

**September Morn – A Sight and Sound Game Design Challenge Entry**

(Concept A, Image B, Sound A)

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*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

- **1 Corinthians 13:11**

**Prologue – Departure**

You and your friends have played in The Fair Glen at the River's Bend for as long as you can remember.

*<What is your name? Personal Name only – no Family Names.>*

It is always sunny and pleasant here. It rains only when you need it too for your games, and the clouds always run away when you chase them.

*<What lives beyond the Glen that you fear? Things only – no Concepts>*

You noticed something today. Something that most of the other children don't see or pretend not to see. The leaves are changing from greens to yellows and reds and oranges. Some of them have fallen from the trees. Your special friend has noticed this too and seems somehow saddened.

*<Who is your special friend? On what thing (toy, character, other) is he based? What is his personality traits? How do those personality traits manifest physically?>*

In the center of the Glen is the Great Oak, a kind old tree that is always happy to lend shade for lazy naps on sunny days and provide limbs for climbing. Today, the Great Oak showed you something new – a cave hidden amongst her roots.

*<You can bring something special from the Glen with you when you enter the cave. What is it?>*

The cave is deep and old. It may take you several tries, but eventually you plumb its depths. In its deepest chamber, you find an ancient gate and three rusty keys.

*<Somehow, you know must choose one. Which key do you take?>*

You thrust the key into the gate and turn it.

*<Each time a gate is opened in the game, play Sound A.>*

Stepping through the gate – you find yourself ... elsewhere....



## Body: Initiation

### The Mechanics

DURING the game proper, the character will face a number of challenges. The challenges are rated in numbers of dice, and the number of dice generally will increase as the story progresses.

BY way of example, I will use the first challenge upon entering the City of Gates.

The character faces three manifestations of the fear identified in the prologue. This is a single challenge, rated in three dice. The character (currently) has two traits they can bring to bear: the special item they brought from the woods and their fear of the creatures. For each trait, they get one die, for a total of two dice. The player describes the character's actions and specifies how they apply the traits. Both sides roll their dice and arrange from high to low.

The side with the single highest value gains the upper hand, with ties leading to comparison of the next die, etc.

IF the character has the highest value, the player wins the challenge and gets to narrate how the scene plays out.

IF the opposition has the highest value, the character's special friend appears and gets involved in the conflict. CHOOSE a trait that the special friend applies and roll additional dice on the character's side, one at a time, until the character gets the upper hand. The character now wins, but the opposition narrator gets to describe how the scene plays out and at what cost to the special friend. The special friend loses the trait they used to help the character, but there is also a physical manifestation of this loss. Essentially, the special friend looks a little more like the object or toy they were originally based on.

ALTERNATIVELY, the character may choose to sacrifice one of her personal traits, typically those from the Glen first, followed by the most recently gained, to re-roll any number of their dice. IF they now have the highest value, they succeed and they get a new trait as step (2) below (this trait can be drawn from the list of reward traits – see below). Otherwise, he succeeds, but does not get an additional trait in step (2) below.

After the conflict, several things happen.

(1) An additional key appears that will allow the character to pass through a new gate.

(2) The character gets an additional trait based on how the conflict played out:

(2a) If the character won outright, he adds a trait based on the chosen action, strategy, or skill that led to his success.

(2b) If the special friend got involved and rolled fewer dice than the character did originally (in the case of the first challenge, less than 1 die), the character gains a positive transformation of the trait the special friend used as she adopts that trait for herself.

(2c) If the special friend got involved and rolled as many or more dice than the character did originally, the character gets a negative transformation of the trait.

(3) The character goes through a physical transformation based on the challenge. If he won outright or through a re-roll, he shifts toward the more positive aspects of adulthood. If she won with her special friend's aid or if she sacrificed one of her traits for a failed re-roll, she shifts toward the more mundane aspects of adulthood.

### The Road of Trials

As the characters pass through gates (including the gate from the Glen), they will face challenges before they can obtain a key for the next gate. With each gate passed through, the City awakes and more inhabitants begin to appear. The nature of the City should reflect the transforming character. If the character is becoming strong and noble, the City should be brighter and cleaner. If the character is becoming dark and twisted, the City should reflect this.

In addition, while passing through a Gate, play the transition sound (SOUND A). Turn the volume down a notch for each trait sacrificed by the special friend – if all traits are gone, don't play the sound – the gate is just a gate.

The first challenge any character faces upon passing through the gate is the Challenge of Fear. Three manifestations of the fear identified in the Prologue challenge the character. This is a three die challenge. Though a physical conflict is the most obvious solution, other solutions are possible – evasion, intimidation, bravery. Remember that the choice of solution will color the trait gained and the associated physical transformation.

The next three challenges will vary. Choose three from the examples provided, or create one or more of your own. Typically, each challenge is one die higher than the previous.

The Challenge of Stealth: A woman has been locked out of her home and asks the character to help her get back inside. The problem is that she has a large guard dog that the character needs to sneak past. The dog is indeed large, just happens to have three heads, but also incorporates aspects of the character's fear. If the character tries a direct assault, roll normally, but he can fail – his special friend will not involve themselves in a combat challenge with this beast. Failure results in the character being ejected and needing to try a different tact. If the character tries stealth, or any other non-combat strategy, the standard challenge rules apply. Upon success, she opens the woman's house from the inside, and the woman gives the character an old key she has laying around by way of thanks.

The Challenge of the Errand Runner: The character encounters a well-to-do woman on the street outside of the next gate. She has a package that she needs to have delivered and asks the character to do the errand. She warns the character that others may try to take the package and asks him to guard it cautiously. There are a number of potential specific challenges here. Another inhabitant – possibly an older child who had left the Glen before the character – suggests that the character open the package and split the contents with her. Or for a more physical conflict, three manifestations of the character’s fear will set upon him to try to take the package. Upon success, the receiver, a woman who is apparently the original woman’s twin, gives the character a key as a reward.

The Challenge of Temptation: As the character works toward the next gate, they pass an alley full of tempting smells. (If her special friend currently has a favorite food or indulgence as a trait, then that indulgence is readily apparent.) Investigation reveals a brightly colored market with all manner of food, drink, and other pleasures. Everything appears to be free. The challenge here is one of moderation. If the special friend has an indulgence as a trait, this is a challenge that can be failed as the special friend is distracted by their own temptation and will not intervene to guarantee success. Failure means that the character has been drawn off the main road and now must pass two additional challenges to complete his journey. One challenge to replace this failed challenge and then one more for a total of four between the Challenge of Fear and the final challenge.

The Challenge of Past Shadows: Not everyone makes her way successfully through the City of Gates. Those who lose a special friend and have all their traits stripped away become permanent residents – and threats – in the City. The character encounters three former residents of the Glen who either gave into gluttony, greed or rage. They will attempt to tempt or goad the character into joining them in their fate. The former residents of the Glen explain how everyone sees autumn at a different time and how the City is their reward for their actions in the Glen – and how the final gate means their ultimate destruction. They believe that hidden somewhere in the City is a path back into the Glen.

The Final Challenge – Janus the Gatekeeper: The specific nature and appearance of the final challenge will depend on the character’s choices and traits gained as they traveled through the city. The challenge will be rated in one more die than the character’s last challenge and the character will have to garner two successes to win. The character can fail if he cannot or chooses not to sacrifice one of their traits for a re-roll or to allow the special friend to sacrifice itself. If the character wins, he gains all of the benefits of succeeding a standard challenge. If she fails, she is given the choice to either travel the City some more and try again or to sacrifice her special friend entirely to earn the key to the final gate.

Janus nearly always has two faces regardless of his appearance. This may literally be two faces on the front and back of his head or it may be that he wears a mask of some sort that is knocked off after the character's first success. A more mundane Janus may look like a janitor or someone else who carries many keys.

### **Apotheosis and the Ultimate Boon**

As he passes through the final gate, the character undergoes a final transformation to full adult form. First, choose a family name for the character, perhaps, but not necessarily based on their adventures in the City of Gates.

If his special friend survived the journey through the city, the character also gets one final additional trait selected from the rewards trait. In this case, describe the joyous and likely successful life they have as an adult, culminating in the introduction of her child into the Glen.

If a special friend did not survive the journey, describe a mundane life and the material rewards, if any, the character has as an adult, culminating in their lack of understanding as his child discovers the Glen on her own.

Reward Traits:

- 1) Hope
- 2) Love
- 3) Joy
- 4) Favor of Friends
- 5) Respect of the Wise
- 6) Success

