



Phänomen über, und unter Erden.
Erdbeben.



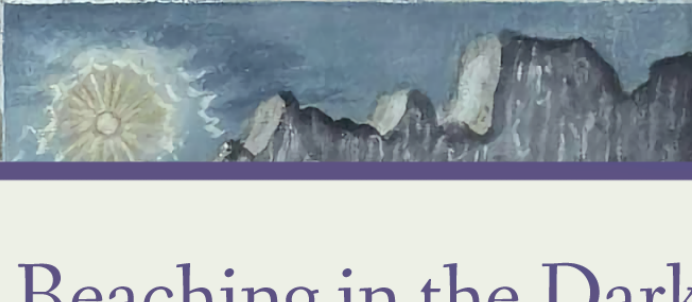
Gewitter.



Leuchtkugel.



Ihr Lichter.



Reaching in the Dark

A misty, fantasy PbtA Game

Inspired by Florence + The Machine's High As Hope



Mond mit seinen Hof.



Sonnen Regenbogen.



Mond Regenbogen.



Nordlicht.



See Sturm.



Wasserhose.



Gamuni.

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Reaching in the Dark

A misty, fantasy PbtA game inspired by the tone and feel of *Florence + The Machine's High as Hope*, best played over short games or one-shots. Written by Josh Hittie.

This is a game of having **Lost** and hoping to **Find**. Of exploring *The Land* encased in mist and dew. Players take on the role of beings who have drifted into *The Land* having lost pieces of themselves. One person takes on the role of the **Choir**. It is the Choir's job to weave together the strings of narrative the players provide and act as the conduit for *The Land's* own will.

A somber mist pervades *The Land*. Infused with Spirit, this mist obscures what is Lost and waiting to be Found. Loam and moss. Stained glass and rough brick. Aged bronze and green stone. Warping and shifting, *The Land* takes on many shapes, but always cloaked in the same obscuring mists. Endless days that never turn to night, overgrown cities without seasons, white cliffs and shrouded woods. Within *The Land* you will find other beings and creatures who were consumed by their Loss and reach out toward any point of hope, snuffing it out. *The Land* both acts to ruin those who have Lost, and cradle those who wish to Find.

There are four **Forms** that players can take. **Hazes** who draw their power from bonds and promises. **Beasts** who run wild, burn bright, and risk being consumed by their passion. **Weavers** who draw forth and shape the mists that blanket *The Land*. **Torrents** who let nothing stand in their way, rushing in and washing it all away. Forms have no name, only descriptions. Forms are malleable, and as they Find what they have Lost they may change and gain new descriptions. Forms are transient beings only temporarily visiting *The Land* and players may find themselves dissipating into the very mists they seek to clear. This is okay. Sometimes you must let something go and find something new.

There are four **Forces** that drive each Form. Hunger, Song, Grace, and Thunder.

- ❖ **Hunger:** Roll with Hunger when you seek, want, need, lust. Hunger is ravenous, passionate, full of wild abandon and revelry. Hunger can never be truly satisfied.
- ❖ **Song:** Roll with Song when you wish to imprint your will onto *The Land* and its creatures or conjure forth the Spirit that infuses all things within the mists. Song is triumphant and pleading, it is a battle of heart between you and *The Land*.
- ❖ **Grace:** Roll with Grace when you act subtly and carefully. Grace dances around the edge of vision, its absence is noticed but rarely is its presence felt.
- ❖ **Thunder:** Roll with Thunder when you storm, rage, or push forward. Thunder is loud and bold. It is the crashing against what tries to hold you back.

When you try to conjure, summon, or reshape the Spirit infusing *The Land*, boldly face the dangers in the mist, or reach to Find what was Lost, **roll 2d6 and add an appropriate Force**. On a 10+ you succeed. On a 7-9 you succeed with complications. On a 6- you face dire consequences. For every 11+ you roll, you may regain one point of Spirit or Body up to your maximum. You may choose to spend 1 Spirit to roll with advantage (roll 3d6 and keep the two highest results). When you roll with Force using something you are skilled in, you may roll with advantage.

Select your Form and add a total of 3 to your Forces. No Force may be greater than +3. You cannot subtract from any Force.

The Haze

- ❖ +1 Grace, +0 Song, +0 Hunger, -1 Thunder
- ❖ 6 Spirit 4 Body
- ❖ When someone makes you a promise, gain +1 Spirit. So long as that promise remains unfulfilled you maintain that extra Spirit.
- ❖ When you whisper a promise to *The Land* you may create a bond with something you can feel. Spend 1 Spirit to call on that bond when you need it most. Once called on, the bond is broken and cannot be remade.
- ❖ You are skilled in locks and keys, silvered words, and grimoires and circles.

The Beast

- ❖ +1 Hunger, +0 Thunder, +0 Song, -1 Grace
- ❖ 2 Spirit 8 Body
- ❖ When you pursue what you want single mindedly, you may choose to give in to your passions. Your Form gains the tags [*burning* and *bestial*]. These tags last until you have satiated your passion.
- ❖ You may spend 1 Spirit or 2 Body to share the fire that burns within you with another. They regain 2 Body. When you spend Spirit learn a truth about *The Land*. When you spend Body, you burn ever brighter. Gain +1 forward when you roll with Hunger.
- ❖ You are skilled with bone and blood, in rending and breaking, and salt and herb.

The Weaver

- ❖ +1 Song, +0 Grace, +0 Thunder, -1 Hunger
- ❖ 8 Spirit 2 Body
- ❖ You can see the strings that tug and pull within the mists. When you tug on those strings you may spend 1 Spirit to release the seams of *The Land* beneath your feet, or clear the mist clouding your vision.
- ❖ Choose two tags [*light, glass, dewed, stone, dusk, wind*]. You can conjure forth these properties from within the mists by spending 1 Spirit.
- ❖ You are skilled in stars and moons, fortunes and fables, and secrets whispered.

The Torrent

- ❖ +1 Thunder, +0 Hunger, +0 Grace, -1 Song
- ❖ 4 Spirit 6 Body
- ❖ You wield a shape that tears apart what stands in front of you. Describe this shape, assign it two tags [*hallowed, darkened, hidden, raging, hunting, weeping*].
- ❖ You may spend 1 Spirit or 1 Body to push back the mists that cloud you and those near you. Those you trust regain all spent Spirit as their doubts are washed away.
- ❖ You are skilled in the deluge and flow, in sheer overwhelming force, and piercing that which obscures.

Each Form has a pool of **Spirit** and **Body**. Spirit represents the essence of *The Land*. It infuses every Form and creature and may be called on and manipulated. If your Spirit is reduced to zero, you can see through the mist clearly but cannot interact meaningfully or permanently with *The Land*. Spirit can be replenished by following the path *The Land* has laid out immediately in front of you, despite the dangers you are sure to face. Body is the physicality of a Form. When you take damage, this damage is normally applied to your Body pool. Body can be replenished by choosing to Lose something you hold, or by reclaiming something you have Found. If your Body is reduced to zero you become a shade, easily influenced by the whispers of the mists. When both your Spirit and Body are reduced to zero, your Form dissipates, and you leave *The Land*. Unless otherwise stated, any kind of harm reduces Body or Spirit by 1.

For every piece of you that you Find, you may choose one of the following options.

- ❖ Increase Body or Spirit by 1.
- ❖ Increase one Force by 1 (to a maximum of +3).
- ❖ Create a new tag for your Form.
- ❖ Create something new you are skilled in.

Players should answer the following questions when starting the game or when taking on a new Form.

- ❖ What core piece of you do you *think* you have Lost?
- ❖ How do you *hope* to Find it within the mists?
- ❖ How did you emerge into *The Land*?
- ❖ What indelible mark do you bear?

Denizens of *The Land*

Denizens have a combined pool of Spirit and Body called **Mist** to represent their attachment to *The Land*. When their Mist is reduced to zero they vanish, swept away by the Forces of the players. The amount of harm done to a denizen's Mist will vary with the narrative of the moment (but it is often 1).

Angels: The Angels roam the cold skies circling the Lost like vultures. They know what hopes sit in your heart and wait to pluck it out should you fall.

- ❖ 1 Mist. Should an Angel fall, you can scavenge the hope they have stolen.

Wolves: All teeth, fire, smoke, and howls. Wolves are ravenous creatures that have been consumed by their Hunger. They are beautiful.

- ❖ 4 Mist. Their teeth deal 1 damage to Body. Their howls deal 1 damage to Spirit.

Blossoms: Small flower-like beings who deal in favors, honey, and spring.

- ❖ 1 Mist

The Hidden: Ethereal creatures that flit between the streams of shadows and pools of light deep within winding forests. They steal secrets and memories.

- ❖ 2 Mist. Their hands can only deal damage to Spirit.

Artisans: These thin beings float along the tangled currents of the canopy. When they touch the ground their movements are heavy, but they possess a weightlessness when aloft.

- ❖ 1 Mist. Artisans will trade their strange goods for stories and incense.

Statues: These are Spiritless Forms that have become trapped and bound to *The Land* by their regrets. They are wretched shells but possess deep knowledge. They wish to be freed.

- ❖ 1 Mist. Each Statue possesses one unique truth, though they are loath to share it.

Augurs: The Augurs slumber beneath soft moss and sweet brooks. Should they be woken they will offer guidance and prophecy to the worthy.

- ❖ 2 Mist. An Augurs prophecy is always true but rarely obvious.

The Displaced: Their roots wrap around empty cages. They crawl forward with a heavy beat and weaving rhythm. They may be slowed, but they cannot be stopped by force alone.

- ❖ 2 Mist. When their Mist is depleted, Displaced are only briefly banished from *The Land* before recondensing in another location.

The End: Where the earth gives way to brick, The End waits. They dwell in the places in-between haunting the thresholds of *The Land*. They are naturally drawn to transient Forms. Avoid their gaze.

- ❖ 2 Mist. Near The End, the mists behave wildly and unpredictable.

Silhouettes: Diminutive and lyrical, these creatures cluster around powerful Song. They can do little on their own, but when their voices join as one they are grand.

- ❖ 1 Mist.

Principles of the Choir

- ❖ Be evocative. Use contrasting descriptors to create the world. *The Land* is both lush and barren. It is melancholy on the tongue, while being jubilant in the chest. *The Land* should reflect the tonal dichotomy between Losing and Finding.
- ❖ Let the players clear the mists that they believe obscure them.
- ❖ Use tags with reckless enthusiasm. But make sure they're more evocative than mechanical. Each tag is up for interpretation, just like everything else about this game.
- ❖ Be soft when players succeed, be hard when they fail. *The Land* is strange and fickle. It will embrace those who Find what they seek but scorn those who Lose themselves in the mist.
- ❖ There is always a glimmer of hope out amidst the dark. It may be small and fragile, but it is there.
- ❖ There is always, always, a grand triumphant crescendo before the final ending.
- ❖ *The Land* is responsible for creating the obstacles players face. These obstacles should be linked to what their characters have Lost or what they wish to Find. All of this is just a giant metaphor really.

Credits

Reaching in the Darkness is inspired by High As Hope by Florence + The Machine.

The cover art is *Phänomen über, und unter Erden* by Josef Gabriel Frey (1878).

This game was written for the Record Collection 2k19 jam hosted by Riley Hopkins.