you convey the mood to the players with your monologues?
- Make sure that you are comfortable with the techniques that the players will use.
- How do you want to express the Grey Boy, the ever-present Death? There are some tips under “How to run The Journey”
- Redecorate the room so it will be as empty as possible and give the players a chair each. Tables and sofas are forbidden. As well as crisps, candy, soda cans and other disturbing moments.
- Run through the music and learn the three soundtracks.
- Go through your own feelings and how to get the most out of taking part in this marvelous journey.

3. How to prepare the players to play the Journey

It is of outmost importance that you prepare the players for the Journey. It probably differs from some scenarios and role plays they've played so it is important to go through the information, expectations and the scenario's game plan. This will hopefully avoid dissatisfied players due to wrong expectations or insecure players that are unsure of what is expected of them. Make sure you put some time on this phase since it is crucial and there are some information to go through.

Here are a number of key issues to go through with the players:

- They will interpret a predestined story. The focus is on how the players interpret the scenes.
- The story's events will be unknown to the players, so hopefully they will be curious to come along the evolvement of the Journey.
- The Journey is set in a post-apocalyptic environment. Many years have passed since the catastrophe and the memories are fading. The focus is set on the present and not telling tales about how good things used to be. There is no longer such thing as civilization and there are few survivors. No one is to be trusted. You are practically out of food and the winter is coming. The world has become a really bad place to be in.
- The mood of the Journey is a key issue. Key words as desolation, hunger, fatigue and weakness, a fading hope. These words shall permeate the players' interpretation of the Journey.

- The story will darker as every scene goes on. The players must be aware of that and show it in their gaming.
- The players will embody four characters. The Mother, the Daughter, the Man and the Stranger. Tell about their relations to each other when the game starts. Draw lots or hand out the characters as you find suitable.
- Tell about the Turning Point. That is the goal of their journey. They shouldn't just see it as a physical place but also a state of mind, of hope and comfort that they want to achieve.
- Run through the mechanics of the scenes, how they work and the scene instructions. Make sure that you explain what is expected from the players in the scenes they will participate in.
- The players monologues ought to be brusque, short and they shouldn't be afraid of being quiet.
- Tell about the techniques used in this game. Regular scene playing, monologues, story telling monologues and shadows.
- Enhance the importance of not reading ahead. The rule is one scene at the time.

- Inform the players that the Journey s influenced by the novel The Road by Cormac McCarthy and that if they've read or seen it they are welcome to use it as a source of inspiration while they play. If they haven't read it they ought to do it after having played the scenario.

4. How to game master the Journey

In one way you have a very little role to play when the game has started, and in another your have a crucial function to fill. The content of the scenes the players handle themselves but your job is to enhance the ominous mood, put in the perspective of the Grey Boy, supporting the players, start and end the scenes with short monologues and outmost being a present audience to the scenes played.

Here are a few words on the way:

Starting and ending scenes

Setting the mood in the introducing monologues is a good idea. Make sure you're not that talkative but rather short in your monologues. Convey the atmosphere, not the setting! Tips are available in every scene introduction.

In the scene instructions it clearly states when the scene ends or who is ending the scene and how it is made. When the scene has ended it is your turn to give some perspective on what just happened. You can choose to talk from either the Grey Boy's perspective or from narrative. A tip is to retell what happened but from a new perspective. Be very careful with the mood!

The Grey Boy

The Grey Boy symbolizes death. He has been accompanying the party since the Daughter became ill. It is important that when you talk from the boy's perspective that you aren't threatening but caring and longs for to take care of the Daughter. Being a point of light in the darkness and the horrible events the Daughter experience. A promise of relief. The boy should

come up in some introductions or endings of a number of scenes. Always use first (I/ me) perspective! Here follows a few examples of what you can describe:

1. In the introduction of the scenario the Grey Boy tells how long he's been wandering next to the Daughter. He feels her pain, her worries.
2. When they run from the school he describes how he helps the Daughter to run through the forest. Faster. Faster. How he fills her lungs with air. How he's not going to let anyone take her away from him.
3. At the pond. How he sits next to her. How he wants to lay his arm around her but dare not. What if she becomes angry? No, he'll bide his time until she is ready for him.
4. At the cottage. He looks into the frosty windows. Sees her slumber next to the heat from the fire. How he longs for her.
5. At the cottage. He makes angels in the snow while waiting for her. Hundreds, maybe thousands of snow angels surrounds the little cottage.
6. At the cottage. She gets sicker. He sees her peer towards the window. She sees the light dance through the frosty glass and she sees him and waves tired at him.

7. At the cottage when the Man and the Mother escapes. When they run out in the night they leave the door open. He hesitates but then enters. He hesitates but is now with her.
8. Just before the Daughter dies. He lies next to her in the bed. Hears her heart beat. Her hunger is his. Her pain is his. Soon they'll play by themselves.
9. When she's died and held her finishing monologue. He takes her away. She will never be thirsty nor hungry nor cold again. She is with him now. The grey boy.

Supporting the players

Help the players understand the scenes. Never start a new scene until everyone has understood. If there are any problems you can always replay a scene.

The music

Make sure you use the music to reinforce the mood of the scenario. The introducing/finishing track is only used during Scene 1 and after scene 26 when you are finishing the scenario. The threatening track is only utilized when those kinds of scenes are played (mostly around the Stranger and in the school). During all other times the third track is looped.

Know the scenes

It is important that you know what is happening in the scenes as they are played. You can use the players scene instructions/ role descriptions in terms of that it is you that handle the leaflets as they play but you can also use the Scene Guide.

5. Finishing words

Soundtracks can be received by emailing me at fredrik@fabel.se or fredrik.axelzon@grkom.se

Thank you for taking your time to read all this. I hope that you as a game master and your players will enjoy the scenario and the story that is conveyed. By participating in this story I hope that you will have an thrilling, intense and memorable trip straight into the darkness of the Journey.

Finally I'd like to give many thanks to Tobias Wrigstad for all the inspiration he's given me through the years. Thank you Palmskan. The players who have tested the scenario. And most of all thank you to Elina and my prince William for being you.

Good hunting

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