Travelogue – A Tapestry of Tales

A story-telling RPG
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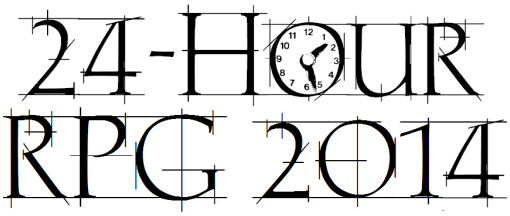

What You Need

- at least one friend willing to play this game with you,
- pencil and paper,
- tokens,
- an hour or more of leisure,
- and, ideally, some beverages you enjoy. Sip and listen!

The Travellers

You are travellers resting for the night. While you relax, you share stories of your journeys and encounters. Your goal as players is to weave a web of stories together, and to explore the personalities of the characters as well as the world you create through your stories.

First, agree on a genre and some basic setting information: Are you playing travellers in a medieval fantasy world or urban horror setting? Is some advanced technology important for the setting? If you can‘t agree, let the host decide or choose randomly. Also, agree on the tone of the game: Are you going for goofy stories, tall tales, epic adventures, gruesome reports or everyday experiences?

Then, create the round of characters. Pick three traits – these are the traits that will influence all your characters. You all share one trait in the same way. For the two other traits; each player is free to either have her or his character share this trait or an opposite of it [suggestions in brackets]. Use the following list or create your own:

You...

- are disabled.
- carry something valuable that you don‘t own.
- are privileged.
- need to save the world/ a community from an evil/ danger. [You have to destroy something.]
- are in love with person X. [You are hunting/ seeking revenge on X.] (First player to pick this trait gets to name the person which is the object of the (possibly opposing) interests of all players.)
- know the circumstances of your death.
- have lost your memory and search for your identity.
- have to take care of a family member. [You have to flee from a family member.]
- ...

Pick names for your characters.

If you‘re the host, you may establish where the group of characters currently is. Are you sitting round a campfire on a glacier? Are you in a run-down tavern on a bustling space station?

Now start telling stories!

Telling Stories

Players take turns telling stories. On your turn, you tell a story, either of a past **journey** or an **encounter** you have made on the road. It need not be anything spectacular – in fact, go for something short and simple. Don‘t be afraid to use an idea that seems boring to you.

The difference between encounters and journeys is mostly a question of narrative zoom. Encounters are small moments, while journeys are the big picture, ignoring details like encounters on the road. Try not to mix them in your story, be aware of your zoom.

Examples of journeys: Visiting your children living beyond the river. Going to the capital to learn something from learned masters.

Examples of encounters: An animal that you‘ve seen. Robbers who took your purse.

In your stories, choose a **focal point**. This may be a strife or conflict that‘s at the heart of your encounter or journey, or somebody who contacted you. Did you help or hinder that person? Did you overcome or escape the problem? How? Don‘t make it too complicated. Leave out some details.

The other characters may ask **questions**, but you can tell them not to interrupt your story if you like. However, you have to allow at least three questions. But you don‘t have to answer them! Questions may be big or small.

Examples: What was the weather like? How did you feel in that moment? What did the sirens sing about? Why did you help them? What was the reason of the journey? What would you rather have done? Isn‘t it right that you [insert trait] – so how could you do that?

Use your stories and questions to imagine the world in detail as well as explore the characters personalities. Players may mutually establish that their characters travelled together, but still only the player whose turn it is tells the story. The other player may tell her/ his version later on.

Reincorporation and Tokens

Have a heap or bowl of tokens within easy reach, for instance coins or small stones, or a deck of cards. At the start of the game, put in two tokens per player. During the game, to get more tokens into the pile, you have to reincorporate elements from the stories of the other players. Tell about how you met the same person, maybe on the same day or ten years earlier. Or recount an experience that you were reminded off by a similar story told by another character. If the the other player feels that the connection is valid, she adds two more tokens to the pile. Similarly, if you bring one of the traits into play, you can add two tokens, if the group agrees.

For each story, each audience member can silently reflect: Do I enjoy the story? If you do, hand the narrator one token. If you give the narrator a token, you may also take one for yourself, to remind you of the particular story. Each player can award a maximum of two tokens per story: one for the narrator, one for himself. Tokens can be awarded during the story or once it is finished. *(The open-endedness of tokens was inspired by contempt tokens in Avery McDaldno‘s game* The Quiet Year*.)*

When you have finished a story, made up your mind about awarding tokens for it, and no further questions remain, another player takes turn, until everyone has told a story. Depending on how short or lengthy your stories are, you may wish to play more than one round.

That's it. Have fun with your stories!