



YOU GOTTA DO WHAT YOU GOTTA DO

A game of unknown genre, with owlbears
by Mike Sugarbaker

Getting Ready to Play

1. Enlarge and print the map of the Forest (or draw it to fit) on an 8.5"x11" sheet of paper.
2. Print and cut apart the Goal cards.
3. Gather up 3 to 5 players willing to play a board game where some of the rules just result in amorphous story-telling rather than anything really happening and you aren't allowed to know how you win.
4. Place 10 Bee tokens (pennies are appropriate) and 5 Honey tokens (yellow glass stones are good) on each Hive space on the Forest board.
5. Have each player create their Owlbear character, as described below.

Creating Your Owlbear

1. Choose a name. "Steve" is appropriate, although if everyone picks Steve that'll be confusing. All Owlbears have the surname Owlbear.
2. Assign 8 points between your two attribute scores. Your attributes are Owl and Bear. The number of points you put into your Owl attribute will come into play when your Owlbear does things like flying, thinking, seeing, and civil negotiation. Your Bear attribute will be used for things like running, fighting, lifting things, intimidation, and eating. Use your better judgment.
3. Find a small token to represent your Owlbear. It should be different from other people's.
4. Place your Owlbear's token on any Roost space on the Forest board.
5. Take two Honey tokens and put them in front of you. Your Owlbear has these to start with.

The Deal

Owlbears have always ruled the Forest, more or less. Lately, things are pretty much about gathering up honey from the hives in local trees. Your boss doesn't have a very satisfying explanation for this, but it's not as if you've thought of anything else to do with your life, and it pays the bills. Besides, honey is delicious.

In the game, your Owlbear will be getting an assignment from his boss to go gather some Honey. Which assignment depends on office politics, which is to say it depends on the other players. Gathering Honey is generally a good thing in the game, except when it isn't. Which brings us to the last thing you need to do to start the game:

1. Shuffle the Goal cards up and pick one of them. Set it in some obvious, visible place, without looking at it. No one is allowed to look at the Goal until the end of the game.

About the Forest

All spaces on the Forest board are either Up or Down. Up spaces have heavy borders. Spaces that have a word in them have special properties that I will explain in a minute. Spaces that are just next to those spaces, but are maybe surrounded by a heavy border just like them, don't have those properties.

Your Owlbear can travel directly between two Up spaces, but it requires him to fly, which takes a lot out of him these days (in short, it's an Action). Getting around otherwise means moving through Down spaces one by one, and then climbing to the Up space once you get there. (Walking from one space to another is never an Action, unless you want to do it more than once a turn. For more on Actions, keep reading until I tell you what they are.)

Playing the Game

Someone goes first. Your turn goes like this:

1. Check to see if every player has an "I've gone this round" marker. (Oh yeah, you will need some of those. Poker chips, whatever.) If all players have one of these, take them all away and set them aside again. Now no players should have one of these.
2. Start talking about what your Owlbear is doing right then, based on where in the Forest he is, what other Owlbears are around, and what happened to him recently. If this is your first turn, your Owlbear is quite possibly still in his morning meeting with his boss. If there are other Owlbears in your location that are played by other players in the game, those players can interject as appropriate. Owlbears not played by players, including your boss (who never even has a name), are played by the player to your left. Bees are not played, exactly, but any player can contribute Honey on their behalf. (Yeah yeah, getting to that too.)
3. The other players will probably be trying to put your Owlbear in a position he doesn't really want to be in: assigning him to a Hive all the way across the Forest, offering him a promotion if he beats up another Owlbear, making the bees in his space attack him, whatever. At some point in all the talking, they should drive you to a point where you're all like, "Dude! No way!" and your Owlbear has to do something to respond. (If they take too long to do this, you can always start pushing *them* around.)
4. Whether you decide to have your Owlbear go along with their crap or do something else, it's time to take your Action. This is the one big thing you do in a turn that actually tests one of your attributes, Owl or Bear. Choose which one is appropriate and announce it, giving the other players a chance to call bullshit on you and make you use the other if necessary.
5. If your Action is against another Owlbear, that player also chooses the appropriate Attribute for what their Owlbear is doing. If not, the player on the right will just kind of be whatever you're opposing, and will pretend to have an attribute worth 4 points.
6. Each of the two involved players secretly chooses to spend some amount of Honey tokens by hiding some in their hand. Once they have both done this, they reveal how many. Add that number to the number of points in the Attribute you chose. Highest total wins.
7. *Skip this step if your Action is directly against Bees.* If you have more than five Honey and you're not in a Hive, subtract one from your total score for the Action for each Bee token in the same space as your Owlbear. If Bees take your total below zero, your Owlbear is dead.
8. If you win, go ahead and say some stuff about how your Owlbear did his thing. However, whatever player opposed you will get to move three Bee tokens by one space. If your Action was directly about taking some Honey from some specific source, take it.
9. If you lose the Action, the player to your right will choose a Distraction from the list below. Since Owlbears are so awesome, they obviously don't fail at stuff unless they are distracted. Also, you

will have to lower the Attribute that you tried to use by one point, and raise the other by a point. The other player will read you your Distraction, and you have to tell everyone why this Distraction made your attributes change. Maybe it made you think about a thing.

10. To end your turn, talk about how what just happened to you suggests some trouble for another player's Owlbear. Maybe it's directly connected, maybe it's not, maybe you can just kind of say "Meanwhile, across the forest, Owen was in danger of spilling his lunch all over the new hire," or whatever's appropriate. It can be any player, but if you choose someone who already has an "I've gone this round" token, all the players who don't have an "I've gone this round" token get to take one Honey from off the board.

Once all this is done, put an "I've gone this round" token in front of yourself if you don't already have one.

The Laws of Saying Stuff

Improv-theater types have a rule called "Yes, And," which basically means that if someone says or implies that something happened or is happening, you should roll with it and build more stuff on top of it, rather than trying to block it. This is the rule of saying stuff in this game. Basically, if someone says some stuff happens, and you don't like it, don't just sit there saying "nuh-uh" like a douche; instead, figure out a way to make your Action about it so that you can *force* the other guy to give you your way.

The other rule of saying stuff is that things you just say can't affect game stats, tokens, and the state of the board directly; you have to back up your statements with the other game rules. That is, you can't just up and say, "My guy totally pulls out a shank and kills Dan Owlbear!", unless you want to find out that Dan Owlbear is impervious to shanks, because as far as the game is concerned, you can say you shank Dan Owlbear and he'll still be standing there and just as ready to do stuff as before. However, if your Owlbear wants to offer another Owlbear some Honey as part of making some kind of deal, you do actually have to fork over the tokens.

I could make this section a lot longer and more detailed and boring, but some weasel would figure out how to weasel around it all anyway. So, bottom line: don't play with weasels. Seriously, if you want to win that bad, this game is only going to piss you off. Relax.

Your Future With The Company

You can probably tell that you'll be doing Actions in Hive spaces to get a lot of Honey, but what then? When you're finished with your work at the Hive your boss assigned you, you should probably go back to the office at the Roost to check in and get a different assignment. (You could try and get more Honey elsewhere first, but believe me, that can get ugly.) When you're back at the Roost, you can try to have a talk with your boss about your future in the company. You and the player to your left (who always plays the part of your boss) should use stuff that yourselves and others have brought into the story to push this conversation towards an Action against your boss. It might even be an Action that uses Bear if you get rough with each other.

If you win it, you get to look at one of the Goal cards that *wasn't* chosen. Put it right back in the pile of unchosen Goals, which should all be face down thanks, after you look at it. You are SPECIFICALLY FORBIDDEN to share any information about what you see with other players (although it might influence how you choose Distractions in the future... or not). The player who played your boss then gets to move three Bee tokens one space.

If you lose, the player who plays your boss takes one Honey from you, if you have one, and you do the move-an-attribute-point thing as explained earlier. Remember that the talk-about-your-future action is not required; you can just get your new assignment and have an Action about that.

Other Stuff That Is Rules

When your Owlbear is on a Hive space, your Bear attribute gets a +1 bonus, but your Owl attribute gets a -1 penalty. When your Owlbear is on a Roost space, your Owl attribute gets a +1 bonus, but your Bear attribute gets a -1 penalty. You don't actually move a point when these happen; these are just temporary.

The game ends, incidentally, when the players' Owlbears have collected a total of 10 Honey for each player (*not* when each player *has* 10 Honey, but when the total is 30 between three players, 40 between four, and so forth). It also ends if more than one Owlbear has died of bees. At that point, play concludes and the chosen Goal card is revealed, telling you this game's win condition and thereby this game's winner. It is possible that no one will win. Get used to it, chump.

Distractions

1. A human wandered into the forest and you had to take a second to maul it.
2. Some bees seemed to be flying in a strange pattern or shape. What does it mean???
3. Friggin' branches.
4. Someone said you weren't appropriately dressed for work. What an asshole.
5. Some cubs were dancing and you had to stop and break it up. That stuff is illegal! What's going on with the new generation, man?
6. You saw some owlbear - didn't see his face - talking to a human with bushy white hair and mustache and a white suit, who carried a valise and kept saying folksy sayings. Both of them carried some honey. What does it mean???
7. Mating opportunity.
8. You drop an F-bomb and your boss overhears you.
9. Stress management seminar.
10. Howling noises from a cave.
11. Bosses whispering to one another. You don't know what about.
12. A bunch of humans just outside the forest, with a weapon you haven't seen.

If you've used all the distractions, or some of the players seem to be taking a shine to particular ones, feel free to make some stuff up based on what has gone before. But get some of these in first. Also, don't go crazy with number 7; we're professionals here.

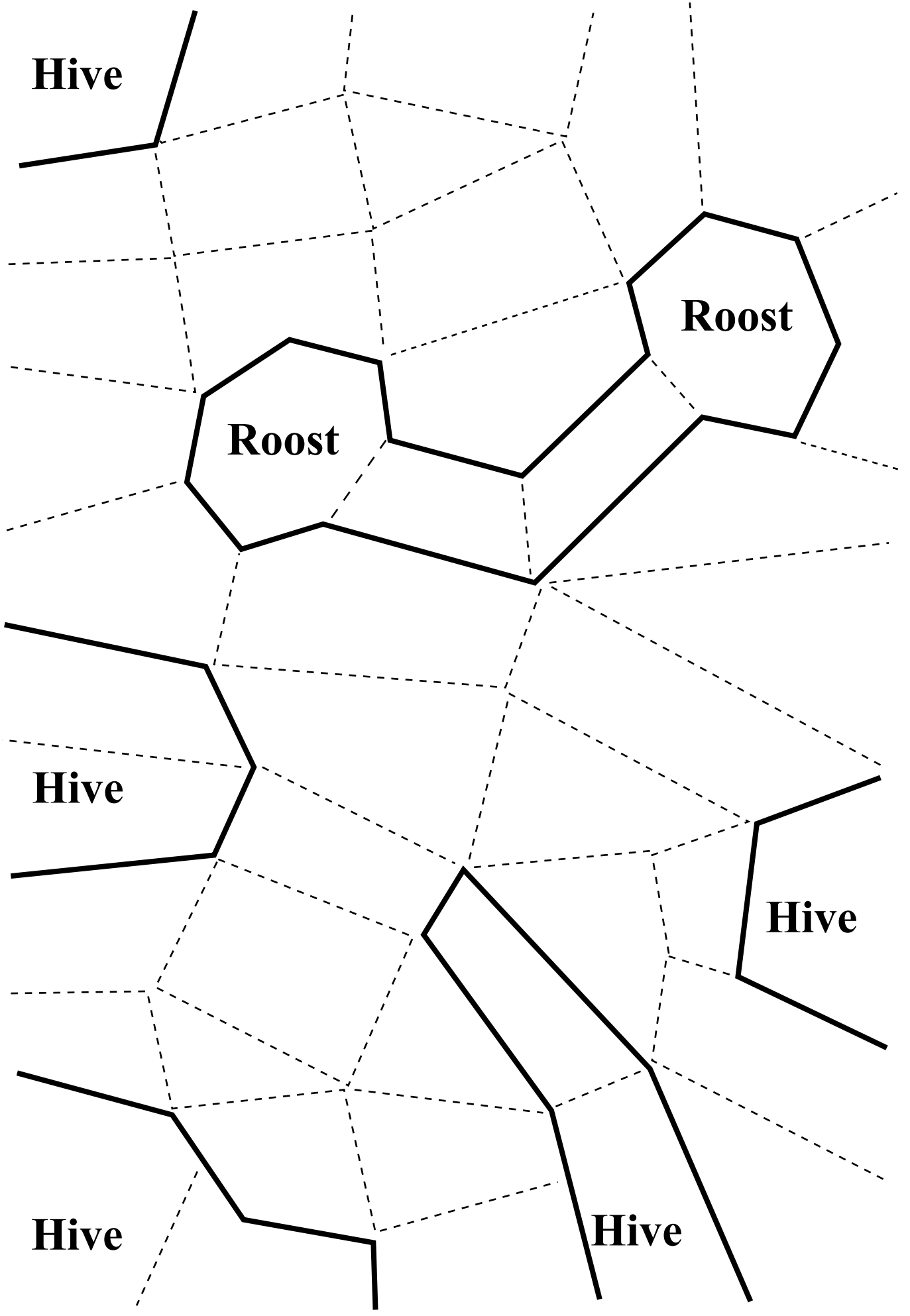
Notes

If you don't know what owlbears are, they are basically walking bears with owl heads and wings for arms. They rule the forest. If you don't know what role-playing games are, don't worry; the experience you get here isn't going to help you much should you ever play one of those.

Shout out to Brennan Taylor, whose game *Mortal Coil* I am ripping off a little. Shout out to Jason Morningstar and story-games.com. Shout out to Clinton R. Nixon who nicely puts up with me when I blabber at him excitedly about my game design activities. Shout out to anyone who actually plays this game; I hope it is at least kind of fun. Shout out to whoever made up owlbears.

This game is an entry in the BPG 1KM1KT Owlbear Challenge, with the terms 'owlbear,' 'Mark Twain,' and 'apiculture.' It is copyright 2006 Mike Sugarbaker. Email the author at misuba@gmail.com.

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Hive

Roost

Roost

Hive

Hive

Hive

Hive

Your bosses seem to have gotten together on some crazy strength through adversity kick. Posters everywhere and stuff when you get back to the roost at the end of the day.

The player with the most Honey who has sometime during the game lost Action points to Bees wins the game.

The bosses think someone's in line for a promotion. But they can't stop looking at each other nervously.

The player with the most Honey wins, but the player to that player's right says how that player's Owlbear is the fall guy for what's about to happen to the company.

Bees make shapes and fly in formations. They begin to surround the roost at dusk.

The player with the least Honey wins.

At the end of the day, cuts to benefits are announced. Nobody's looking at the rich guys like they like them.

The player with the most Honey wins. Each other player says how they start getting revenge.

It isn't like you don't work hard... it isn't like you don't like your work... but the more humans you maul the more you start to wonder if honey is really everything. If something else isn't the real future direction for the company.

The player with the second most Honey wins.

The old bears' network is powerful, but you knew that. What you didn't know is that when the boss invites you to join his fraternal order, you've only climbed one ladder to find yourself at the bottom of another.

The player to the left of the player with the most Honey wins.

Screw the boss, screw the company. You're gonna get what's yours this time. You're socking a little something away in a tree trunk. They'll never know.

The player with the most Honey wins. The player to that player's left says how the boss is gunning for him.

The patterns are all over the forest but no one else saw. Only you know, only you understand. It's time to bring them all down.

The player currently in a space with the highest number of Bee tokens wins.

They're coming in with torches (fire!), with their swords, with their nets. Maybe we forgot to rule the forest.

The player nearest to a Roost space wins.

Someone's been skimming off the top and trading it to the human with the crazy hair. Heads are going to roll. You knew that guy was no good.

The player with the second highest Honey count wins.

The player with the most Honey wins.

What did you THINK was gonna happen?

Stress is taking its toll all over the company, but you need a vacation. PTO's short. Strings will need to be pulled.

The player with the most Honey gives three Honey to the player to the left. The player who then has the most Honey wins.