# TOGETHER

*a GM-less, 2-player game about cross-cultural connection through storytelling*

# ALONE

by Britt A Willis

@feelingfickle | brittawillis.com | feelingfickle.itch.io

# TOGETHER / ALONE

Game design, layout, and sketches by Britt A Willis
Twitter/IG: @feelingfickle | brittawillis.com | feelingfickle.itch.io

## WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

A single Envoy arrives in a new land, intent on inviting this government and people to join in an alliance with theirs. A Local greets them and offers to lead them to the Capital. To get there they must journey together, alone across an unwelcoming wilderness, sharing tales of their people and themselves along the journey.

TOGETHER / ALONE explores the stories we tell about our collective and personal history, how they may be seen as reflective of us en masse, and how that assumption may feel to the individual.

## WHAT DO I NEED?

- You and someone else
- One 6-sided die
- Eight poker chips (or coins, or tokens, or edible chips, or...)

## INSPIRATION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- The Hainish Cycle (specifically The Left Hand of Darkness) by Ursula K. Le Guin
- ECH0 by Role Over Play Dead (roleoverplaydead.com)
- The Quiet Year by Avery Alder (buriedwithoutceremony.com)
- Elements of the first page design were inspired by a Marketshow Designers layout on Canva.com.
- Fonts used: Industry Inc and Journal
- This game was created in the traditional territory of the Nacotchtank (Anacostan) and Piscataway peoples.
- This game was created for the Folklore Jam hosted by W.H. Arthur & Swords and Flowers

# THE WILDERNESS

To reach the Capital and begin a exchange with these people, the Envoy must travel across a wilderness with the Local as their guide. What wilderness will you travel across? Is it a bitter icy expanse, an arid desert, a small boat in an tumultuous sea?

# THE CHARACTERS

The Envoy already knows and the Local realizes immediately - you (and your people) are undeniably different. What is the primary difference you each notice, either in culture or physiology, upon meeting each other?

## THE ENVOY

You have been sent alone to learn of these people and invite them to join yours in an alliance. You plan to stay here until you succeed or die.

Introduce yourself to the Local:

- Name, pronouns, & official title
- Where do you come from (a different country, planet, plane of existence)?
- What do your people and land have to offer?

## THE LOCAL

You recognize the importance and possibilities in the Envoy's mission and have offered to lead them through the rough journey to your Capital.

Introduce yourself to the Envoy:

- Name, pronouns, & official title (are you a ranger and guide, a religious figure, a local leader?)
- Do you believe your government will accept this Envoy?
- What do your people and land have to offer?

# THE JOURNEY

Take 4 chips each. The game consists of 4 rounds. Each round is 1 turn each, starting with the Local. Each round indicates ~1 week of travel.

Roll a 1d6 or choose a tale from the LOCAL TALES (if you're the Local) or ENVOY TALES (if you're the Envoy). Feel free to describe in detail the situation inspiring your tale, and ask questions of each other to better understand your tales and travel companion.

# LOCAL TALES

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | You trip today, almost falling into a precarious situation. This reminds you of something a child in your hometown supposedly did, a tall tale passed down from the older kids to the younger for who knows how long. Did you pass the story down to a younger generation as well? Share the tale with your companion. |
| 2 | An intimidating storm makes traveling impossible for the day. Tell your companion of a myth about a hero who rode the wind. Can they hear your tale over the disturbance? |
| 3 | You come across a recognizable, rocky outcropping, shaped vaguely like a person of your land. Who is this landmark named for? Have many travelers come across it or is this a rare sight? Have you ever seen this landmark before? |
| 4 | In the middle of the day you come across one of the few creatures that finds this setting habitable. Tell your companion the legend of how this species came to be. |
| 5 | Your companion is clearly less suited for this journey and has fallen behind as you travel today. What marching song do you share to boost their morale? What event spawned the creation of this song? Did the song's narrators overcome their struggle? |
| 6 | According to your calculations, you are low on rations. They might not last the whole journey. Tell your companion of a religious tale in your culture about someone who was divinely granted an abundance in a drought and what they did with it. |

# ENVOY TALES

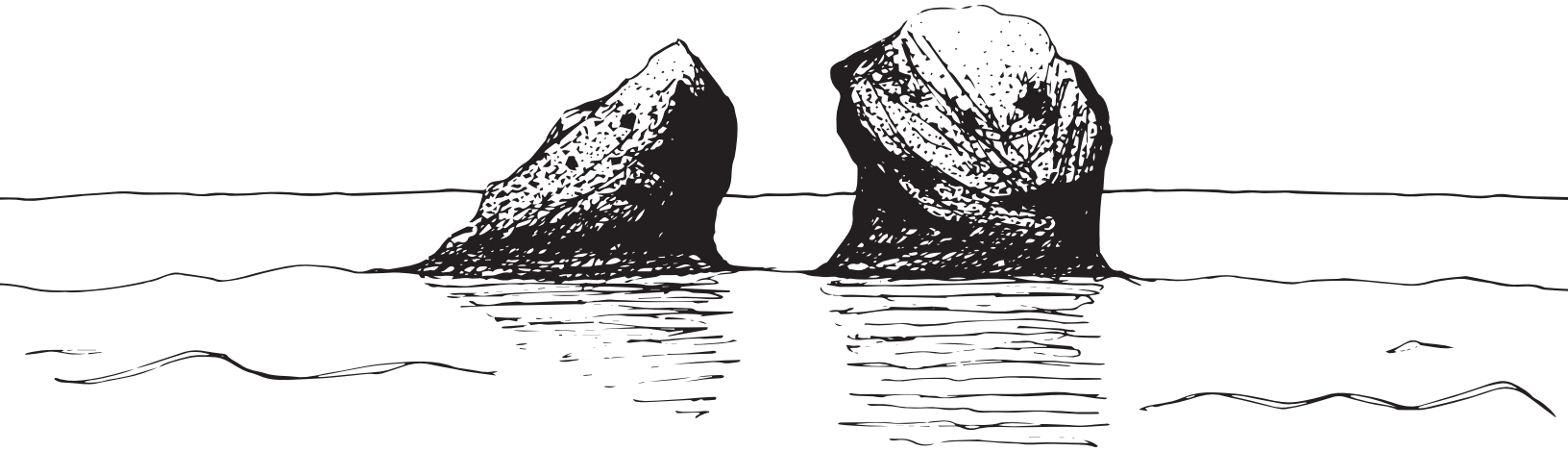
| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | You offer to cook a homestyle dinner one evening, substituting the supplies not available with the closest ration that seems similar. Do the substitutions work? Share the origin of the meal, a family recipe passed down over generations, with your companion. Is there a secret ingredient? Will you share that with them as well? |
| 2 | You've noticed the sun feels different in this wilderness, a more noticeable presence. Tell your companion how, according to myth, your sun was placed in the sky. |
| 3 | The shape of the distant horizon reminds you of the first time you travelled to see the most prominent landmark in your land. How old were you? What great accomplishment led to the landmark? Did you ever go back? |
| 4 | A howling noise arises at night. It's likely just the wind, but disturbing all the same. Huddled near your companion, unable to sleep, whisper the legend of a howling creature from your homeland, and how it was defeated. |
| 5 | You fall ill for two days, a sickness likely brought on by how poorly acclimated you are to this wilderness. What song does your companion hear you whispering in your fevered sleep? |
| 6 | As the hours and days go by, you lose faith in your cause and wonder if the Capital will even hear you. Tell your companion of a religious missionary from your culture who went to a new land to spread faith and how they persisted, despite it going horribly, horribly wrong. Do you feel the missionary made the right choice? Do you convey that to your companion? |

If your companion's tale inspires trust or further interest (whether because of your similarities or differences) put one of your chips in a center pot. If your companion's tale elicits distrust or disgust, take one chip from the center pot.

If there are no chips in the center pot, the Local may take one chip from the Envoy's hand. The Envoy **may not** take any chips from the Local's hand.

After 4 rounds (4 stories each/8 total) you have arrived at the Capital and pitched the alliance.

**TRY CLOSING A FOLKTALE (OR MORE) WITH "DOES YOUR HOME HAVE A SIMILAR STORY?"**



# THE CAPITAL

Roll a 1d6 to determine how the Capital responds.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1–2 | The Capital irrevocably distrusts the Envoy and their people and will not be convinced of an alliance in your or the next lifetime. How is the Envoy treated in light of this distrust? How is the Local treated for assisting them? |
| 3–5 | The Capital feels uncertain about the Envoy. There is a chance for alliance here, but it will take many years and much work. How long does it take? Does the Envoy stay and live to see the alliance finally take form? Does the Local help their cause during this time? How? |
| 6 | The Capital is excited by the Envoy's offer of alliance and is happy to begin negotiations immediately. What role does the Local take during negotiations? How does the Envoy feel about their mission coming to a close? |

If you are dissatisfied with the roll, the Envoy may take any number of chips from the pot to add to the roll.

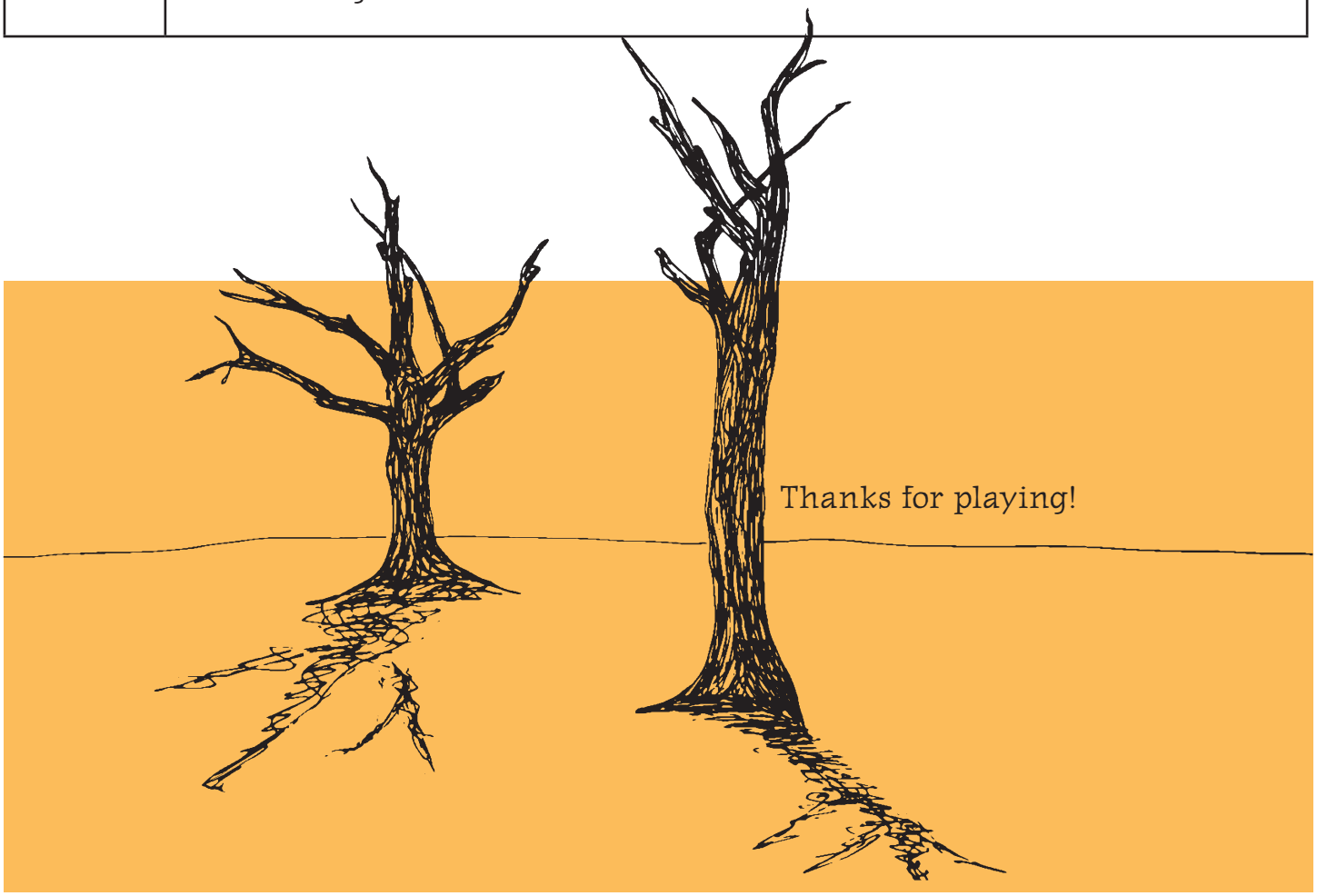
Think of this as using what your companion shared to make larger assumptions about their people and manipulate the Capital. This *will* negatively affect your personal relationship.

After the Envoy takes any chips out of the pot, the Local may use one chip from their hand (if they have it) to either add +1 OR -1 to the roll. If you add +1, put the chip in the pot.

# THE END

After rolling and adjusting the number of chips in the pot, count how many chips you have left. This indicates the strength of your personal relationship with your companion at the end of this journey.

Use the descriptions as a jumping off point and close the game by discussing how your relationship progresses moving forward, if at all.

What was lost or gained during your journey? How does the Capital's decision affect the two of you?

| | |
|---|---|
| 0–2 | Alliance or not, the two of you will never trust each other. Your journey revealed a rift you as individuals are incapable of crossing. |
| 3–5 | You see each other as associates in the task of uniting your lands, but your connection is fairly tenous, dry, and dependent on your lands' relationship. |
| 6–8 | You are bonded and your relationship is enduring, whether or not the lands at large can reach an alliance. |