

A FAREWELL TO KINFOLK

Alexander Trott

A village convenes at the changing of the seasons, sharing news of the tumultuous world beyond their borders. A Youth steps forward—they have received an auspicious Calling they cannot deny.

This is the only home they’ve ever known. These are the only people they have ever loved.

It now falls on those who remain to prepare the Youth for what is to come—to send them out with gifts wrought in love that remind them of the home they leave behind.

This is a game for 6-13 players, lasting between 2-4 hours. It explores a close-knit community uplifting and supporting a youth on the verge of a frightening quest and rise to maturity.

Materials

Play requires a shared pool of nametag stickers (three for each player), writing utensils to mark them, and scissors to cut out the card sheets (though they can be folded and torn if need be).

Space

The play space should be large enough for each player to have a small area of their own, representing their Homes and Workshops. Those personal spaces should encircle a central communal area large enough to hold everyone, which represents the Town Square. Any and all furniture is permitted.

Choosing Roles

To begin, decide which player will be the Youth, while all others will play the diverse cast of Kinfolk.

The Youth You have received a great Calling that urges you out into the great and wider world. Your job is to: define your Calling that beckons your sudden departure, meet with your community for advice and warning, and ultimately say goodbye to the only home you’ve ever known.

The Kinfolk You are the many unique individuals that compose the tapestry of the Village. Your job is to: remind the Youth who they are, give them hope and advice informed by your own experience, and ultimately create a unique Boon to bestow upon them before they leave.

Playing the Game

Stages of Play

Make Characters Proceed to the appropriate page—*Creating the Youth* or *Creating a Kinfolk* depending on your chosen role—to create your characters.

Claim Homes Each player should claim a personal area on the periphery of the Town Square.

When ready, play proceeds in one roughly uninterrupted session, representing the Youth’s final day in the community.

Dawn Overseen by the Elder. It is the first morning of Fall, where tradition dictates a meeting be called to hear news and make plans for the coming season. All players arrange in a wide circle. One at a time, each shares one tidings of the world at large in the form of rumors they’ve heard or events they’ve witnessed in or beyond their borders. For inspiration, Kinfolk should reference their Role card. This is a ritual of communal worldbuilding, which establishes truths about the shared world.

When the final Kinfolk has shared their tidings, the Youth player shares last—they reveal their Calling and declare that they must leave by end of day. Questions may be asked, to which the Youth may or may not have answers. When enough curiosity has been satisfied, Dawn ends when the Elder announces there will be a farewell ceremony at nightfall, and urges everyone to prepare for it.

Day As Day breaks, play out the communal scurrying. The Youth visits with each Kinfolk, soliciting advice and saying farewell. Meanwhile, the Kinfolk conspire to create gifts to bestow upon the Youth in the farewell ceremony. After the Youth has met with all Kinfolk, Dusk immediately falls.

Dusk The Elder gathers everyone to the Town Square, which has now been transformed into the ceremony grounds, and describes the decorations that have been erected there—any Kinfolk may contribute additional details. The Elder should place the Youth somewhere all can see, and then commence a ceremony of farewell however they see fit.

As part of that ritual, one at a time, the Kinfolk bestow their Boons upon the Youth. As they bring it forward, they should describe its appearance, share any contributions of other Kinfolk, and conclude by expressing the purpose they hope it will serve.

When the final Boon has been given, the Elder shall give the Youth an opportunity for one final goodbye before concluding the ceremony. When all is done, the Youth should walk out of the Town Square, through the circle of homes, to the utmost boundary of play. From there, they must turn and look at the congregated Kinfolk for one last time. Then leave the play space entirely. The game ends.

Creating the Youth

I Background

To begin, write your name upon a sticker and place it in the center of your chest.

The rest of your background is explored through play—through the sharing of memories, the confiding of secrets, confessions of regrets. However, all Youth share some fundamental qualities at the start:

<i>Connected</i>	You grew up here, and have spent your whole life here—so you have met everyone in the village, and have a lifetime of shared memories with them. Not all of them need be positive.
<i>Naive</i>	You have often gazed horizonward, but have never left the Village you call home. You have only heard stories of the lands beyond, and some loom large in your imagination.
<i>Curious</i>	Your naivety is matched by an insatiable curiosity about the world you’ve never known. Now, you seek to verify the stories you grew up with, and hear new ones that can prepare you for what awaits.

II The Calling

Then, consider the nature of your Calling. It will be your announcement to the community in the very first scene at Dawn, and you will need to be able to answer their questions.

The ultimate nature of your Calling is up to you, but it should be marked by the following features:

<i>Urgent</i>	You must leave immediately. <i>This is the first time anyone in the community has heard of it, and their shock and reconciliation represents the story of the game.</i>
<i>Auspicious</i>	It came to you in an auspicious, shocking moment. <i>In a troubling dream, the portent of a ritual, a divine revelation, a kingly official summons, foretold in a prophecy.</i>
<i>Harrowing</i>	It can only be fulfilled by leaving home and entering a deeply unfamiliar world, beset by challenges and dangers. <i>The world outside of your community is new and uncertain to you, and you rely on the stories and advice of those who have ventured out to warn you of what awaits.</i>
<i>Climactic</i>	The Calling ultimately drives towards a final challenge that will demand great personal transformation to overcome. <i>The trial need not be physical in nature; it could be a vow that must be made, a role that must be adopted, a ritual that must be performed, a riddle to be solved.</i>

Playing the Youth

Context

The majority of the game, set during Day, comprises your visits to the members of your community. As they conspire to make the gifts they plan to bestow upon you, you meet with each of them for the last time. When you meet with the final Kinfolk, play moves to the final act—Dusk.

Over the course of the day, explore the internal turmoil your Calling creates in you. Embrace feelings of fear and doubt, pursue questions of hope and faith, and incrementally strive to accept—if not embrace—your task.

Five Focuses in a Scene

<i>Get Advice</i>	The Youth is marked by their naivety. Dawn’s sharing of news will establish details about the wide world you inhabit, but you need deeper explanations and sage advice to confidently navigate that world. Each Kinfolk will give differing perspectives—expect some to disagree.
<i>Indulge Memories</i>	Taken by the shock of your leaving, Kinfolk will be inspired to share their memories of you. Feel free to imagine memories of your own and voice them. Shared memories enrich the history between you and build out your past. If a memory is ever shared that you disagree with, say “I don’t remember it that way.” and correct the record.
<i>Affirm Reputation</i>	Beyond their day-to-day job, each Kinfolk has a Reputation that represents the emotional work they do in the community. Each will require you to do something once in conversation with them.
<i>Hard Question</i>	The closest bonds in the community are going to have a Hard Question for you, by virtue of their relationship to you. The question is an intimate one, borne out of their concern for you—it may take time to drive the scene to a moment appropriate enough to ask it, but it must be asked.
<i>Say Goodbye</i>	This is your last day with the people you grew up with. Your scenes with them will be your last opportunity to voice your feelings to them and say goodbye.

Creating a Kinfolk

Setup

Each of the Kinfolk are represented by four qualities: their Roles, their Reputations, their Relationships, and their Memories. These are each represented by a set of cards. Separate them from their sheets and lay them into three grouped arrays face up. As the Kinfolk collectively create characters together, each should pull the cards that represent their choices for each category (ensuring there are no duplicates and all characters are unique).

❶ To begin, write your characters name on a nametag.

❷ Choose a Role

Role represents your professional labor within the community. It determines your job, and has shaped how you think and move in the world. It also determines the ideas and concerns you are likely to explore. **Only the Elder is mandatory.**

Pull a Role Choose and pull one card from the array of Roles. Write the name of that Role on a second nametag. Include any other clarifying details/speciality if necessary.

❸ Choose a Reputation

Reputation represents your emotional labor within the community. It is how you are known, and asks the Youth to engage with you in a particular way. While your Role influences your physical manner, the Reputation should inspire your emotional posture. **Choose one that contrasts with your Role.**

Pull a Reputation Choose and pull one card from the array of Reputations. Write the full text of the Reputation (name and text) on a third and final sticker. The Youth will need to be able to read it to be able to fulfill its demand.

Note the Demand Consider what the Youth will be coming to you for, and what they must do for you to give it.

❹ Choose a Relationship or a Memory

Relationships represent an intimate personal connection to the Youth. It is a dominant source of feelings about their leaving, and fuels a Hard Question you have for them. **Relationships are more emotionally demanding, so not every player need choose one, and there may not be enough for all to claim.**

Pull a Relationship If you feel inspired, choose and pull one card from the array of Relationships. Write the name of that Relationship (not its flavor text or Hard Question) underneath your name on the first nametag.

Note the Question Based on your connection to the Youth, you will feel the need to ask them a Hard Question that weighs on you. It should not be asked until the time is right.

If you cannot or will not choose a Relationship, choose a Memory card instead.

If you have chosen a Relationship, you may additionally opt to choose a Memory as well.

Pull a Memory Choose one card from the wide array of Memories. They represent an important moment you shared with the Youth. Keep it in your hand or pocket. You will keep it until you have recounted the memory to the Youth, after which you will give it to them.

❺ Place Your Nametags

Finally, place the nametags on your chest with your Name in the center, your Role to its right, and your Reputation to its left.

Example Final Nametags

Blacksmith
(Armorer)

Ruth
(Parent)

Optimistic
Bring me a fear, and
I will tell you why it is
undeserving of your worry.

Playing a Kinfolk

Overview

As a Kinfolk, your play will alternate between conversations with the Youth and work on your Boon.

In any scene, utilize the space physically as if it holds the familiarity of decades. This is a small, tight-knit village where everyone knows everyone, every foot has stepped in every home.

Conversations with the Youth

Give Advice

The Youth is marked by their naivety. The worldbuilding ritual at Dawn will establish the wide world you inhabit, but they will deeply rely on your advice—borne out of experience—to understand the world and build the confidence needed to navigate it.

Play Into Reputation

The Reputation you have cultivated represents how you emotionally serve the community. Play into the psychology and personality that would invite that Reputation. Yours will require the Youth to engage with you in a particular way—support them in doing so.

Share a Memory

If you have a Memory card, find time to share and elaborate on that memory with the Youth. Memories build out your relationship and remind the Youth who they are and how they have grown. As they doubt themselves, it will be helpful to remind them what makes them special.

Hard Question

If you have a Relationship to the Youth, it will require you ask them a Hard Question. It is an intimate one, and is urged only out of your concern for them. Scenes can start jovial and positive, but should ultimately drive towards a more serious mood where hearts can be beared.

Say Goodbye

Today marks your last day with the Youth. Your scenes with them will be your last opportunity to voice your feelings to them, and ultimately say goodbye. Reassure them, support them, but don't be afraid to be vulnerable if called for.

Collaborating on Conversations

In such a small village, it is rare that anyone is allowed to exist on their own for too long. **Move freely, enter people's homes, discuss news and feelings with them, and force the Youth to interrupt you.** Even then, do not dismiss yourself until you are satisfied—Kinfolk are profoundly comfortable and reliant on each other, and will only leave if it is clear intimacy is desired, or if duties call them elsewhere.

Crafting Boons

In the final act of the game, *Dusk*, the Kinfolk each take turns presenting the Youth with a handmade gift to aid them on their journey—their Boon. It can take any form you choose. It should likely be informed by your Role, but can also take inspiration from any other source: a shared memory, a known threat, a quirk of your personality.

Consider its purpose, and do not be afraid to imbue it with magic—anyone working with love can do such things.

Example Boons

A keen weapon, etched with the symbol of our people	A vial of fresh buds that open when a storm approaches	A horn of draught that bestows the relaxation of a full nights sleep	A sturdy cloak, sown in the colors of our land
Hearty bread that always stays warm	A lantern that always points home	A cup that purifies all it holds	A bottle of wine, sealed on the day you were born
A ward against evil	A childhood toy	A leather diary	

Collaborating on Boons

It is well known that Boons become stronger when made with the aid of many hands. As you work through what your Boon will be, visit with other Kinfolk and discuss ways in which they will agree to contribute. **You may only ask another Kinfolk to contribute on your Boon once you have satisfied their Reputation.** Any number of Kinfolk may contribute to your Boon. However, you must still produce your own no matter how many Boons you contribute to.

Example Contributions

...in a decorative bag sown by the Tailor	...waxed by the Herbalist with oils that repel predators	...with a lithe bone handle carved by the Hunter	...unburied from the catacombs by the Elder
...etched with legendary words recorded by the Bookkeeper	...with gems chosen by your siblings	...anointed in holy water by the Priest	...warmed in the hearth by the Innkeeper

ROLE

Blacksmith

You are strong but quiet—stern and abrupt when you do speak.

You tend towards metaphors of temperature or pressure, and dwell on questions of purity and strength.

You can't help but be physical, but you always wipe your hands on your apron first.

At Dawn, report what weapons have been outlawed, or are now suddenly in high demand.

ROLE

Bookkeeper

You are reserved, meticulous, making eye contact only with books and ledgers in your keeping.

You tend to cite myths and recount bygone deeds.

You can't help but trace words in the air, dust every surface around you, and shush with a finger when pondering.

At Dawn, report on the troubling letters you have received from distant scholars.

ROLE

Brewer

You carry yourself warmly, with an easy, earthy friendliness.

You tend towards metaphors of fermentation and flowing, and dwell on questions of patience and transformation.

You can't help but laugh.

At Dawn, report what worrying rumors your customers are drinking to forget.

ROLE

Carpenter

You stand straight and purposeful, measuring everything around you with your eyes.

You tend towards metaphors of growth and joining, and dwell on questions of balance and structure.

You can't help but gesture with chopping, hammering, or sawing motions.

At Dawn, report what structure the town must urgently build or rebuild, and why.

ROLE

Cook

You bustle, busy-bodied, checking myriad pots and pans, jars and fires.

You tend toward metaphors of ingredients and combinations, and dwell on questions of satisfaction and nourishment.

You can't help but hold people's hands, or bump them with your hip, and not let them leave until you know they're happier than when they came in.

At Dawn, report how goes the harvest.

ROLE

Elder

You are old, eyes twinkling with a light that intimates that you can see the full picture.

You speak plainly.

You can't help but look people directly in their eyes, and prefer to sit side-by-side with them while you talk.

At Dawn, make sure everyone reports out, and ask follow-up questions if prudent.

ROLE

Herbalist

You are bent from years of pruning and picking, supporting yourself on whatever or whoever is near.

You tend toward metaphors of roots and remedies, and dwell on questions of decay and renewal.

You can't help but grind your fist into your palm and tuck things into unseen pouches.

At Dawn, report what the land and weather tells you.

ROLE

Hunter

You are quick and lithe, watchful and witty.

You tend toward metaphors of tracks and signs, and dwell on questions of pursuit and nature.

You can't help but circle those you talk to, intensifying as you close in.

At Dawn, report what dangers have beset you in the wild places.

ROLE

Innkeeper

You are loud and familiar, rearranging furniture and making space.

You tend toward metaphors of home and hospitality, and dwell on questions of rest and belonging.

You can't help but shake the hands of those who won't accept a hug.

At Dawn, report what you have learned from passing travelers.

ROLE

Priest

You hold yourself solemn and centered, with an aura of authority and reverence.

You tend toward quoting scripture or the sayings of saints, and dwell on questions of purpose and redemption.

You can't help but hold your hand to your heart, and look up towards the sky.

At Dawn, report which scripture the current days resemble, and how it ends.

ROLE

Tailor

You are sharp-eyed and fussy, forever evaluating the fits of others.

You tend toward metaphors of material and stitching, and dwell on questions of appearances and identity.

You can't help but pull on clothes and measure limbs.

At Dawn, report how fashions are changing and what is driving it.

ROLE

Trader

You are confident and amenable, with open palms and a warm smile.

You tend toward sayings from far off lands, and dwell on questions of risk and reward.

You can't help but want to make a deal and shake on it.

At Dawn, report which roads have become too dangerous to travel, and why.

REPUTATION

Confident

*Bring me something
that confuses you,
and I will set you
straight.*

REPUTATION

Kind

*Tell me something
that hurts, and I
will hold it.*

REPUTATION

Dutiful

*Tell me what to do
and I will do it.*

REPUTATION

Gossip

*Ask me for rumors
or secrets and I
will tell you what I
know—in exchange
for a secret of
your own.*

REPUTATION

Protector

*Tell me who bothers
you, and I will go
argue with them
myself.*

REPUTATION

Listener

*Confess your biggest
regret, and I will
accept without
judgement.*

REPUTATION

Optimistic

*Bring me a fear, and
I will tell you why
it is undeserving of
your worry.*

REPUTATION

Pessimistic

*Bring me a fear,
and I will tell you
how it's worse than
you imagine.*

REPUTATION

Playful

*Tell me something
that feels deadly
serious, and I will
make you laugh
about it.*

REPUTATION

Nostalgic

*Tell me what you'd
undo if you could,
and I'll tell you why
you must not.*

REPUTATION

Stern

*Tell me what you
want and I will make
you prove it.*

REPUTATION

Wise

*Ask me for a
story, and I will
pass one down
from the ages.*

MEMORY

**I saw the
first time you
almost left,
but never
knew why.**

MEMORY

**I was there
when you
learned how
to swim.**

MEMORY

**As a child,
you told me
your very
first dream.**

MEMORY

**We both saw
a shooting
star.**

**I always
wondered
what you
wished.**

MEMORY

**One night you
fell asleep,
but I stayed
awake.**

MEMORY

**We argued
until the fire
went out.**

MEMORY

**We both
took shelter
until the
rain let up.**

MEMORY

**You took
something
of mine.**

**I'm glad
you did.**

MEMORY

**We both
made a
promise
neither of us
can keep.**

MEMORY

**I still
remember
what you
broke the
first time
we met.**

MEMORY

**I saw your
face the first
time you fell
in love.**

MEMORY

**I know the
secret place
where you've
carved your
name.**

Lover

You cling to a precious romance, long-watered or newly blossoming.

Hard Question

“Do you expect me to wait for you?”

Parent

Those first wobbly steps you presided over now threaten to go where you cannot follow.

Hard Question

“How will you remember me?”

Sibling

For as long as you can remember, you have stood between them and the world’s cruelty—now they walk directly into it.

Hard Question

“What of yours will you leave me?”

Sibling

For as long as you can remember, you have lived in their shadow—but now you shudder to think how you will live without it.

Hard Question

“What of yours will you leave me?”

Best Friend

You shared in their triumphs and sorrows long before their name meant anything at all.

Hard Question

“Why can’t I come with you?”

Rival

Your kindred spirits drove you both to a life of competition—two edges keeping each other sharp.

Hard Question

“Why you and not me?”

Mentor

You have long felt that you were preparing them for a world—a future—that is now at their doorstep.

Hard Question

“What was my first lesson to you, and have you learned it?”