

Whispering Road

THE

A STORY-TELLING
GAME BY
Brent P. Newhall





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Introduction

The Whispering Road is a GM-less tabletop role-playing game built to tell stories that reward **exploration, pacifism, and helping others**, in the style of movies by Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli. The players play heroes exploring a new world, facing dangers, and trying to find home.

How This Game is Different

The Whispering Road is designed to tell specific kinds of stories, ones that aren't told often in Western culture.

The Five Principles of The Whispering Road

- These stories do not focus on physical combat, though they may include a lot of action.
- The heroes are mostly ordinary people, or at most, people with unusual abilities. The heroes are thrust into a strange world, where they try to do the right thing and get back home.
- These stories celebrate community, even fledgling ones. Heroes are rewarded for helping others, and discouraged from acting selfishly. Your hero will learn how to get along with others during a big adventure in a strange, beautiful world.
- The heroes almost never save the world, though they often save a few lives. Hollywood doesn't seem to find this exciting enough, but it lets the story focus on character development. An individual's specific actions (and the consequences of those actions) are very important in *The Whispering Road*.
- These stories have a gentleness to them, though the heroes may get into serious (even deadly) danger. The story usually does not involve death rays or assassins; instead, you will often find hedge wizards, bumbling pirates, and otherworldly magical creatures.

- If you've ever wanted to play a game where your character struggles with specific motivations at odds with others, and who at the end overcomes his or her limitations, this is the system for you.

Quick Rules, for Those Wanting an Overview

Choose one player as the Navigator (the person who keeps the story on track) and another player as the Driver (the person who pushes the other players to keep moving). Both Navigator and Driver will also play characters like everyone else. As a group, choose a starting time period and location, and list specific story ideas that you want to include or exclude (e.g., "no death").

Players define their heroes with an Archetype (similar to a class in a traditional RPG), a personal Need that is limited by another player's hero, and a set of personality Traits. The game then begins with the heroes in their home town, after which they are transported to a new land.

As the players discuss their heroes' actions, they will come into conflict with each other or certain antagonists. Every conflict is phrased in terms of how it interferes with the heroes' Needs. To resolve a conflict, players use their Traits to satisfy each others' Needs; each Trait earns a die. If a die rolls 5 or higher, its hero satisfies that Need.

Traits can be played selfishly, to help one's own Need, or selflessly, to help another hero's Need. If you play on your own Need, then the result of your roll is added to your Bad Karma; otherwise, it's added to your Good Karma. Bad Karma accelerates at the end of the story, and heroes with a lot of Bad Karma at the end of the story won't go home.

The story is played out in five Acts, plus a prologue and an epilogue. Each Act moves the story forward in a particular way, and poses questions to be answered through play.



*Playing
the Game*

Setting Up

The game is best played with a group of 3 to 6 players, though it can be run with as few as 2 players.

You will need:

- 6-sided and 8-sided dice. You can get away with just one of each, but you'll all be rolling them a lot. Ideally, each player will have 3 of each.
- Paper and pencils to record your heroes' information
- A deck of trait cards, though you can just use paper for this and copy them off the list later in this manual.



Choose one player to be the **Navigator**. The Navigator's job is to ensure that the players keep to the outline of the story, revealing plot information that needs to be revealed in each Act. To be clear, the Navigator cannot direct the story any more than any of the other players. The Navigator also gets to play a hero.



Choose another player as the **Driver**. The Driver's job is to keep the story moving forward, and to suggest conflict ideas. The Driver does not tell the story; the Driver keeps an eye on everyone's conversation and, if that conversation wanders too far off-course, gets the players back on-track. The Driver plays a hero, too.

The Driver makes sure the players are moving forward; the Navigator ensures they're all heading in the right direction.

Create the World

First, you will decide on the basic elements of the story. Where do you begin? Is there anything you definitely want to include (such as creatures or genre conventions) or avoid?

CHOOSE THE TIME



Point at another player. This player will now choose a time frame for the story and announce it out loud.

Example times include:

- Present day
- Medieval fantasy
- Steampunk
- Early to mid twentieth century

Of course, you're not limited to this list, and the chosen player can ask the rest of the group for ideas. However, the chosen player does get final say.

CHOOSE A HOME



Point at another player. This player then decides what "home" looks like. This is the starting place for the story, and at least one of the heroes will live here. Though the heroes will spend most of the story in another world, it's important to figure out where they came from and where they're trying to return.

Example homes include:

- A small village
- A large house in the country
- A dirty city
- A city with a clean upper class and a dirty lower class
- A beautiful forest in danger
- A halfway house for spirits

SAMPLE SETTINGS

As a group, feel free to discuss your decisions and further flesh out this setting.

Here are a few examples:

- Present day in a small, rural town where nothing happens
- A village in a beautiful forest in a medieval fantasy world
- A dirty steampunk city
- A quiet suburb of a city in the early 20th century

Choose Parameters

Now that you know where you're starting, you'll probably want to agree on a few basic parameters of the story. Some players may be uncomfortable with a story involving mature subjects. Some may be so excited by the setting that they'll be desperate to include something, like a dragon or a forest. Here's where you'll define those things.

Parameters are story elements that players definitely want to include or definitely don't want to include in the upcoming story.

Here's how to define parameters:

 *The Driver chooses each player, in turn.*

When chosen, each player announces one parameter of the story. A parameter is usually either a fact (such as "Wolves roam the countryside") or a limitation on the story ("Children will never be in mortal danger").

Here are some sample parameters:

- Home is being threatened by...
- The home has a mystery, which is...
- The story should be fast-paced.
- The story should be laid-back.
- Children will never be in mortal danger.
- No sex, please.
- Spirits are real.
- We've gotta face a dragon!



Create Your Hero

Each player now creates a hero. The heroes are the central characters in the story you will tell.

Your hero is built from three pieces:

- An **Archetype**, which tells you the kind of role the hero will fill in the story
- A **Need**, something the hero wants that another hero gets in the way of
- 5 **Traits** that describe the hero's personality

ARCHETYPE

Begin by deciding on your hero's **Archetype**:

Ordinary Hero—You have no big powers. That in itself is likely an asset, since you won't be a big target. You will be thrust into adventure. You are probably already skilled in your chosen trade, such as a scientist or engineer.

Your goal will be to protect another.

Special One—You may be a princess or a wizard-in-training, or perhaps you were born with a strange power. You possess rare skills or talents, though you're not necessarily unique.

Your goal will be to protect yourself, an object, or a piece of information.

Mentor—You are probably the most skilled and experienced person in the group. You advise and assist the other heroes.

Your goal will be to ensure that another hero matures and makes the right choices.

Rascal—You get into trouble a lot, though you have a good heart. You may have grown up on the wrong side of the tracks, you may have fallen in with the wrong crowd, or you may just attract negative influences.

Your goal will be to prove your good soul to the others.

If your hero is a Special One, **choose your special power or item now**. Be creative; just make it up! If you can't think of a power or item right now, don't worry; you can think it up later.

NEED

Decide on something that your hero **needs** or strongly wants to have or to happen.

Samples include:

- I need my sibling to be safe...
- I need my family to stay together...
- I need to decide on my profession...
- I need to relax...
- I need to prove that I can take care of myself...
- I need to explore...
- I need my people to be safe...

Then, choose one other player, and decide how that player's hero prevents your hero's Need from being fulfilled.

Samples include:

- ...but my younger sister always wants to explore and get in trouble.
- ...but my father wants to take a new job.
- ...but my mother wants to direct my choice of profession.
- ...but my best friend always gets me in trouble.
- ...but my older sister makes my decisions for me.
- ...but my best friend is sickly and I need to take care of her.
- ...but my mentor wants me to apprentice somewhere else.

Hint: Your Need should be a burning desire that pushes at your hero's basic identity.

The Need will be at the heart of one conflict in every Act during the game.

TRAITS

Further define your hero with **5 personality Traits** (7 if you're playing a Rascal). You can choose multiples of each Trait. In fact, you probably want multiples of a Trait that you plan to use often.

Note: If you are playing a Special One, then your special power or item counts as one of your Traits. You will only choose 4 Traits below.

You'll notice that each Trait may have a special modifier of physical, intellectual, or relational. You'll see how they work later.

The following Traits are available:

Acrobatic **PHYSICAL** You can perform impressive stunts of physical dexterity.

Adventure Magnet If there's adventure to be had, you'll find it.

Amazing Durability **PHYSICAL** You can take a lot of punishment, get back up, and take some more.

Angry Outburst **RELATIONAL** A surge of anger gives you courage and power you would otherwise lack.

Animal Empathy **RELATIONAL** You have ways of communicating with animals, and can often use them as guides or messengers.

Animal Companion You have a pet animal who follows you everywhere.

Bag of Wonders You always seem to have an appropriate item on-hand.

Burst of Courage You usually go for the most bold option. Sometimes it works!

Calm in the Storm Even in difficult-to-understand situations, you stay calm and see exactly what should be done.

Dumb Luck Whew, that was close! Are the rest of you okay?

Everyone Likes Me **RELATIONAL** Something about you brings out the best in others. You make friends easily and people tend to sympathize with you.

Fiercely Protective You leap to the defense of your close friends and family.

Future Sense You have limited insight into future events.

Gadeteer **INTELLECTUAL** You have a knack with contraptions and fast mental calculations.

Impassioned Plea **RELATIONAL** You burst out with a passionate speech which sways others to your point of view.

Insatiable Curiosity **INTELLECTUAL** You are always peeking into dark corners and exploring areas others find a little worrying.

Intensity **RELATIONAL** Your intense personality and utter self-assurance often convinces others of the justice of your beliefs.

Item You carry an item that's special to you.

Loves Everyone **RELATIONAL** You see the good in everyone around you, even when they don't see it themselves.

Master You are highly skilled in one particular profession or area of expertise.

One With Nature **PHYSICAL** You can survive—and even thrive—in the wilderness. It's like the plants can talk to you.

Pacifist **relational** You gain much inner strength from your beliefs in avoiding war.

Power of Flight You can fly. To do so, you may need to hold or use a physical item, such as an amulet or a broomstick.

Powers of Illusion You can cast magical spells of illusion and trickery.

Protector You believe it's important to defend the weak.

Scholar **INTELLECTUAL** You love history and research, and know a lot about the past.

Shapeshifter You can assume a different physical appearance.

So Cute **RELATIONAL** You are so adorable that others can't help protecting you.

Thoughtful **INTELLECTUAL** You can think through many problems yourself. You rarely need to rely on others to overcome a puzzle or other intellectual challenge.

Words of Wisdom **RELATIONAL** You always know the right thing to say to help others see the right path.

Each hero also has **Good Karma** and **Bad Karma**, which each start at zero.



Sample Characters

TARO

Taro is an **Ordinary Hero**. His goal is to protect Sora.

His **Need** is “Take care of Sora, but she’s constantly in danger.”

His **Traits** are: Amazing Durability **PHYSICAL**, Burst of Courage, Fiercely Protective, Intensity **RELATIONAL**, Loves Everyone **RELATIONAL**

SORA

Sora is a **Special One**. She is the princess of a long-lost civilization, and her goal is to protect herself.

Her **Need** is “Find out what happened to my civilization, but it’s so dangerous nobody wants to talk about it.”

Her **Traits** are: Adventure Magnet, Impassioned Plea **RELATIONAL**, Loves Everyone **RELATIONAL**, Scholar **INTELLECTUAL**, Thoughtful **INTELLECTUAL**

ONO

Ono is a **Mentor**. His goal is to ensure that Taro matures and makes the right choices.

His **Need** is “Find out what’s so special about Sora, but she doesn’t want to talk about it.”

His **Traits** are: Acrobatic **PHYSICAL**, Bag of Wonders, Master, Powers of Illusion Shapeshifter

MARIE

Marie is a **Rascal**. Her goal is to prove her good soul to the rest of the heroes, particularly Ono.

Her **Need** is “Show Taro how much I love him, but he only has eyes for Sora.”

Her **Traits** are: Adventure Magnet, Angry Outburst, Burst of Courage, Dumb Luck, Impassioned, Plea, Insatiable Curiosity, So Cute



Conflicts

Inevitably during the story, the heroes will collide with other people who don't want the heroes to get what they want. Indeed, the heroes may do this to each other!

A conflict begins when these two requirements are met:

- The heroes are at an impasse. Usually, this happens when one character (hero, ally, or antagonist) wants to stop another character.
- The problem involves at least one hero's Need.

What do I mean by "involve" in that last requirement? Heroes want things: they want to protect others, to live a stable life, to prove themselves. Each conflict has to put one of those Needs in jeopardy, allow one of those Needs to be fulfilled, or otherwise include a Need in its stakes.

DEFINING THE CONFLICT

In other role-playing games, conflicts are usually physical combats, which are handled by rules that simulate each blow of the fight. *The Whispering Road* is different. A conflict might not involve any physical danger at all; it may be an impassioned attempt to sway an authority, or a puzzle that must be solved. Some may be combinations of these.

That said, some conflicts will obviously fall comfortably in one of three categories, called natures: **physical**, **relational**, or **intellectual**. If so, *the Navigator announces this nature to the group*. If a conflict doesn't fit neatly into any of these categories, that's fine. It just won't have a nature.



The Navigator now consults the current Act's list of questions. If the conflict doesn't address any of these questions, the Navigator should speak up. This may be a conflict, but it won't move the story forward at all. In this case, the Navigator should ask the players to frame the conflict in a way that addresses at least one of the questions.



If the players play for more than 30 real-world minutes without getting to a conflict, the Driver must introduce one.

The Driver should always be driving the group towards scenes and conflicts. If the players can't think of what to do next, the Driver must suggest a new scene or a conflict. If the players can't agree on a choice (and only when they have come to an impasse), the Driver's choice is final.

So, to sum up: the conflict **may have a nature** (physical, relational, or intellectual) and **must** relate to at least one hero's Need.

TAPPING TRAIT CARDS

You may now *tap* any number of your Traits. These Traits must be untapped, meaning they have not been tapped (all Traits start untapped).

Each Trait must be applied to a Need. Just announce this to the group. This represents the hero using some aspect of her personality to assist a friend in the conflict. That said, the Trait may be applied to the hero's own Need, or to another hero's Need (more on the consequences of that later).

If you're tapping several Traits, you can apply each one to its own Need; they don't have to all apply to just one Need.

GETTING DICE

Once you've done this, take a die for each Trait. If the Trait's nature matches the conflict's nature (for example, you're using a Trait marked **PHYSICAL** during a physical conflict), you get an 8-sided die. Otherwise, you get a 6-sided die.

If the conflict has no nature, players only get 6-sided dice.

Continue this until every player has finished tapping Traits and receiving dice. Once you move to the next step, you can't go back to get more dice!

ROLLING THE DICE

The players all roll their dice at the same time.

If any die rolls **5 or higher**, the Need to which it applies is satisfied within this conflict. If it rolls under 5, the Trait came into play but didn't help directly in satisfying the Need or resolving the conflict.

Each player now describes how that played out for that player's hero.

BUILDING KARMA

Now you get to add your dice to your Good Karma and Bad Karma totals.

If you tapped a Trait to satisfy your hero's own Need, add the die result you rolled to your Bad Karma. If instead you tapped a Trait to satisfy another hero's Need, add the die result to your Good Karma.

Example: John's hero, TK, makes an Impassioned Plea to satisfy his own Need to be noticed. He rolls a 5, which satisfies the Need, but the 5 is added to his Bad Karma.

Later, TK uses a Burst of Courage to thank his older brother for always watching out for him, satisfying his older brother's Need to protect TK. This rolls a 3, which doesn't satisfy the Need, but the 3 goes towards TK's Good Karma.

To be clear: the dice you roll are always added to *your* own Karma, no matter whose Need you attempted to satisfy. You add the result of every die you rolled to your Karma whether you satisfied the Need or not.





The Story's Structure

The story will be told in a series of Acts, plus a prologue and an epilogue. The story told in each Act will answer two or three questions, and will involve several conflicts between the heroes, their environment, and their world.

During each Act, consult the page for that Act for questions to be answered, rules to follow, and advice for both the Navigator and the Driver.

Each Act ends when every hero's Need has been involved at least once in some conflict during that Act.

For a short game (2 hours), skip the optional Acts. For a longer game (4 to 6 hours), play all the Acts; it makes for a more satisfying story.



As the players act out the story, the Navigator checks the questions listed on the current Act's page. The Navigator ensures that the story is progressing in a way that answers those questions. This should be done calmly and naturally, to keep the players from focusing on one aspect of the story at the expense of others.



Meanwhile, the Driver monitors the story for slow-downs. If the players spend a lot of time exploring the world or making plans, the Driver should introduce a conflict. In a short game, you should play for at most 15 minutes before entering a conflict.

Prologue: The Ordinary World

During the prologue, each player describes his or her hero waking up and going about a day in his or her normal, everyday life. There should be no conflicts in this Act; you're just describing your day. The next Act will interrupt this day and launch the heroes into the big adventure.

While you talk this out, also try to answer the following general question: **what is normal life at home?** What do average people normally do at your home? Is this a quiet or a bustling place? Is it in danger?



The Driver makes sure that each player has had a chance to talk before moving on to the next Act.



The New World

ACT ONE

2008

Players

Describe your heroes entering a new world. This may be through a portal, through the actions of a magical guide, through getting lost, or any other way you can think of. Have fun with this!

The new world can literally be a fantastic land, it may be a new environment (like moving to a new house), or it can even be a major change in the heroes' normal routine (the arrival of a new baby in a family).

In this Act, the heroes learn about the new world.



Make sure that each conflict answers at least one of these questions:

- How is the new world different from the normal world?
- How does the new world operate? What are its rules?



Conflict ideas:

- Encountering the dangers of this world
- An initial encounter with antagonists
- A mentor protecting the group
- Encounter with a strange sage

Conflicts



Announce the nature of the conflict: physical, relational, or intellectual.

1. As a group, decide which heroes' Needs are involved in this conflict.
2. Each player decides whether to tap one or more Traits in this scene. Each Trait being tapped must apply to one of the Needs involved in the conflict. If a Trait's nature matches the conflict's nature, the player gets an 8-sided die; otherwise, the player gets a 6-sided die.
3. Roll the dice.
4. If a die rolls **5 or higher**, the applicable Need is satisfied.
5. Each player adds dice rolled towards his or her own Need to his or her **Bad Karma**, and adds dice rolled towards other heroes' Needs to his or her **Good Karma**.

Wrapping Up

Once every hero's Need has been involved in at least one conflict during this Act, the Act ends.

Each player chooses two tapped Traits and untaps them. The player may instead choose two Traits and swap them out for any other Traits on the list, but must leave them tapped or untapped.

If a hero has satisfied the goal listed in the hero's Archetype at least once in this Act, the hero's player rolls a six-sided die and adds the result to the hero's Good Karma.



Antagonists

ACT TWO

Players

Describe your heroes' first encounter with the antagonists. The antagonists may show up unannounced, or you may stumble upon them.

The heroes will then pursue the antagonists—or be pursued by them—during this Act.

The antagonists don't have to be big, evil villains. They should pursue their own plans, which the heroes interfere with, knowingly or not.

Also, there may be several antagonists. While this Act should at least introduce all the antagonists, you don't have to encounter all of them now. You can save the leader for later.



Make sure that each conflict answers at least one of these questions:

- How have the antagonists upset this world's equilibrium?
- What is the antagonists' specific threat to the new world?
- Do you learn anything new about the new world?



Conflict ideas:

- Encountering the antagonists
- Encountering the antagonists' past victims
- Learning from a mentor
- Thrust further into the new world

Conflicts



Announce the nature of the conflict: physical, relational, or intellectual.

1. As a group, decide which heroes' Needs are involved in this conflict.
2. Each player decides whether to tap one or more Traits in this scene. Each Trait being tapped must apply to one of the Needs involved in the conflict. If a Trait's nature matches the conflict's nature, the player gets an 8-sided die; otherwise, the player gets a 6-sided die.
3. Roll the dice.
4. If a die rolls **5 or higher**, the applicable Need is satisfied.
5. Each player adds dice rolled towards his or her own Need to his or her **Bad Karma**, and adds dice rolled towards other heroes' Needs to his or her **Good Karma**.

Wrapping Up

Once every hero's Need has been involved in at least one conflict during this Act, the Act ends.

Each player chooses two tapped Traits and untaps them. The player may instead choose two Traits and swap them out for any other Traits on the list, but must leave them tapped or untapped.

If a hero has satisfied the goal listed in the hero's Archetype at least once in this Act, the hero's player rolls a six-sided die and adds the result to the hero's Good Karma.

Allies

ACT THREE



This act is optional. Skip this Act if playing a short (2-hour) game.

Players

Describe meetings with new allies. The allies may appear unexpectedly, or your heroes may seek them out.

During this Act, you will also learn about the broader conflict and how it may effect the new world.



Make sure that each conflict answers at least one of these questions:

- What missing pieces do the allies provide in defeating the antagonists?
- What else do the heroes need to know about the broader conflict?
- What are the allies' names? In a two-player or three-player game, what are the allies' Traits?



Conflict ideas:

- Encountering the dangers of this world
- An initial encounter with antagonists
- A mentor protecting the group
- Encounter with a strange sage

Allies

If you only have two players, when you first meet an ally, pick 2 Traits for the ally. Players can tap allies' Traits as well as their own, and allies' Traits function exactly like hero Traits.

If you have three players, the group can only make one ally for the entire story. Pick 2 Traits for the ally as above. Other characters may assist the heroes, but they are purely extras; they don't get any Traits.

If you have three or more players, allies only get names; no Traits. They are all extras.

Conflicts



Announce the nature of the conflict: physical, relational, or intellectual.

1. As a group, decide which heroes' Needs are involved in this conflict.
2. Each player decides whether to tap one or more Traits in this scene. Each Trait being tapped must apply to one of the Needs involved in the conflict. If a Trait's nature matches the conflict's nature, the player gets an 8-sided die; otherwise, the player gets a 6-sided die.
3. Roll the dice.
4. If a die rolls **5 or higher**, the applicable Need is satisfied.
5. Each player adds dice rolled towards his or her own Need to his or her **Bad Karma**, and adds dice rolled towards other heroes' Needs to his or her **Good Karma**.

Wrapping Up

Once every hero's Need has been involved in at least one conflict during this Act, the Act ends.

Each player chooses two tapped Traits and untaps them. The player may instead choose two Traits and swap them out for any other Traits on the list, but must leave them tapped or untapped.

If a hero has satisfied the goal listed in the hero's Archetype at least once in this Act, the hero's player rolls a six-sided die and adds the result to the hero's Good Karma.



The Ordeal

ACT FOUR

This act is optional. Skip this Act if playing a short (2-hour) game.

Raise the Stakes

Each player compares his or her Good Karma to his or her Bad Karma. If Bad Karma is at least half of Good Karma, the player gets two dice for every Trait tapped for the player's own Need during this Act.

Players

Your heroes now enter a dark place (literally or metaphorically) and lose whatever they're trying to protect. Everything looks grim.

Perhaps you launch an attack on the antagonists, but you fail. Perhaps the antagonists attack and overwhelm you. Perhaps you investigate some aspect of the world and are overwhelmed by it.

In this Act, conflicts will usually be more personal, focusing on the heroes' personal growth despite their external problems. In fact, you may want to intentionally get your heroes in trouble, without using the conflict rules. Engage their Needs with interpersonal struggles or the subtext of a scene with no chance of "winning" for now.



Make sure that each conflict answers at least one of these questions:

- *How does the situation get worse?*
- *How do the heroes lose whatever they're trying to protect?*



Conflict ideas:

- *A disastrous encounter with the antagonists*
- *A disastrous end-run around the antagonists*
- *Thrust even further into the new world*
- *Discovering a new dimension to the antagonists' threat*
- *Losing a loved one*
- *Losing an easy solution*

Conflicts



Announce the nature of the conflict: physical, relational, or intellectual.

1. As a group, decide which heroes' Needs are involved in this conflict.
2. Each player decides whether to tap one or more Traits in this scene. Each Trait being tapped must apply to one of the Needs involved in the conflict. If a Trait's nature matches the conflict's nature, the player gets an 8-sided die; otherwise, the player gets a 6-sided die.
3. Roll the dice.
4. If a die rolls **5 or higher**, the applicable Need is satisfied.
5. Each player adds dice rolled towards his or her own Need to his or her **Bad Karma**, and adds dice rolled towards other heroes' Needs to his or her **Good Karma**.

Wrapping Up

Once every hero's Need has been involved in at least one conflict during this Act, the Act ends.

Each player chooses two tapped Traits and untaps them. The player may instead choose two Traits and swap them out for any other Traits on the list, but must leave them tapped or untapped.

If a hero has satisfied the goal listed in the hero's Archetype at least once in this Act, the hero's player rolls a six-sided die and adds the result to the hero's Good Karma.

Resolution

ACT FIVE



Raise the Stakes

Each player compares his or her Good Karma to his or her Bad Karma. If Bad Karma is at least half of Good Karma, the player gets two dice for every Trait tapped for the player's own Need during this Act.

Players

After the disaster of the Ordeal, the heroes now face antagonists who are much more powerful. The heroes launch into their final struggle with the antagonists. This may involve several conflicts as the antagonists escape and must be pursued.

Often, the antagonists act on their own plans now, and the heroes have to stop them. Feel free to go big, and feel free to introduce new complications. Remember, the antagonists are now desperate, too! They may pull aces from their sleeves.



Make sure that each conflict answers at least one of these questions:

- How do the antagonists make the resolution unusually difficult?
- How are the antagonists neutralized?

Conflicts



Announce the nature of the conflict: physical, relational, or intellectual.

1. As a group, decide which heroes' Needs are involved in this conflict.
2. Each player decides whether to tap one or more Traits in this scene. Each Trait being tapped must apply to one of the Needs involved in the conflict. If a Trait's nature matches the conflict's nature, the player gets an 8-sided die; otherwise, the player gets a 6-sided die.
3. Roll the dice.

4. If a die rolls **5 or higher**, the applicable Need is satisfied.
5. Each player adds dice rolled towards his or her own Need to his or her **Bad Karma**, and adds dice rolled towards other heroes' Needs to his or her **Good Karma**.

Wrapping Up

Once every hero's Need has been involved in at least one conflict during this Act, the Act ends.

Players

Each player compares his or her Good Karma to his or her Bad Karma. If the Bad Karma is higher than Good Karma, your hero will remain in the new world forever. Otherwise, your hero can go home.

Take your Good Karma and subtract your Bad Karma. This difference tells you the quality of your ending:

0-10 points

You're back, and everything's returned to normal. Whew!

11-20

You're back, and this adventure has changed you. You're now on a road to a better place, or you have a bitter-sweet ending.

21 or higher

You're back, and this adventure has made you a better person.

-0 to -10

You're still in the new world, but this is where you belong anyway.

-11 to -20

You're still in the new world, but maybe this is where you belong.

-21 or lower

You're trapped in the new world.



The Driver points at each player in turn.

Each player, when chosen, narrates one brief scene that describes the hero's life after the adventure.





Credits

DESIGN & WRITING Brent P. Newhall
EDITING Jim White (T.W.Wombat)
LAYOUT Clay Gardner
ART Kaitlynn Peavler, Claudia Cangini
and Manuela Soriani

PATRONS ON PATREON

Seth Drebitko
Joe England
Andrew Hauge
Dave LeCompte
Ryven Cedrylle

PLAYTESTERS

Wolf Bergenheim
Thomas Caruso
Joe England
Brian Kelsay
Kelly McElligott
John Reiher

Thanks to the hundreds of backers for this game's Kickstarter.
You can read about them at thewhisperingroad.com.

THE Whispering Road



The Whispering Road is a GM-less tabletop role-playing game built to tell stories that reward exploration, pacifism, and helping others. If you've ever wanted to tell a story in the worlds of Hayao Miyazaki or Studio Ghibli, this is the game for you.

These stories do not focus on physical combat, though they may include a lot of action. The heroes are mostly ordinary people, thrust into a strange world where they try to do the right thing and get back home.

Heroes are rewarded for helping others, and discouraged from acting selfishly. Your hero will learn how to get along with others during a big adventure in a strange, beautiful world.

These rules include specific guidance on creating heroes, launching them into a new world, resolving conflicts, getting them home (maybe!) and advice on what to do in each of the game's five Acts.

This game uses 6-sided and 8-sided dice, and is intended for players aged 8 and up. One game will play in about 3 hours.

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