

.. Travel Journal of ..

Short Tales



— A cozy game of cheer and wonder. —

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Dedicated to my cousin Leo, whose enthusiasm made
this game go from a little weekend project to one of
my fondest memories in the hobby.

This is **Version 1.2** · A general revision of presentation and language.

Introduction

Let's get to know each other, shall we?

I am the **Travel Journal of Short Tales**, and I am the book you are holding in your hands. At least conceptually, of course! It's far more likely that you are reading this through a screen, are you not?

What you'll find in these pages is an adventure game. Not just any adventure game! A **roleplaying game**. A group of people sits around a table—it doesn't matter if it's made of wood or pixels—and each plays the part of a **character** in a small story as it unfolds.

Well... most of them, anyways. One of the players will have to play as **the Narrator**, in charge of presenting the other players with interesting situations, describing the world around them, playing the part of the various people the rest of the players come across, and reacting to the actions of the players. Sounds daunting, right? Truth be told, it kind of is! Which is why I recommend that the Narrator is experienced with this sort of thing. If you're not, don't worry, I'll help you out later on.

That should be enough to get us acquainted. Let us begin!

Tools of Play

What do you need to play the game, I hear you ask?

You may have heard about roleplaying games before, so you may already know that the most important tool is **your imagination**.

Pen and paper is always useful, of course, for taking notes about your character and the ongoing adventure. I'm sure you can find some neat things called **character sheets** wherever you got this book from that will help you keep that neat and tidy.

Most importantly... Have you ever played **UNO**? Do you have a deck around? If so, great! Instead of using dice (like most other roleplaying games) this game is played with **a deck of UNO Cards** for when luck needs to spice up the story. More on that later.

Setting Up

Once a player has stepped up to be the Narrator, you should be good to go. For the sake of simplicity, I'll be referring to the players other than the Narrator as "**Players**" from now on. Capital P.

Each Player creates a character to play during the adventure, following the guidelines in the next few pages.

Meanwhile, the Narrator shuffles the deck of cards, and deals each Player **10 Cards** each, face down—this is **their deck**.

Once every Player has their character and deck, the Narrator can give a few introductory words to set the stage, introduce the characters, and begin the adventure.

The Tales Themselves

You find yourselves in a tavern. Or somewhere else. That's up to the Narrator now! But where do you start, and where do you go?

I guess I never did tell you what this game was about, huh? Sorry, I got caught up in the clichéd "What is a roleplaying game?" section that me and my fellow rulebooks tend to have.

This game... is a **fantasy game**! With swords, monsters, dungeons, and tall adventurers and—wait, actually, that's not right. I'm sure you're familiar with the fantasy genre, but I've decided to choose a smaller scale for my portrayal of it. In more ways than one.

Players don't go into grand adventures where the world is a stake. This is a game about small folk going about their day. Gnomes and Dwarves and Goblins and the rest of the little people that fantasy likes to brush aside, finding adventures in their day-to-day lives.

Most of them aren't fighters, and prefer to deal with threats with words and carefulness. The characters in this game are commoners who find themselves in an unusual situation. The call to adventure is out there! But not too far away from home. Truth be told, they'd prefer to be back by dinner time.

Character Creation

Alright, let's create a character. Don't worry, this won't take too much of your time. You'll need to choose a **Kinship**, two **Jobs**, and then grab some starting **Items**.

Let's start with the basics, though: give your character a **Name**, and imagine **what they're like**. You can choose to do this first, or come back to this after you've explored your options throughout this section. Take as much time as you need.

Step 1: Choose a Kinship

Your Kinship represents your innate traits, the appearance, quirks and shortcomings shared by most of your family line and peers of a shared origin. In most cases, it also says something about what you know and what you were surrounded by growing up.

Kinship means more than just the natural kin you belong to. It's also about culture, about friends, about the tales and songs you know by heart, the habits you've grown accustomed to, and the sort of words that you use during conversations. Give it some thought, and it can be a really handy tool for roleplaying your character.

Rules-wise, it comes into play when drawing cards from your deck, changing how many you can take out at a time based on whether your Kinship **aids** or **plays against** you in a given situation.

Dwarf: You are strong and resilient. You live underground, so you're used to the lack of light. The dwarf-men are known for their bushy beards and eyebrows, and the lady-dwarves are equally proud of their long, braided hair. Dwarves tend to share a love for drink and camaraderie among each other, but aren't very friendly to outsiders.

Gnome: You were born with a knack for magic. You live in the forest, and can communicate (but not talk) with most woodland creatures. You have been raised surrounded by vast collections of knowledge, making you very wise. Your avid curiosity, however, makes you easily distracted when doing "boring" tasks.

Goblin: You usually describe yourself as "green", though your large ears, big eyes and sharp teeth are probably also worth noting. For someone whose kind tends to inhabit swamps and harvest small mushrooms, you're awfully inventive and dexterous. The concept of courage escapes you, however, making you rather cowardly in most frightening or stressful situations.

Halfling: The countryside hills are your peaceful home, and you groan at the sole thought of having to leave it. Luckily, your natural charisma gets you through most situations pretty easily, and you can move very stealthily if talking isn't an option. Hard work and complicated tasks, on the other hand, aren't your strong suit. You are proudly and unapologetically lazy, and you like it that way.

Kobold: You allegedly descend from the great Dragons, though you look more like an alligator who dresses up in tattered robes and walks funny, with stubby limbs and a long snout full of spiky teeth. Your heritage is proven by the fact that you can breathe fire, but you definitely did not inherit the great intellect of your forefathers. Truth be told, you're not particularly bright.

Shroomfolk: You're an awakened mushroom made vaguely in the shape of a small person, and not two of your kin looks alike. You're very stretchy and resilient in your own mushroom-y way. You live close to the Goblins, whose diet has led them to believe you're out to get them in revenge, but you move and talk so slowly that your kind has never been able to tell them otherwise.

Främling: You're not from around here, and you're not quite sure of how you got here. You're not a Halfling or a Dwarf, because you're definitely not as hairy. You can't be a Gnome either, your ears are too round! Wherever you came from, you find hospitality and strange looks in equal measure. You're pretty observant, that's for sure, but your blind optimism has given you more troubles than solutions so far. When picking up Items during Step 3, you add to the list some things that may have been in your bag when you got here: an **Instant Camera**, a **Walkman**, or a pair of **Walkie-Talkies**.

Step 2: Pick Two Jobs

I told you that these adventurers are common townsfolk, didn't I?

Every character starts out with **two Jobs** that represent the things they know and what they do in their everyday lives. It doesn't necessarily mean it's exactly their occupation, it's simply a good method to keep little pockets of knowledge grouped together.

You can always think up new Jobs with the Narrator if the list doesn't cover something you want. I can't stop you, now, can I?

Alchemist: You handle potions and magical ingredients every day, and can prepare strange concoctions quite aptly.

Artisan: You are able to create beautiful and unique works of art, even with subpar materials you find around on the road.

Blacksmith: You know a lot about equipment and materials of all kinds, and your craftsmanship is unparalleled. Allegedly. By you.

Cartographer: You can draw great maps, and your ability to keep landmarks and paths in mind means you rarely get lost.

Cook: Your cuisine is exquisite, and you're really good at handling (and picking) mundane ingredients. You've developed good senses of taste and smell, too.

Engineer: You're great at using and crafting gadgets, mechanical contraptions, and various kinds of strange tools and machinery.

Explorer: You're good at scouting through harsh terrain, sneaking past possible threats, and running away if things don't go well.

Farmer: You're used to tending to crops and handling animals, and you're no stranger to hard, prolonged, backbreaking work.

Fisher: You've spent a lot of time on or near water catching fish, making you quite knowledgeable and skilled on related activities.

Lamplighter: You handle yourself well through the labyrinthine streets of large cities—especially during the night—and always know exactly where in a settlement to find what, or who, you need.

Librarian: You know a lot about writing, history, folklore, language and riddles, making you wise and learned beyond your years.

Mason: You know a lot about materials and architecture, what makes a structure sound and stable, and how to bring it down.

Merchant: You handle yourself well through trade routes and transactions, and you're an avid appraiser of valuable goods.

Miner: You know a lot about rocks, gems and minerals, letting you recognize them with ease, and you know exactly how to dig 'em up.

Minstrel: You consider yourself a great entertainer in many ways, and you're very good at handling an audience.

Naturalist: You know a lot about the world of nature, from plants and herbs that you can find in the wilderness, to all the meanings of the stars in the sky.

Noble: You come from a wealthy household, be it by your own work or by heritage. You have the presence of a leader, and have a way of being convincing, and honest, when trading favors.

Parent: You have kids back home, or you've gathered parental experience in one way or another. Either way, you know how to comfort and communicate with kids of all kinds.

Physician: You've studied to recognize many kinds of wounds and illnesses, and can heal up just about anyone in no time.

Thief: You're a dishonest rascal and a troublemaker who can lie quite convincingly and do all sorts of knavish, deceitful tricks.

Town Guard: Your heart lies in whatever lets you protect those around you, making you a great fighter and defender.

Vagabond: You admittedly don't know a lot, but you're always full of rumors and little tidbits of info you've heard during your travels.

Wizard or Witch: You've studied a lot about magic over the years, making you knowledgeable about the arcane. You know **3 Spells**.

Woodsmen: You've grown acquainted with the forest and its quirks, making you a skilled hunter, lumberjack, and woodworker.

Step 3: Grab Three Items

(You always have the tools available for your two Jobs.)

Finally, it's time to pick the stuff you've been carrying around this whole time. You start out with **three Items** from the following list:

Bag of Gems: Carries 3 gems, which you can use to pay for an item, a service, or a favor of some kind.

Balloons: Three balloons made of a stretchy fabric. If you tie their strings around you and fill them up, you'll slowly start floating!

Berry Jam*: Sweet and tasty, and a favorite throughout the land.

Bottle: A small container made for holding liquids and tiny objects. Items marked with a * leave behind a Bottle once they're spent.

Bread: You can make sandwiches, toast, and attract pigeons.

Bug Box: A small matchstick box full of tiny, harmless bugs.

Can of Coffee*: When properly brewed and served, drinking just a cup is sure to wake up just about anything.

Clay Tea Set: Make some tea, breathe, and calm your senses.

Ferryman's Lantern: Gives off a decent light that never fades.

Flamestone: A warm, reddish stone that can spark flames when struck against a hard surface. Commonly used for igniting hearths.

Guard's Halberd: Though impressive to look at, all the hurty bits are blunt. It's used to show off against beasts, shoo them away, and even whacking them (if necessary). Useful for poking stuff, too.

Handbook: A useful reference for a subject of your choice. You must choose the subject when you pick the Handbook.

Large Shield: Can be used to protect yourself from harm. With good positioning and reflexes, it can also be used to protect others.

Magic Patch: A sticky patch used to hold things in place and fix holes or tears. The stickiness never wears off, making it reusable.

Magnet: Attracts metals and sticks to them with great strength.

Megaphone: Sounds that pass through it come out louder.

Mole Gauntlets: Large, clawed gloves used to dig through dirt at a faster rate and greater comfort than common shovels.

Music Box: This tiny wooden box contains a mechanism that plays a lovely melody. It only requires you to wind it up first.

Old Instrument: An instrument you've owned for a good while, but that can still be used to play melodies. You should describe what kind of instrument it is when you choose it.

Oni Wine*: A strong rice wine brewed by friendly river giants that causes increased warmth and sleepiness when you drink it.

Oven Mittens: Protects your hands when handling hot things.

Potion of Health*: Heals any ailment or wound when you drink it.

Root Wand: Used to cast a spell stored within it. Choose a Spell from the list when picking it up.

Rope and Hook: Used to catch things, tie up stuff, or climb up or down steep surfaces. Quite resistant once the hook is fixed in place.

Rubber Chicken: It's a rubber chicken with a pulley in the middle. What possible use could this have?

Scary Mask: A wooden mask carved into the face of a snarling monster, which can scare the snot out of someone if used well.

Smelly Onion: This onion of unusual size has a very strong smell that can scare away wild animals or make creatures cry.

Soap: Though it's meant to be used strictly for cleaning things, you can also use it to make surfaces and objects slippery.

Spyglass: Lets you observe things in a direct line of sight from afar.

Umbrella: Protects you from the rain, and lets you fall slowly and glide through the air.

Woodland Wisp*: A small forest spirit caught in a bottle that can stay vigilant or scout around for a while when released, before returning with any gathered info and poofing away.

How to Play

The general loop of roleplaying is quite simple, actually:

The Narrator **describes a situation**, the Players **react in character** and act in response, and the Narrator then **changes the situation** according to the Players' input. That's pretty much it, really.

If the intentions of a Player hinge on **luck**, or the outcome depends on **how well** they perform, the Narrator calls for a **Draw**.

Drawing Cards

You draw one card face-up from **your deck**—the 10 cards you were given at the beginning of the game. You may draw more cards for each aspect of your character that **aids you**: your Kinship, your Jobs, or your Items, one card for each category, up to **four cards**.

You don't draw the first card if you're **Hurt** or if your Kinship **plays against you**, but you may still draw additional cards.

Add together the values of any cards that share a color. Some cards can modify this value. Your highest total determines your result:

0 to 5

Failure...

(something went wrong, and you failed. bummer!)

6 to 10

Success!

(you did okay, and succeed without much trouble)

11 or more

Great Success!

(you did great! something nice happens in your favor)

Once you're done, the Narrator describes what happens next, and the cards you've drawn are removed from play.

Getting Tired

Your deck is, in part, a measure of how much adventuring spirit you've still got in you before needing to take a break. Running out of cards means you're too exhausted to succeed when difficulty arises, and you act with the bare minimum effort at all times.

When running low on cards, the group can decide to take a breather or a nap. The Narrator returns all the cards removed from play to the main deck, shuffles, and deals new cards to everyone.

A **breather** is a short rest of a few minutes, and restores **up to 5 cards** to your deck. You can benefit from two breathers before needing a proper nap to restore your cards.

A **nap** is a comfy sleep in a safe place of a couple of hours, and restores **all your spent cards**.

Getting Hurt

Nobody said adventuring was easy. If something **hurts you** in any significant measure—physically or emotionally—you can't draw the first card when doing a Draw, and you **need a breather** to heal.

If you're hurt again, you **pass out** and **need a nap** to recover. Your friends carry you around until then, but you can't really do much.

You can also **heal** by having **a hearty meal**, drinking a **Potion**, or being treated (with a Draw) by a **Physician**.

Contests

A competition between a Player and an adversary works the same as a normal Draw, but both sides draw cards **one by one**.

The **contender** draws first, then the Player, the contender again, and so on until both sides **run out of cards** to draw, or the Player **decides to end** the Contest on their turn. The **highest result** wins!

Narrator: Use your judgment when deciding how many cards to draw. Keep in mind that adversaries can get Tired and Hurt too.

.. The Cards ..

(and what they mean)



Number Cards of the same color are added together. **0 Cards** are worth **10**.

$$2 + 3 + 4 = 9$$



The **Skip Card** negates the last **number** drawn of the same color.

$$7 + \text{Skip} = 0$$



The **Reverse Card** doubles the value of a **number** of the same color.

$$4 + \text{Reverse} = 8$$

.. The Other Cards ..

(and what they mean, too)



The **Draw Two Card** is worth **2 of its color**, and your deck recovers up to 2 cards.

$$3 + \text{Draw Two} = 5$$



The **Wild Draw Four** is worth **4 of any color**, and your deck recovers up to 4 cards.

$$6 + \text{Wild Draw Four} = 10$$



The **Wild Card** allows **numbers of any color** to match together.

$$2 + 4 + 3 + \text{Wild} = 9$$

Magic!

Magic is all around you in these enchanted lands, but few can truly claim to be fully-fledged sorcerers. **Wizards** and **Witches** dedicate their time to study these arts, writing in thick grimoires brimming with magical lore and donning impressive hats that channel their abilities. Some claim that the bigger the hat, the better the Wizard, the source of many a rough dispute among these magical scholars.

A good sorcerer has at least **three spells** in their repertoire, beyond the minor magic they use every day. Mundanes usually have no access to magic at all, but **Root Wands** that carry a spell within them can be used by anyone, regardless of their magical talent.

Using Magic

Magic is a capricious and unpredictable thing! Nobody said that twisting the very laws of nature didn't have its risks.

When attempting to cast a **Spell**, you say the **magic word** out loud, and Draw to see if it works or not. A result of 6 to 10 means that the spell works **perfectly**, under the control of the caster. However...

Failing to cast a spell **fizzles out** the magic in your Wand or Hat for a while. On the other hand, a Spell that's cast with a result of 11 or above results in an **Overcast**—a strong discharge of magical energy that results in a spell that is **a bit too powerful** for your Wand or Hat to contain, sparking an effect which you **no longer control**.

In either case, a fizzled out or overcharged Wand or Hat requires you to **fix it up during a breather**. Otherwise, attempts at using magic suffer the same drawbacks as being hurt. Should another spell result in further damage, you'll need to let it cool down or recharge **over a nap**, becoming useless in the meantime.

Spells **fade out** after a while, but you can **choose to end the effect** early, provided that you didn't overcast it in the process.

– List of Common Spells –

A-HEM!: Makes your voice sound significantly different.

- **Overcast**: Your voice becomes loud, booming and thunderous.

BOOM!: You cause a loud but otherwise harmless explosion that leaves the target covered by dust and soot.

- **Overcast**: The target, alongside whatever is currently around it, is launched high into the air at great speed.

EN-LARGE-O! + REDUCTO!: Twin spells that make things larger or smaller respectively, about twice and half their original size.

- **Overcast**: The target grows gigantic, or is reduced to pocket size.

FIREWORKS!: Shoots an array of pretty, festive lights into the sky.

- **Overcast**: The fireworks shoot in all directions. Call the firemen!

FROG!: Summons a regular, friendly frog to follow you around and keep you company. It will hop to wherever there are bugs to eat.

- **Overcast**: Summons a giant frog roughly twice your size.

ILLUSION!: Creates a poorly-crafted but oddly convincing visual illusion or disguise under your control.

- **Overcast**: The illusion looks, sounds, and even feels very real.

LEVITATO!: Makes the target float for a while, under your control.

- **Overcast**: The target floats through the air as if it were in water, uncontrollably to you. The target can "swim" in the air, though!

MAGIC MISSILE!: Bumps into the target and slightly annoys them.

- **Overcast**: A barrage of magic bolts K.O.'s the target in seconds.

OPEN SESAME!: Gently opens the target door or lock with a click.

- **Overcast**: Opens everything considered "closed" in your vicinity.

(vanish!): Makes the target invisible-ish for a while, though it can still see itself translucently. This magic word is **whispered**.

- **Overcast**: The target becomes wholly invisible, even to itself.

WHOOSH!: A gentle gust of wind blows in the direction you choose.

- **Overcast**: An uncontrollable, unstoppable gale blows through the area in an inconvenient direction.

Narrating Adventures

(a few tips for running the game)

I think I've covered all that you need to start playing the game. But what if you want to be the Narrator? I hope these tips help both the experienced and the novice Narrator alike.

It's Narrator, not Storyteller: Your role isn't to tell a story, it's to engage with the Players and create a story together, through the situations that play out in the game itself. Things will likely not go the exact way you expect them to happen—that's okay! That's part of the nature of a roleplaying game. Think of something and play along. If the Players get stuck, help them out! Let them go through your adventure in their own way.

Light-hearted: Keep things non-violent, whimsical and fun. There are better games out there for more serious, darker adventures. If your adventure can result in a nice little story that would make your mum smile if you told her about it, you're on the right track.

Short: These rules are meant for stories that can be finished over the course of a session or two. If I'm honest, I don't know if you can stretch it out any further, but I highly doubt it. Your adventure should be rather straightforward and wrap up after just a handful of objectives completed, just a couple of hours from start to finish.

Comfy: Take breaks from time to time. Take your time to describe the area around the Players and draw them into your world. Let them tell stories around a campfire if they want to. Challenge them just enough for the adventure to be considered an adventure, but don't keep them on their toes at all times.

Low Stakes: Focus on the little things. You'd be surprised at how fun just gathering some berries by the creek for the local baker can actually be if you make each moment something to cherish and remember. Keep objectives simple, and the consequences of failure to a minimum if the group happens to screw up along the way. Let them try again, if they need to.

Writing Adventures

Now that we're on the same page, you should be ready to start thinking up something to start with. It's always good to take some time before starting an adventure to prepare ahead of time, but what if you don't know where to begin?

The Stage: Where does the story take place? Is it in or near the local village? Is it somewhere in the wilderness? Perhaps it takes place in a single location, like a giant library? Think of where the adventure begins, and where it can lead the Players.

The Quest: What do the Players need to do? Do they need to gather a special ingredient? Maybe find a lost pet? Perhaps delivering something, asap! Always think about an objective, but never a single solution. Give them a mission, and send them off to figure it out on their own—that's their part of the fun!

The Focus: Most Quests have a centerpiece of some kind, some key characters or elements that make it interesting and engaging for the Players. Perhaps it's the patron that sends them off in the first place, or the strange nature of what they need to find. Perhaps it's a mystery that they need to unveil! This is your chance to think about all the important parts that the adventure circles around.

The Challenge: No adventure is complete without a little trouble. Like I told you before, this shouldn't really be serious or outright dangerous, but you should give the Players something to really think about and challenge them in their objectives. How about a scary monster of some kind that they need to befriend or shoo away? Maybe it's a matter of circumstance—"How do we get to the top of the tower if the stairs are gone?!"—or the very nature of their objective playing against them. Keep them guessing!

The Supporting Cast: Sprinkle interesting characters throughout the adventure, and try to keep them simple and memorable. Don't focus on their **story**, there's never time for that! Focus on their **personality**. Think about what they're like and why they're there, and how their inclusion in the adventure makes it better.

Wrapping Up

I think that's about as much as I can tell you about this game.

I suppose our journey has come to an end, hasn't it? Oh well, I knew it wouldn't last that long when we began...

There are lots of ideas that we haven't talked about yet! Maybe one day I'll tell you about the **Five Sages**, or what **Lantern Season** means. Maybe I'll be able to give you even more choices for your unique characters, or ways to keep them around for longer, and offer you a book full of lovely drawings instead of just my words.

I am, after all, only a travel journal.

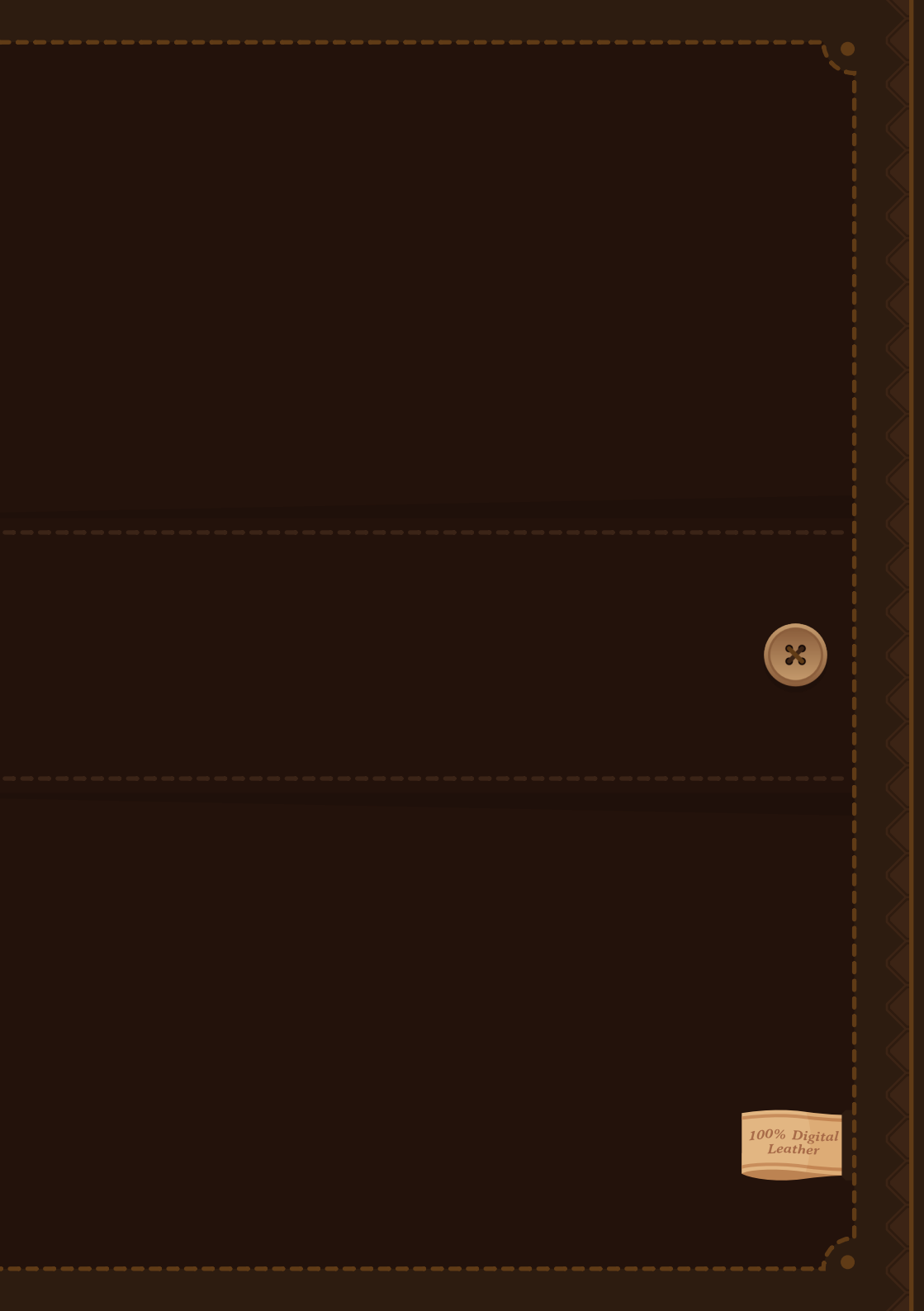
But... No roleplaying game is truly finished by the time its book is read. **Now it's up to you**, as a Player or Narrator, to bring to life what little I've taught you. To tell tales of the small adventurers forgotten by fantasy, leading small lives, engaging in short adventures. To travel together to whimsical lands in a boat built by your imagination. To make the words in these pages your own.

Sorry, I've never been very good at saying goodbye, but... I'll try:

Farewell, traveler.

I thank you for our time together.

And I truly hope that we meet again.



100% Digital
Leather

