Sailing for Atlantis

You and a handful of strangers are sailing into the unknown in search of Atlantis.

Each of you has different reasons for seeking Atlantis.

None of you know how to get there.

Of course, Atlantis doesn't actually exist. And the voyage to a place that doesn't exist takes a very strange path...

Game Structure

The player characters travel from island to island, seeking the way to Atlantis. Each island holds secrets that can help their quest and temptations and obstacles that can distract them from it. Each island will reveal more of the mysterious traveling strangers, and each island always leaves its mark on those who quest for Atlantis.

Players take turns adding new details to the current island and then roleplaying in the developing situation. Whenever they overcome obstacles, one of the player characters may be forever changed. As the characters change, so does their journey, propelling them into a world stranger and stranger as they struggle to reach their goal and puzzle out what their purpose is in seeking it.

Set Up

You'll need a character sheet for each player, and a couple pads of Post-It notes. It's also helpful to have a marker to denote who the Captain is each turn, and a pile of glass beads, a different color for each player.

Take the *back* page off of a pad of Post-It notes and stick the rest of the pad in the middle of your character sheet, sticky side to the left. This is your Log.

Label the first four pages of your Log "Talents," "Knowledges," "Gear," and "Tricks." Pull those pages off and place them, in any order, in the four corner spaces of your sheet. These are your current Cornerstones. You will build your character's traits off of these Cornerstones later.

The Globe above the Log keeps track of the points you spend. At the start of the game, only the first quarter of the Globe is unlocked and its points available. Label the first quarter with the destination that your character claims to be traveling to. This very well may be "Atlantis" if the character is very honest or very subtle; it may be nearly anything else otherwise.

> *Imagine you, Tim, and Amanda are playing. You all set up your initial Cornerstones, and write in your ostensible destinations. Amanda writes in Atlantis, claiming she's honest and forthcoming; you don't trust her for a moment. Tim writes in the Royal Palace, saying he's a loyal vassal of the King. You write in the Grand Market, and portray yourself as a merchant. Sure, they'll believe that.*

There is no space for you to write your character's name; this is intentional. The name that your character gives to others may be her real name; it may not. Your character may be what she appears to be; she may not. Your character may think she herself knows who she is; she almost certainly does not.

Playing the Game

Play progresses in turns around the table. When it is your turn, you are the Captain, responsible for moderating roleplay and providing adversity. You may find it useful to use a token on the table to remember who is currently the Captain.

On your turn, you may add an element to the present situation on the island, and then narrate the development of the situation. The entire table then roleplays in response to what has happened. As Captain, you guide this roleplay and provide adversity and context. This roleplay continues until a conflict arises. To resolve the conflict, everyone around the table takes turns applying their traits to elements in the situation. Whoever beats the difficulty of the island wins their stakes; whoever has the highest total moderates the remainder of the turn's roleplay. Players roleplay out their successes or failures.

The player to your left then becomes the Captain and takes their turn.

The Captain is an important and powerful role. In addition to introducing adversity and moderating roleplay up to the conflict, she declares stakes *last*, applies traits *first*, and taps the globe *last*.

Turn Structure

1. Build Island
2. Roleplay to Conflict
3. Conflict Resolution
    a) Set Stakes
    b) Apply Traits
    c) *Optional:* Buy & Rewrite Traits
    d) *Optional:* Tap the Globe
    e) Narrate Success
4. Souvenirs

Phase 1: Build Island

Only the Captain acts in the Build Island phase. If you are the Captain, you may play the top page from your Log onto the island. If the top page is blank, you must write a word or phrase on it before playing. Attach the page to any exposed edge of the island. Narrate the addition to the island and how it relates to the cards it borders.

> *Imagine the island is already built of the island's name, Tortuga, a page labelled Tavern, and another page labelled Pirates, arranged in an "L" shape. The situation has already been established as a pirate lair. On your turn, you write "Princess" and attach it to the Pirates page so it borders both Tortuga and Pirates. You explain that the pirates have captured the princess and brought her to Tortuga. She isn't in the Tavern, though, since the Princess page doesn't border the Tavern page.*

If you are playing the first page for this island, the word or phrase on the page becomes the name of the island. Additionally, you must write down the difficulty of the island and draw a square around it. This is equal to the last island's difficulty plus five. The first island's difficulty is therefore five.

If the island isn't interesting yet, the Captain may pass the rest of her turn.

Phase 2: Roleplay to Conflict

Everyone describes what their characters are doing, roleplaying until a conflict or conflicts develop to the point where players cannot roleplay further without knowing how it turns out. Players may introduce their characters into the scene at any point, whether or not the Captain included them at the beginning. Otherwise, the Captain serves as moderator for the scene, making sure that everyone participates and holding the other players back from narrating past the conflict. The Captain also describes the actions of the island's residents and dangers during the Roleplay to Conflict phase.

> *You and your fellow players narrate getting drunk in the tavern and talking up the pirates there. A few rums later, you decide to have one of the pirates lets slip that they kidnapped the princess. The players set off to find and rescue her, because they're friendly sorts.*

It may be that you do not find a conflict, especially when an island is very small. If no conflict arises after a few minutes, the Captain may end her turn. The player to her left becomes the Captain and takes his turn.

Phase 3: Conflict Resolution

The first step of Conflict Resolution is setting the stakes. Starting with the player to the left of the Captain and going clockwise around the table, players declare what they are trying to accomplish in the current conflict. Stakes must be framed in terms of character *actions*, not states of being or establishing facts. Any player may elect to support another player, but they may only support a player who has already declared stakes. Alternately, any player may elect to oppose another player. If they have already declared their stakes, players must spend two points from an unlocked quarter to change their stakes.

> *Tim to your left declares that his stakes are to save the princess. Next up, Amanda decides to support Tim in saving the princess. When it's your turn, though, you decide that you want to ransom the princess, instead.*

Then, starting with the Captain, players pair one of their traits with a page of the island, narrating how the trait is used on the part of the island represented by

that page. Players score a number of points equal to the trait plus the value of the page, if it has one. Each page can only be used by one player, and each player may only use each of their traits once per conflict. You may want to use glass beads to mark which pages and traits each player has used.

> *You go first, so you apply your Talent: Silver Tongue +4 to the Tavern, explaining how your character got the pirates there to tell exactly where the princess is. Tim uses his Trick: Sneaky +3 on the Pirates, describing how his character leaps at them from the shadows. Amanda uses her Gear: Cloak +3 on the Princess, hiding her from prying eyes. You've scored 4 points; Tim and Amanda have scored 6.*

If any player or group of players score a number of points greater than or equal to the island's difficulty and are unopposed, they win their stakes. If your stakes are opposed, you must beat both the island's difficulty *and* the opposing player. Otherwise, it is more than possible for more than one player or group to win their stakes. Roleplay out the resolution, with the highest-scoring single player serving as moderator.

> *Let's pretend the island's difficulty is just 5. Tim and Amanda win their stakes, but you don't. You still scored higher than they did, though, so you'll moderate the roleplay as they narrate their success.*

Buying New Traits

When you are taking turns using traits, you may spend up to five points to create a new trait at that value and apply it immediately. The trait is written on any blank block on your character sheet, built off of the foundation of one of your Cornerstones. Spent points are checked off out of unlocked quarters in the Globe. You do *not* need to be the Captain to buy new traits.

> *Let's skip back a bit, to where you've scored 4 points and Tim and Amanda got 6. There's still a page in the island: Tortuga, and it's your turn to apply traits. You spend four points on "Maps" and write that in on a block built off of Gear. You then apply Gear: Maps +4 to Tortuga, and describe how you lead the players to a*

hidden cave where you can hide the Princess -- long enough to collect a ransom. Now you've got 8.

If you buy a new trait that fills the last space connecting two Cornerstones, all the traits between those Cornerstones can be considered based off of either.

Later in the game, imagine that Tim placed Hashashim +5 in the last space between Talents and Connections. Hashashim and all the other traits between those two Cornerstones could then be counted as either a Talent or a Connection.

Rewriting Traits

Instead of buying a new trait, a player may spend a number of points equal to a trait's value in order to rewrite it entirely. The trait's value increases by one. This is the only way to get a trait valued higher than five.

Now imagine that Tim spends five more points on Hashashim +5, rewriting it to King of the Eagles +6. It still counts as a Talent or a Connection.

Tapping the Globe

After everyone has assigned traits to pages, go around the table one last time, starting with the player to the Captain's left. Each player may tap one quarter of their Globe for more points. They must explain how their actions in the current conflict have lived up to one of the descriptors written in that quarter. They may then add a number of points equal to the unspent rows in that quarter. If they do this, they must spend one point from one of those rows.

Back to Tortuga. Tim and Amanda have 6, you have 8. Tim wants to moderate the results of the conflict, so he taps his Globe and points at his ostensible destination of the Royal Palace. He'll take the princess directly to the King. He's got three rows in the first quarter that are still blank, so he adds three points to his total, skipping to 9. You'll have none of that, so you tap your Globe, too, pointing at your stated destination of the Grand Market. You're trying to drum up cash to spend.

You've got two empty rows, so you add two to your score, for a total of 10. Both you and Tim mark off one point from an empty row on each of your sheets.

Yielding

At any point in a conflict, any player may elect to yield, surrendering their stakes and freeing up the pages that they had been using. Any remaining players may then apply traits to those pages and score points as normal.

Phase 4: Souvenirs

The highest-scoring player who wins her stakes may take one page off of the island and put it on any other player's character Cornerstones, or safekeep it on their own Log. You may take any page from the island as long as you can remove it without removing other pages. When you do so, note the total number of pages remaining attached to the island and add this number, circled, to the page. This is the value of the page. The value of the page does not change, even if it is placed on an island and taken as a souvenir again.

So you got your stakes and scored highest. You can only remove Princess, since the other pages are buried. You pull that page off the island, leaving three pages behind. You write 3 on the page and circle it. You put it on Amanda's sheet, covering her Gear Cornerstone.

The player may also spend points to take additional pages off of the island. The second page costs two points, the third page costs three more points, the fourth page costs four more, and so on. The last page on an island cannot be taken as a souvenir.

For the purposes of discussion, let's say you wanted that Pirates page, too. You tick two points off of your Globe and pull it, putting its value, 2, in a circle. You slap it down on your own Log. On your next turn, you will be able to add Pirates back onto the island or nothing at all. However, you will get first dibs on its +2 points when it comes to applying traits.

Transforming a Player's Cornerstone

When you place a page on another player's Cornerstone, you fundamentally change the kind of traits that are built off of the Cornerstone. If the player previously had Talents like Swordfighting and Mechanic, you might replace Talents with Memories, turning those previously immediate skills into things the character only remembers. Alternately you might replace Talents with Needs, giving the character a reason to seek those traits out in others.

When a player uses a trait associated with the transformed Cornerstone, they add in the value of the Cornerstone.

> *You replaced Amanda's Gear with Princess +3. Her Cloak, which used to just be Gear, now has something to do with Princess. Maybe she is a princess and it's her cloak of office. Maybe she stole it from a princess. It's up to her to say when she uses it next. Whatever she decides on, the Cloak +3 will add the Princess +3, counting for 6 points when she uses it.*

Unlocking Quarters of the Globe

Players spend points out of the quarters displayed on the Globe above their Log. At the beginning of the game, only the first quarter is unlocked and only its 25 points may be spent. In order to spend points beyond the first 25, players must unlock the other quarters.

Everyone's next quarter is unlocked when any player has all four Cornerstones transformed. They may now spend the points from that quarter, but they must define it first.

The first quarter is labeled with the character's ostensible destination at the beginning of the game. When the second quarter is unlocked, all players label theirs with their character's *apparent* reason for traveling to Atlantis. When the third quarter is unlocked, all players label it with what their character *believes* is their purpose in traveling to Atlantis. When the fourth quarter is unlocked, all players label it with what their character *suspects* is their true purpose.

When a quarter is unlocked, it's a good idea to have all players mark an "X" on their current Cornerstones. The next quarter will be unlocked when all four Cornerstones have been redefined again and no "X" marks are showing.

> *Later in the game, Amanda replaces your Talents with Secret. Your other three Cornerstones have already been replaced, so Amanda has unlocked the next*

quarter, which happens to be the second. Everyone puts a mark on their current cornerstones and writes in their apparent reason for travelling to Atlantis. You've established yourself as something of a rapscallion, so you write in Profit.

Moving On

Eventually, an island will either exhaust its interest for the players or become so unbearably hostile that the characters will need to flee. And Atlantis is always on the horizon, beckoning the seekers onward.

Leaving an Island

The characters may only leave an island if one or more players win stakes to that effect, and when such stakes are won, the current island is discarded and the next turn will create a new island. All player characters move on to the next island; there is no staying behind. The player characters need not travel together, however.

Imagine it's much later in the game, and on the present island Tim has managed to get his character appointed Chancellor to the Mad King. He's also thrown you in Jail, which is preventing you from completing the Ritual to destroy the Sorceress. You decide to bail, setting your stakes as escaping from jail, finding Amanda's character, and heading for the horizon. When you win the stakes, Tim narrates that his character pursues yours to recapture you and put you back in prison where you belong. Next island!

Unlocking Atlantis

If, after all four quarters of the Globe have been unlocked, any character has all four Cornerstones redefined again, Atlantis is unlocked. This does not bestow any points, but it does put Atlantis within reach. The next time the players leave an island, the following island will be Atlantis. However, the players are no longer constrained to travel together, and the stakes for leaving the island can specify that some players reach Atlantis and others do not.

If stakes are won that progress any players to Atlantis, all the players take

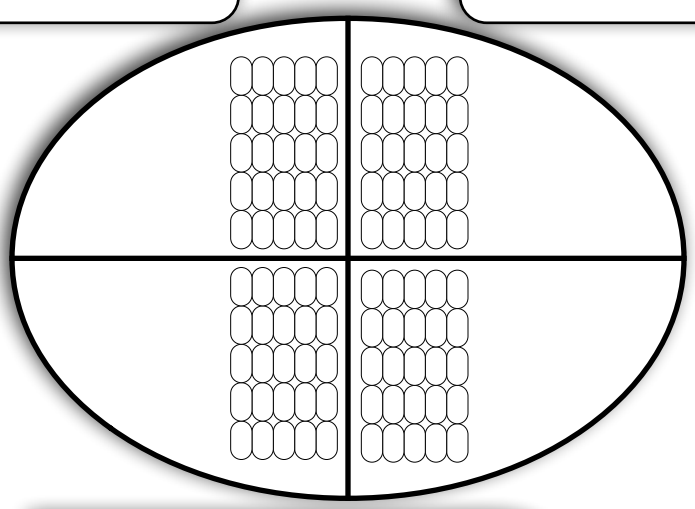
turns narrating an epilogue. The player with the most unspent points goes first, then the player with the second most unspent points, and so on. Ties are broken by empty blocks on the character sheet. Characters who reach Atlantis are assumed to automatically attain their true goal -- whatever their player decides that is. Characters left behind cannot narrate getting to Atlantis in their epilogue.

Afterword

This game gets weird. As normal and prosaic as the first island may play out, it's only a matter of time before characters are running around with Cornerstones like Nostalgia, Sword, Happenstance, and Bees. They leave the island called Pillar and proceed on to the island named Apotheosis. In fact, the islands can quickly cease to be physical islands at all.

Also note that the descent into psychedelia is a steepening slope. The stranger your Cornerstones become, the stranger the pages you add to the island, and they inevitably return to your character sheet. By the time you reach Atlantis, it is almost guaranteed to be something very different than you expected, and your character will almost certainly be something that is not entirely human.

Bon Voyage.



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