

Coyotesong

A game of leaving

Joel P. Shempert

“Last Chance” Game Chef 2012

Ingredients: Coyote, Lantern, Mimic, Forge Thread: *Capes: Losing with style*
<http://indie-rpgs.com/archive/index.php?topic=12313.0> (using only the phrase:
“Losing With Style”)

I haven't gone far

But I've gone far enough

Far enough that I may never again

See that driveway stretch before me

Or hear coyotes in the night

May never again

Kiss maples

Hug cedars

Walk in a thistled field

As dusk falls

Or see a hawk take flight

From the treeline

Coyotesong is a game, or if you will, a ritual.

Play this game when you're about to leave one place or context to go to a new place or context.

All these rules are contextual and adaptable. Alter them to fit your circumstances. This may sometimes pose a challenge, but I'm confident you can overcome it.

Start preparing for play about a month before you leave a place, assuming you know that far in advance. Think of some regular or frequent occurrence you will miss. If you can't think of one, pick one you think you *won't* miss.

Pick something natural if you can. Maybe it's coyotes yelping in chorus in the middle of the night. Maybe it's the full moon. Maybe it's a spring rainshower. If you can't find something natural, pick something artificial. But don't pick something you or those you share the place with do intentionally. So, not your backyard BBQ or anything. Pick something that happens whether you ask it or not. Maybe it's your neighbor's loud parties, or maybe there's a holiday and the whole block sets off fireworks, or maybe it's the garbage truck making its clankety fanfare down the street in the wee hours.

Whatever you pick, try to pick something that happens at night.

Find someone to play with. Get someone who is leaving the place with you, or who is staying while you go, or just a good friend who is supportive or weird, personal rituals.

It's ok to play with more people, or by yourself. If you have more, just spread out the turn-taking. If you're by yourself, play both turns.

Involve your fellow players in the event picking process if you think it will bring you all joy, or else keep that to yourself.

If the event is predictable, you'll be able to schedule the play time. If it's unpredictable, all the players will have to be ready to jump up and play at a moment's notice. If it's an event that ends quickly, you'll need to decide whether to play right then with whoever's available, or wait for your friend who's biking across town or whatever. It's perfectly fine to play after the event itself has ended. Make sure everyone has clear expectations and is prepared for the possibility that the game might happen without them.

If the time to leave is nigh and the event doesn't happen or you miss it, either pick a new event or play as if the event was occurring.

When the event occurs, grab your lantern (or candle, or flashlight), even if it's light out, and rush outside. Watch and/or listen to it for a moment, then when you're ready, address the event or the beings who caused it.

(Don't talk directly to any human beings when you do this! If human beings are involved in the event, just address them in the abstract. After you play the game, you can approach them and converse if you want. In fact, that might be kind of wonderful.)

When you address the event, use the following scripted questions. If you want to change them or add to them you may, but for sure use the first one and the last one.

After you ask one question, the next player answers for the event. Next player, close your eyes for a moment. Take deep, relaxing breaths, and try to *hear* the event or its beings answer. Take a little time if you need it. When you *do* hear it, say the answer, eyes still closed, in a whisper if possible, to the first player. Don't worry about hearing it "right," just hear it as best you can, and say the direct, most obvious thing, not the most deep or clever. If you can't hear anything, just make something up, but still say the obvious truth and not the clever thing. Don't tell anyone whether you heard something or made it up.

After you answer, next player, it's your turn to ask! You are now the "first player," and the *next* player is the "next player."

Take turns asking and answering until you run out of questions or you feel done. Always close with the last of the scripted questions (#4), and make sure the asker of that question is one of the players who is actually leaving.

Questions

(The questions are all addressed to yelping coyotes. Replace that with the name and description of your event or its beings, as appropriate.)

1) Coyotes, I will miss being your neighbor, and hearing your song in the night. What will you miss most about being my neighbor?

2) Coyotes, there were times when I didn't enjoy being your neighbor. What have I done in our time together that most upset or offended you?

3) Coyotes, I've often found your ways difficult to comprehend. What have I done that you found most perplexing?

Final question! Make sure one of the departing players asks this one:

4) Coyotes, I'm grateful to have heard your song one last time. What could I do for you to make our parting a happy one?

When you are finished asking and answering questions, salute the event in your own personal style, toasting with wine or beer or a hearty cheer or whatever. Share a hug or handshake or kiss or whatever's comfortable for the players. Douse the lantern and return to your life.

May you be well and happy in the new place or context to which you are arriving.

Fin.