

Colorless Green Ideas Sleep Furiously

a Game Chef entry by Dev Purkayastha (dev@forgreatjustice.net)

Timing: Playable over any number of sessions, lasting exactly 8 Hours total.

Ingredients: GLASS COMMITTEE EMOTION (not: ancient)

See design thread at: <http://www.1km1kt.net/forum/ftopic668.html>

The furious sleep is a colorless dreaming of green, green ideas. In eight hours, the Dreamer must wake up, and she will have been inspired by the play of your symbols— but where will her inspiration lead?

Players will play the part of symbols within a dream, hoping to bargain with and win over parts of the dreamer's emotional state through a series of visions, quests, surrealities and nightmares. The goal is to effect her final choices once she wakes up in eight hours. Each session can present a mix of different players and different symbols, but the same dreamer.

Introduction

Today, an ordinary person was confronted with extraordinary decisions amidst a confusing swirl of emotions.

Tonight they will have the most incredible dreams, and tomorrow will be the most important day of their life.

This storygame is about that Dreamer and the dreams she had.

...

This game has a somewhat fixed structure, as the GM will ultimately play this for eight hours over several sessions. However, you can run **any** session with **any** people you know, even if they haven't played before.

In fact, the ideal way to play is several ad hoc sessions with small subgroups of your friends, so that stories become a truly communal creation. Just bring these with you:

- notes on the Dreamer's issues
- the Wish/Nightmare cards from previous games
- blank index cards and pens
- a notebook

Terminology

This game involves a GM and 3-6 players. The same person must be GM for all sessions of the game, but any person may be a player at any time (making this game suitable for pickup play). Play time is variable, but will ultimately add up to 8 hours over several sessions.

The GM will play **the Dreamer**, a fictional person experiencing some bizarre dreams. The GM should bring a pawn to represent the Dreamer, a notebook to track the various dreams, and several index cards (and pens) to build the various game elements.

Each player brings an **Anchor**: a physical object of convenient size, not much larger than a CD or paperback, that could have some symbolic or evocative meaning.

Each player will take this anchor and personify it into a **Loa**, the role each player will take for the duration of the game.

There will be dreams within dreams; these are separated from each other by panes of **Glass**. If you break the glass, you break the dream within, and you fall back into the dream outside. At some point, you've run out of dreams to run to.

A **Committee** is convened amongst the Loa in order to create new dreams within old dreams.

There are 6 pairs of **Emotions** described below; each of these will be tied to an issue at stake in the Dreamer's waking life. This will manifest as pairs of **Wishes** and **Nightmares** within the dream. The Loa will use their power to push the Dreamer towards/away from these Emotions/Wishes/Nightmares.

Symbols come in **Chains**, and a card containing such a chain is called a Chain Card. The first symbol in a chain is always your Anchor, but throughout the game the Loa can use free association to take a previous element and derive a new one. Players get 3 separate cards on which to write Chains of Symbols (in effect, 3 separate chains). For example, if your Anchor is "broken cd", a chain may look like this:

Broken CD → bad art → failed artists → absinthe → worms

The **Endgame** happens once 8 Hours of game time have elapsed. The Dreamer will announce to all players, past and present, what the Dreamer resolves to do upon waking.

The Very First Session: Falling and Drowning

These are the 6 emotional dualities used in the game:

WISHES NIGHTMARES

Hope	Despair
Glory	Defeat
Family	Alienation
Love	Fear
Desire	Loyalty
Ego	Duty

Note: Yes, Loyalty and Duty show up as Nightmares.

The GM should first prepare six cards, one for each pair. (The Wish aspect should go on one side in blue, and the Nightmare aspect on the opposite side in red. Leave room for adding some more notes.)

What then follows is essentially a two-part brainstorming process. This should not take more than a half-hour. (A whiteboard may help.)

Step 1: Falling Asleep... The players, having brought their anchors, freely brainstorm suggestions for the identity of the dreamer. However, all suggestions must relate to the anchor in some fashion. (Example: I have a mug, which is filled with liquid, and blood is a liquid, so I say he's a

doctor.) The GM can accept any suggestion; once she does, it is permanently set for the rest of the game.

Step 2: Drowning in Dreams! Once enough basic details are down, the GM moves into this phase, where everyone looks for conflicts in this person's life, one for each of the dualities. There should be a clear choice related to each of these dualities. (For example: I will either have to get married to whom my family wants, or move out of the house and leave them behind → Family/Alimentation.) As soon as the GM has something for each duality, she writes them on the cards (with each choice written below its associated emotion).

Once this is done, this first session immediately ends; the next one may immediately begin, if desired. From now on, any player will be taking up the persona of their Loa, and the GM will take up the persona of the newly forged Dreamer.

And Every Session That Follows Will Begin Like This

First: **start the clock.**

For the GM / Dreamer

The GM should be guiding each player through the initial steps. While waiting for the players to finish, he should establish some baseline facts for the first Dream in the first available page of the Notebook. The dream should happen in some terrifyingly bland and tedious environment, like an endless sea of cubicles, a very small desert planet, or inside a closet which Must Never Be Opened.

For the Players / Loa

Each player should have with them an Anchor (a conveniently sized physical object, no bigger than a CD). Each player then creates her Loa, which is a personalized manifestation of her anchor.

1. Grab an index card and a pen.
2. Turn your anchor into a Colorless Green Idea...
 1. Come up with 3 associated phrases: an abstract concept related to your anchor, and then two semi-contradictory adjectives that could provide some more human color to your persona.
 2. *Example: My anchor is a hammer, so fortitude is a good idea. How about having a sorta jazzy style? And what's a good contradictory adjective to jazz... silence! So I am a Silent Jazzy Fortitude.*
 3. Much like the phrase "Colorless Green Ideas", we see that "Silent Jazzy Fortitude" doesn't make a great deal of sense, but that is in fact ideal!
3. On your card, write the 3 phrases, each on their own line. Divide 10 points amongst the phrases.
4. Flip the card over. The GM will read out the emotional pairings (with a reminder of what's going on in the Dreamer's life). Cross out one pairing; you are ambivalent about the outcome of this emotion. Circle one element of each other pair: you now have 5 goals! You will focus on trying to promote each of these emotions above the others.
5. Add your email address to the card. No, really.
6. This is your **loa**, prepresented by an index card.

Get 3 more index cards. Divide 10 points among them. In the top right, write your anchor. (Leave room for more stuff!) These three cards are your Chain Cards.

Ready to Go!

The GM should set up the board, randomly distribute the Wish/Nightmare cards, and read out the landscape of the first Dream. Then you are ready to play.

How do we set up the board?

In the middle of the table, there will be a 3×3 grid of 9 stacks of index cards. What can be on these cards?

- a blank white card – this is a pane of Glass
- a chain card – this represents several symbols, one of which one is active
- a emotion card, with the Wish on one side and the Nightmare on the other.

At the beginning of the game, there will be only a 3×3 grid of panes of glass, because no interesting details will yet have been played.

The Dreamer's pawn will go in the center of the grid. Each Loa will have a hand of cards, while the Dreamer will keep a Discard Pile and Glass Pile in front of him. (The latter is simply a stack of blank cards, when more Glass is needed.)

And Then...

Each Loa will have a turn, and then the Dreamer will take her turn.

What can a Dreamer do on her turn?

The Dreamer will move his pawn: up, down, left or right. The pawn must move towards any available Dream and away from any available Nightmare. Given multiple choices, the pawn will take the path with the highest number on it; if there is a tie, the Dreamer may decide arbitrarily which way to go.

Before this happens, however, consider the Anchors that the Dreamer currently has in her possession. If the Dreamer is possessing an Anchor, she can call upon the Loa of the Anchor to appear. However, her possession of the Anchor means its Loa can spontaneously appear, even without her permission.

The Loa should then narrate their appearance into the scene using one of their three phrases, and may then dispense advice or suggestions to the Dreamer. The Dreamer can give the Anchor back to the Loa if she wishes. (The Loa can only get it back by asking for it on her own turn.)

Once the various Loa have been summoned or given a chance to appear, the Dreamer can **dispel** any Chain Card ahead, so long as it is derived of the Anchor she is currently using. (This card is then put in the Discard Pile.) On the other hand, the Loa has the option to **push** the Dreamer (literally or metaphorically) into any space of her choosing, thus pre-empting the Dreamer's own turn.

Note that the Loa may disagree about whether a Push is appropriate, and there are rules for that.

The assembled Loa will disappear after the Dreamer has taken her turn.

What can a Loa do on her turn?

She must do one of the following:

(1) She can play a Chain Card from her hand. She may play these on top of any the 8 surrounding spaces on the board, so long as the new card is covering a Glass pane or a Chain card with a

higher rating. Immediately after playing, the Loa should narrate one of the symbols into an element of the scene that the Dreamer will find if she goes here. (For example, given a chain of "Hammer → Wood → Forest", the Loa may narrate that there is a forest there – perhaps a dark, foreboding place, or a cheery glen).

(2) She can play a Wish/Nightmare card from her hand. She may play with either the Dream or Nightmare side facing up, and may play these on any corner of the board. However: there can only be one Dream and one Nightmare face up on the board at any time. If there are multiple Wish/Nightmares on the board after a turn, the older one is removed to the Discard Pile.

Immediately after playing, the Loa should narrate what she will find there. There are no real limits, except that a Wish should manifest as something simple but more or less good (a picnic, a pretty girl, a pot of gold), while a Nightmare should manifest as something either terrifyingly bad (a hurricane of razorblades and tears), or something corrupt yet enticing (a bordello built out of rusted iron).

(3) If she is still possessing her Anchor, she can alter any one Chain card, in her hand or face up on the table, so long as it originally derives of her own anchor. This means that she can add one new symbol to the end of the chain, or that she can decide that it represents a different symbol than it did before, or that she can do both of these. For example, the Loa with an Anchor of 'Romance Paperback' may have a chain card like this:

Romance Paperback → Seduction → Moonlight → Werewolves

She may choose to add a new Symbol (Werewolves → **Silver**); then, if the card was already in play (described as "a forest filled with vicious werewolves") she may also alter what that card means, by either adding a detail or replacing the scene entirely. (So, both "a path of moonlight will show a safe path" or "instead, there is now a Silver Castle through it" are valid.)

(4) She can offer the Dreamer her Anchor – giving the actual Anchor object to the Dreamer. Or if the Dreamer currently has it, she can demand that it is returned.

(5) She can call for redistribution: all the cards in the Discard Pile will shuffled and dealt to each Loa, starting with her. If a Loa gets a Glass card, she must immediately put it back into the Glass pile.

(6) She can invoke a grudge: she will narrate some insult or challenge to another Loa, and then both she and the targetted Loa will put all cards in their hands into the Discard pile.

(7) She can invoke Committee, where she will select some of the Loa to create a new dream within this dream, effectively putting this dream on hold. The acting Loa will name N other Loa to participate with her; unless N other players object, the new dream will be created.

The Dreamer will then flip to a new page in the notebook for this new dream. She will give the Committee 30 seconds to establish their dream. In this time, any member of the Committee can tell the Dreamer write a simple fact about the new dream, or to cross out a fact that has already been written. (Thus, if the committee cannot come to a consensus about the facts, they will be able to establish very little.) These facts must be strictly about color and narration, and cannot ever prevent a Loa from participating in the dream sequence.

Finally, new Glass cards should be placed over each of the nine spaces on the board, and the acting Loa will describe how the Dreamer describes the transition into this new dream – zooming out, zooming in, a fade-in, or whichever. Play will continue, with each other Loa getting a turn

before it is the Dreamer's turn.

What If Loa Disagree?

Perhaps the Loa, assembled before the Dreamer, will disagree about what should be done with her. Any Loa who wishes to decide the outcome can participate in the conflict, which takes the form of the auction.

The Dreamer decides who goes first; this first Loa will make an initial bid of points (probably at 1). Then in an order determined by the Dreamer, each Loa must either drop out of the conflict, or re-raise the bid.

Once one Loa's high bid has gone unchallenged, he must pay the cost by discarding cards in his hand or crossing off traits from his Loa card.

- Crossing off a trait gets you the points listed.
- Discarding a Wish/Nightmare Card gets you 5 points.
- Discarding a Chain Card of your anchor gets your points listed.
- Discarding a Cahin Card of some other anchor gets you 1 point.

What happens after the Dreamer takes her turn?

This means she has moved to a new space on the board.

If the Dreamer has stepped onto an empty space...

...meaning a space totally bereft of cards (not even glass), then the Dreamer has fallen out of the dream. This session is instantly over; proceed to Ending a Session.

If the Dreamer has stepped onto a pane of Glass...

...then Glass walls shatter as she immediately falls into the previous dream; this current dream is over. In the notebook, tear out the sheet about this dream and return to the previous one. Move this glass panel back into Discard Pile.

Since this current dream was built upon a pane of Glass, you want to remove all traces of this recently ended dream. For each of the other eight spaces, remove the topmost cards from each square on the board; remove cards until you have removed a pane of Glass from each. (All these cards go into the discard pile.)

If any of this results in the Dreamer having landed on an empty space, then as above: she has fallen out of the dream, and the session is instantly over.

If the Dreamer steps onto a Wish or Nightmare...

...then the Loa are closer to their goal.

If the Dreamer steps onto a Wish or Nightmare, the player who played that card can freely narrate what the Dreamer finds there, and what how she fares. Add a mark or check to the side of the card she had stepped onto. (You want a count of how many times the Dreamer entered the Wish and Nightmare sides of the card.)

Finally, remove this Wish/Nightmare card to the Discard pile, and put the Dreamer's pawn back on her previous space.

If the Dreamer steps onto a normal card...

The Dreamer should then narrate how she enters into the environment or symbols of that card, and describe how she tries to cope with it. Discard the topmost card from the square the Dreamer just left.

The Dreamer's pawn will now be on one side of the board. This space is now the new center of the board! The cards on the far end of the grid have fallen off the dream – put these into the discard pile. On the opposite, empty side, place 3 Glass cards.

For example, this was the board, where the dreamer is on space 5:

```
1 2 3
4 D 6
7 8 9
```

And the Dreamer (D) moved to space 8:

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1 2 3
4 5 6
7 D 9
```

Then we discard cards 1-3, and we add new Glass cards (g) below cards 7-9. We end up with this:

```
4 5 6
7 D 9
g g g
```

Ending the Session

The players will take back their various anchors, and the GM will handle the remaining cards:

- Loa cards: the GM will save these for the Endgame, so that he has a record of what a player's goals were (as well as what everyone's contact info is!)
- Wish/Nightmare cards: the GM will keep these for the sessions that follow
- Chain cards: These can be discarded.

And now: **stop the clock.**

(If players still want to do more, you may choose to immediately start a new session again. Players can always bring back previous Anchors and Loa, but the Chain cards must be created anew.)

ENDGAME: Eight Hours Later...

Once eight hours of game time have elapsed, play stops immediately, and the Dreamer wakes up; the dreams are finished. The GM will resolve the outcome in out-of-game time.

For each Wish/Nightmare card:

- Assign 1 point for each mark on the Wish side.
- Subtract 3 points for each mark on the Nightmare side.
- If the sum is positive, the Wish emotion has won out. The Dreamer has chosen to pursue that

positive emotion in regards to her issue.

- If the sum is negative, the Nightmare emotion has one out. The Dreamer has chosen to pursue that negative emotion in regards to her issue.
- If the sum is zero, the Dreamer has chosen to avoid this issue entirely, and will deal with an unsatisfactory status quo.

In the case of our earliest example: if the sum on the Family/Alienation card was positive, then the Dreamer has chosen to marry the person whom his family has chosen.

Once the GM has found a proper set of outcomes, he should email all former Loa players of the final resolution of the dreams.

With that, the game is over.

Game Chef Note: *I chose to add this Endgame **after** the Eight hours of play, and thus outside the normal time limit. My justifications:*

- *This final part of play involves only the GM, and not the other players.*
- *This stage can be very variable in terms of the time required.*
- *This helps to preserve the correlation of 8 hours of sleep to 8 hours of dreaming.*

However, this game was originally designed with including a half-hour GM-centric Endgame, as explained in the optional rule that follows. Judges may consider the following rule binding if they prefer.

Optional Endgame Rule: Stop play after 7.5 hours instead of the normal eight. The last session will take exactly a half hour, and represent **Waking Up**. The GM will brainstorm for ideas about what choices the Dreamer will make in the morning; she may invite players to come to give other suggestions throughout this process. Once the outcome is established, mail this out to all past and current participants in the game.

Postscript: It's Thanksgiving!

I'm thankful to Andy K, 1km1kt and all the judges for putting on such a great show.

I'm thankful for the fantastic aural landscape that is [Coheed & Cambria](#). Their music and storytelling was the spark for this mad experiment.

I'm thankful to Mo for her great questions, and for coming up with the seed for the far better game that this could become.

I'm thankful to Graham and Antti for their kind attention, and to Jack Aidley for reminding me that:

If you're going to have falling, you must also have drowning. It's the law.

Indeed it is, Mr. Aidley. Indeed it is.

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So please, borrow and remix my ideas ASAP.