

# WEEPING SUN

A collaborative fantasy story game

This game is a hack of PERSEVERANT

BEN DUTTER

## WHAT IS THIS?

WEEPING SUN is a collaborative storytelling game that focuses on a party of heroes desperately searching for their people's safe haven. We need two to six people to play, and each game takes around two to four hours.

As a group we'll collaborate to create interesting locations, what challenges await us, how our characters are connected, and decide our ultimate goal. Throughout play we'll resolve internal and external conflict, haunted by the grim spectre of betrayal and loss. It is likely that not all of us will make it to the end.

## THE NECESSITIES

We don't need any prep, and only a few materials:

- A stack of 50 or more index cards. Ripping some in half or thirds is fine if you don't have enough
- A handful of six-sided dice (**d6**), preferably four or more for each player
- A pen or pencil for each player

## **GETTING STARTED**

At least one of us should read the rules before we start, but if we're all eager to play right away, we can follow along as we go.

More often than not, only one of us will have a copy of the game before game day - that person can help guide and facilitate the rest of us.

This book is organized in order of play, so you can follow along (either as a reference or for your first time) while we're getting everything squared away.

## **THE PRE-GAME TALK**

It's a good idea for all of us to sit and have a quick chat about the experience we're looking to get out of this game, how much time we have, what issues we'd rather avoid or ban or focus on, and the general tone and theme of the game.

One group's game of **WEeping SUN** might mirror survival horror, while another is about exploration or epic heroism. Getting everyone on the same page before we get into the nitty gritty is often a good way to break the ice, and make sure there aren't any uncomfortable situations during play.

# THE DELUGE

# QUICK START

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*The sun weeps liquid light onto our realm, drowning us  
in a sea of heavenly energy that warps our world*

## NATURE

**Ocean of light:** The sun drains its liquid light, growing darker in the sky, covering the land in bright hot water.

## ERA

**Bronze Age Fantasy:** Dozens of Great Empires fall beneath the constant downpour.

## GOAL

**Escape the deluge:** The only chance for survival is to climb the highest peaks and escape the Sunwater.

## LOCATIONS

Archipelago of Night, Black cave, Blindingly bright river, Drowned city, Glimmering swamp, Glowing Tunnels, Primordial Forest, Sunwater fall, Sunset Sea, Twilight Mountains

## CHALLENGE SOURCES

Boiling rain, Carnivorous trees, Constant rot, Desperate survivors, Engorged monsters, Ground-level lightning, Lack of sleep, Saturation, Sea-leviathan surprise, Sunwater flood

## CREATE LOCATIONS

If we'd rather not use the quick start examples above, we can create evocative **locations**. A location is a noteworthy set-piece that fits with our narrative.

Each player should make a few, writing each on its own index card. As a group, we should have about **ten to fifteen** locations (don't worry too much about repeats). Once complete, each location is **read aloud** to the group. Any one of us can **veto** any location that doesn't fit or makes someone uncomfortable. Shuffle and stack.

Remember, these locations should be representative of the drowning lands, and are places that we'd want to read about in a novel or watch in a movie.

## CREATE CHALLENGE SOURCES

The Sun has made our land dangerous. **Challenges** embody this danger, representing both the literal and figurative things we must overcome as a group.

Challenges are created by combining two elements: the **trouble** and the **source**.

The challenge's **trouble** is one of six ways the challenge opposes our group's goal or puts pressure on us:

1. An unexpected attack
2. A previous choice haunts you
3. Something breaks
4. An environmental threat
5. An internal threat
6. An unsettling development

If we don't want to use the examples in the Quick Start above, every player makes several challenge **sources**. Sources are specific, evocative objects: things, creatures, forces of nature, maybe people.

Each source is written on its own index card, which then goes through the familiar reading and vetoing process. There should be at least as many sources as there are locations, but more is better. Once the sources are finalized, they're shuffled and stacked.

These sources will come into play when we begin telling our story and describing the challenges we face. They play a large role in defining our narrative and the ramifications of our failures, so be mindful of the type of challenges you want to face during our journey.



# CHARACTERS

At the core of our story is a cast of **characters**, the protagonists (and maybe antagonists) that shape the narrative, embody the minds and actions of the players, and serve as the lens with which we engage with one another. They're our avatar within this shared fictional space, and grant us the ability to imagine, act, and react off of each other organically.

Characters are defined by a number of **relationships** and **traits**, connecting to each other and giving us tools and guidelines on how to roleplay believably.

These characters are the heart of **WEeping SUN**. We'll be able to influence each other and the story through our characters' struggles and triumphs, their successes and failures; and perhaps even their deaths.

Each player creates one character, but before digging into their traits or personality, we will map each of our character's relationships to the others.

## MAP OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Every character has two **relationships**: specific connections, bonds, or histories with two other characters in our group. Relationships don't need to be positive, and should be more detailed and interesting than something like *Spouse* or *Sister*.

We define the relationships first because it creates dynamic and interesting characters. There's a tendency to assign stereotypical relationships to characters once their traits and personalities have been assigned - mapping their relationships first makes it more likely for the tough warrior to have a secret love affair with his commanding officer than otherwise.

Each of us defines relationships from the eyes of a particular character (we can swap around during this time, as we haven't picked characters yet), writing each on its own index card. These relationships should align with the agreed upon tone of the game, but don't necessarily need to conform to it.

Once every character has two relationships that they've defined, we place them face up for the whole group to see. Some characters might be the source of several other character's relationships, this is fine so long as every character has at least two.

Anyone can **veto** these relationships for any reason, just like locations or challenges. The final relationships are kept with their respective characters, and will be added with that character's other cards as we go through the character creation process individually.

**EXAMPLE RELATIONSHIPS**

<i>Secretly admires</i>	<i>Battle buddies</i>	<i>Jealous</i>
<i>Openly hates</i>	<i>Same ex-wife</i>	<i>Old enemies</i>
<i>Former lovers</i>	<i>Wants revenge</i>	<i>Mentor</i>
<i>Thinks unskilled</i>	<i>Finds disgusting</i>	<i>Best friends</i>

## DEFINE OUR TRAITS

Each of us works together to pick a character whose relationships we enjoy or find interesting. Once all of us have one character, we work on defining and detailing our character's specific **traits**:

- **History**: your character's past life, profession, training, or other defining knowledge.
- **Method**: the way your character approaches problems and conflict.
- **Ideals**: your character's worldview, morality, ethics, ideology, and psychology.
- **Drive**: your character's motivation and the root source of all their decisions.

Each trait is written on its own index card and kept in that player's **hand** of character cards. Traits can be one or a few words, and should err on the side of too narrowly defined rather than too broadly.

A history of *Soldier* might be too broad and useful, but *Jaded*, *Maimed Veteran* might be perfect. If you're unsure about the usefulness of a particular trait, bring it up with the group. As such, we can **veto** each other's traits.

## **EXAMPLES OF HISTORY**

*Alchemist, Sailor, Hunter, Former Convict, Former Slave, Grizzled Veteran, Priest, Farmer, Politician*

## **EXAMPLES OF METHOD**

*Direct, Cautious, Pragmatic, Brutal, Aggressive, Conniving, Logical, Compassionate, Careless*

## **EXAMPLES OF IDEALS**

*Selfish, Family First, Destiny, Karma, Let It Be, We're All Evil, We're All Good, Might Makes Right*

## **EXAMPLES OF DRIVE**

*Safety, Comfort, Love, Fear, Approval, Family, Fame, Curiosity, Greed, Power, Redemption, Revenge*

# OUR STORY

Now that we've created our locations, challenges, and characters, we can begin telling our story. We'll play as our characters as we make our way through the devastating landscape - facing difficult challenges, exploring interesting locations, and trying to lead our people to safety.

We'll take turns **framing scenes** and describing our characters' actions, reactions, and interactions against dangers and with one another, exploring the themes of our journey and our roles in the narrative. This chapter details how we actually go about **playing the game** and creating our story - everything you need to know from creating **challenge scenes** to **keying traits** to framing **social scenes**.

## STRUCTURE OF PLAY

1. Describe our characters on their journey
2. Introduce a **challenge scene**
3. Take turns attempting to overcome the scene by using our **character cards**
4. Discuss the **impact** of the scene on our story
5. Take turns **framing social scenes** between the other characters
6. Repeat until our story ends



## FREEFORM DESCRIPTION

Our story often begins with us talking about our characters - what they look like, who they know, how they got to be a part of this group - as well as their actions leading up to the first significant challenge.

This phase of the game allows people to get comfortable and start to wrap their minds around their character, and should go on for as long as all of us are still having fun. During this time it is perfectly acceptable for any one of us to describe the landscape or the predicament that we find ourselves.

None of us can control what another character is doing or where they're located, but we can take some creative liberties with our own characters and some of the initial introductory scenes. View this as the first few scenes of a movie or a novel - the characters are exemplifying some of their core traits, but everything isn't quite clear to the viewer yet.

Talk about our hopes and dreams (again, this is in character), make jokes, or simply narrate our own thought process for everyone to hear. Once it is narratively fitting or someone gets bored, we pull a **location card** and place it face up on the table.

## INTRODUCE THE CHALLENGE SCENE

Once one of us has pulled the **location**, they take a few moments to describe and detail it to the group (making it evocative or in-character is encouraged). This is the setting for our **challenge scene**.

The player that's describing the scene **rolls 1d6** and compares the result to our list of potential **trouble**:

1. An unexpected attack
2. A previous choice haunts you
3. Something breaks
4. An environmental threat
5. An internal threat
6. An unsettling development

This is, in essence, the type of challenge that we're going to face as a group. Once the trouble is announced, we pull a **source** from the stack, and **roll another 1d6**. Let this die land where it may, and denote its face value. This is the challenge's **severity** - how difficult, exacting, or punishing the challenge is.

Let the player describing the scene give it a go first - pairing up the trouble with the source, and describing how that challenges our characters (bearing the severity in mind). If they struggle a bit somebody can always jump in and help, or any of us can **veto** the source and we pull again.

In order to prevent a small group struggling in vain or a large group breezing by, the challenge's **severity** should never be:

- less than half the number of characters
- more than twice the number of characters

For example, a five character group could never have a starting severity less than 2, while a two character group could never have a severity more than 4.

The most narratively fitting character (or the oldest player, if there isn't one) gets to **act** first. Each of us will get one **turn** during the scene, in which we describe our character's attempt to overcome the challenge, incorporate some of our traits or relationships, roll some dice, and then finish narrating our success or failure and the resulting impact of our actions.

That's a bit to digest, so why don't we unpack the specifics of a **turn**:

## TAKING A TURN

Each of us gets one turn in a challenge scene, although we can **pass** if we so choose. When it is our turn, we need to conceptualize how our character is involved in the scene, what traits or relationships we have that can possibly affect the challenge, and what actions we can take that are both interesting narratively and a logical path to success.

Each turn in a challenge scene has the following steps:

1. Describe your character's specific **intent**, paying special awareness to how it relates to the challenge and the character.
2. You can **key** up to three of your character cards during your description (traits and relationships), incorporate them in the narration of your actions, and justify why they are **relevant**. Each keyed card is **removed** from your hand and placed face up on the table.
3. Roll six-sided dice (**d6**) equal to 1 + keyed cards.
  - a. Face value of 4+ is one **success**
  - b. Face value of 3- is one **failure**
4. Complete the description of your character's actions, their successes and failures, the **impact** they made, and if they achieved their **intent**.

**We'll take a moment to interpret your results.** Lower the challenge's **severity** by one for each **success** that you rolled during your turn (flipping the die to show the new severity) - a portion of the challenge has been overcome by your character's actions, and the rest of us have to finish it (or suffer ramifications).

For each **failure** rolled, choose the most fitting character card that narratively contributed to your character's failure. This card is **not returned** to your hand, and remains face up. You're no longer able to key this card or gain its benefits until it has been returned to your hand (we'll get to how to do that in a bit.)

If you **rolled zero successes**, you earn what's called a **setback**. A setback is a complication, injury, or other impediment to your character, covered in more detail in its own section later.

## ON TO THE NEXT

Now the next most logical character takes a turn. Any remaining severity from the previous characters' successes are still present, and the rest of us have to try to remove it. The following characters' actions and descriptions should build off of our previous actions.

Once each of us has had a **turn** or chosen to **pass**, the scene **ends** and our story moves on.

## END THE CHALLENGE SCENE

The challenge scene ends once every character has had a turn (or chosen to pass), or its severity has been reduced to **zero or less**. The player who pulled the location card at the beginning of the scene narrates its conclusion - and each player describes their character's final thoughts and wrap-up actions for the scene.

If any **challenge severity** remains at the end of the scene, our group has failed and earns a **consequence**. The challenge's **source card** is shuffled back into the stack. Consequences are major issues that threaten our goal, adding more challenge sources to the stack. Consequences are detailed in their own section.

**We discuss the challenge scene's impact.** How has our story changed? What's developed that makes our characters feel or behave differently? What's the likelihood of accomplishing our goal? This phase doesn't take long - but there should be ample time for everyone to reflect on what has happened and come to some sense of closure on the previous scene, and create expectation for any future challenges that await.

## FRAME A SOCIAL SCENE

After the conclusion of any challenge scene we discuss if any of our characters want to be involved in a **social scene**. If we agree that it doesn't fit with our narrative or the pace that we're trying to set, or that none of our characters have any particularly pressing conversations they'd like to instigate, we can move on.

But, even a single player or character can instigate a social scene. This player **frames** the scene - they describe the situation, the specific setting, and what other characters they want present in the scene. Characters can only be in a scene if their respective players consent to being a part of the scene.

**A social scene must:**

1. always create **camaraderie** or **conflict**, *and*
2. either relate to our journey, *or*
3. relate to the characters' **relationship**.

The scene framer describes the onset of the scene, what their character is doing prior to their engagement with other characters, and elects when the scene **ends**.

We **talk in character** and interact organically. If a character wasn't initially part of the scene, they *can't* appear in the scene without the framer's consent.

## END THE SOCIAL SCENE

Once the player who framed the social scene thinks it has reached a satisfying conclusion, they simply announce that the scene has ended. Scenes can end even in the middle of tense arguments - think of the camera cutting away to another part of the story. This is an effective way to create a sense of mystery or intrigue around future interactions between the characters.

Each of us that were involved in the social scene can **return** one character card to our **hand**. If we don't have any cards that have been left on the table from a previous challenge scene, we don't suddenly gain new cards or get additional uses of our cards.

However, an especially **significant** social scene warrants the creation of a new **relationship card** between the characters involved. Previously existing relationship cards are *never* modified - this eventually represents the complex and murky pasts we've had with those closest to us.

## ON TO THE NEXT

Once the social scene ends, any other character can frame a new social scene. We go around the table until everyone has had an opportunity to frame at least one scene - but people may **pass** if they wish.



## SETBACKS

Whenever a character rolls zero successes against a challenge, they acquire a **setback**. Setbacks are unfortunate complications, injuries, or other negative impediments. We're encouraged to create meaningful, interesting, and genre-appropriate setbacks for our characters as they arise.

Each setback **blocks** an existing character card. You can write the setback on its own card, or simply write the setback on the blocked card. You choose which card to block, but it should be relevant to the setback.

You can **remove** one of your own setbacks during the course of a challenge scene - adding +1 to the challenge severity. We can remove *each other's* setbacks during a social scene without having to roll, so long as it makes sense in the narrative is and something our characters can and would do.

### EXAMPLE SETBACKS

<i>Sick with fever</i>	<i>Fatigued</i>	<i>No tools</i>
<i>Sprained ankle</i>	<i>Mentally broken</i>	<i>Starving</i>
<i>Broken thumb</i>	<i>Paranoid</i>	<i>Hopeless</i>

## CONSEQUENCES

We, as a group, suffer **consequences** if we fail to overcome a challenge scene after each of us has taken a turn. Consequences are major narrative developments that hamper us as a group, presenting new obstacles and challenges for us to overcome.

Consequences are representative of our failure, and should evolve naturally from the challenge scene in which they were earned, or relate somehow to our journey and its inherent themes.

The *first player* to roll any failures in the consequential challenge scene **rolls 1d6**. The result of the roll is the number of *new* challenge **sources** that are added to our challenge stack.

We take turns creating these sources, reading them aloud (vetoing any as necessary), and shuffling them into the stack until we've added the number of sources resulting from the consequence roll.

If we want, one or more of us can narrate a bit about how our failures has made our situation worse, and how these challenges might haunt us in the future (this serves as great fodder for social interactions, nothing like starting an argument over who to blame). If we want, we can skip the next roll to determine trouble, and simply use 2: A previous choice haunts you (using the Consequence).

## INTERNAL CONFLICT

One or more of us can create **internal conflict** at any time. You can choose to **attack** a character on your turn. This attack can be verbal, social, or physical, each with a different impact.

The **attacker** describes their **intent** and **actions**, keying any relevant traits, and rolling dice, just like a challenge. If the characters have a hostile or conflicted **relationship**, the attacker gains **+1d6** to their roll

The **defender** describes their **intent** and **actions**, keying any relevant traits, and rolling dice. If the characters have an amiable or positive **relationship**, the defender gains **+1d6** to their roll

The characters **compare** their successes and failures. The character with **more** successes describes how they gain control of the scene, and the **impact** of their actions. The character with **fewer** successes describes how their character is affected by the conflict.

Any **ties** go to the *attacker*. The losing character might acquire a **setback** (if it makes sense), or the group might suffer a consequence (if it's fitting).

A character can't be **killed** without its players' consent. If the player thinks it is narratively fitting to have their character die, they now assist with narrating the environment, locations, and challenges.

Each of the characters involved in the conflict acquires a new **relationship** card denoting the conflict.

## HELP

Ultimately our fates are intertwined, and it benefits the group if we **help** each other. It's easier to overcome challenges when we work together - both in the rules and in the story.

During a challenge scene, if you haven't yet acted, you can choose to **help** another character with their action. You simply state that you're helping them, and **describe** how you do so. Dead or otherwise incapacitated characters can't help.

When you help someone, they roll **extra d6** equal to 1 + the number of **relationships** you share with each other. There's no upper limit to the amount of extra dice the helped player can roll from this help.

When you help another character, your cards are **not keyed**, however you can't help one of us and also **act** in the same challenge scene. Only one character can help another at a time. If the character you're helping rolls zero successes, you *both* earn a **setback**.

## BETRAYAL

Many of us will be driven to terrible deeds in order to survive, including the possibility of **betrayal**. Hope and brutal pragmatism are strange but common bedfellows.

On your turn during a challenge scene, or in an appropriate social scene, you can choose to **betray** one of the other characters in our group.

If in a **challenge scene**, you gain automatic successes equal to the amount of keyed cards (including relationship cards to the one you betrayed) toward **overcoming obstacles**. If in a **social scene**, you return **all** of your spent cards to your hand, and gain a new relationship card with the one you betrayed.

The betrayal must have a narrative impact, and if it makes sense, create a **setback** for the character that's being betrayed. This can only result in the character's death if their player agrees.

If the betrayed character wishes to contest your character's betrayal, use the **internal conflict** rules. The outcome of this internal conflict does not affect the automatic successes gained during a challenge scene, or the previously spent cards returned to your hand.

If any other characters witness your betrayal, there are likely to be narrative repercussions, and people may elect to create a new (often hostile) relationship.

## SELF SACRIFICE

Rather than see the entire group perish to glowing downpour, one of us may choose to commit **self sacrifice** during a challenge scene.

The character committing self sacrifice describes their character's final act of altruism, and removes severity equal to the number of **keyable cards** remaining in their hand. You can commit self sacrifice even if you've already acted for the turn - but remember you can only apply your keyable cards left in your hand.

The player can choose whether their character dies from their sacrifice, is gravely injured and incapacitated, or is simply separated from the rest of the group. In any case, that character can't be played for the time being (see the **Death and Defeat** section below).

## DEATH AND DEFEAT

Many of us will likely succumb to the brutal nature of our world. If a character acquires a **setback** and has no more **keyable cards**, or the group acquires a **consequence**, that character is **dead** or **defeated**.

*When* the character is killed or defeated is up to their player - either at the beginning, during, or the end of the challenge scene which did them in. Note that even if the player would normally decide to pass for this particular challenge scene, they still suffer the sting of not having enough cards.

A brief interlude that describes how the character succumbs is fitting if there isn't a narratively impactful or logical time for the character to die during the scene (so long as our group approves and finds it to align with our story.)

The player chooses whether or not their character dies or is defeated, as befitting their narrative, the overall tone of the game, and the nature of the scene.

A dead character is no longer part of our story. Their player now helps to describe challenge scenes and locations. A defeated character is **separated** from us, but can return during a later scene of their choice. If a character chooses defeat over death, one of their traits must be permanently replaced with **defeated**, crossing out the trait on their card.

## NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Our story focuses on the main characters we created, but sometimes it makes sense to feature **non-player characters**: the people who contribute less prominently to the story than our protagonists but are still important to the plot, tie its themes together, or showcase our characters' behavior.

Any one of us can play as a non-player character that's relevant to the scene, as long as they don't contradict with our group's narrative preference. It's a good idea to have the player describing the challenge scene or framing the social scene roleplay and describe these side characters, at least when initially introduced.

Non-player characters can be inserted into our story as exceptionally provocative challenges: antagonists or competitive groups that directly or indirectly oppose our characters' success. Or, they can be our friends, allies, or companions (at least in our characters' minds).

Non-player characters that exist as part of our group's party essentially serve as descriptive fodder for our characters. We can kill or manipulate or control these characters as befitting our story (and as usual we can veto each other's actions).



## WHEN IT ISN'T YOUR TURN

While you're waiting for your turn, there are several things you *should* do to make the game a better experience:

- Listen attentively
- Think of how the scene is evolving, and how the current character's actions impact yours
- Think of how the characters' actions create interesting future social scenes

We can engage in certain (optional) behaviors that make the story better for all of us. This helps to define the game's tone, increases engagement, and makes the acting player feel interconnected with our characters and their story.

- Ask questions that relate to the character's actions or the player's descriptions (*not* for justification of a particular action, just for *more* description)
- Add a bit of cooperative color to help bolster the player's descriptions (making a sound effect, interjecting - briefly! - from your own character's perspective, etc.)
- Build upon the previous characters' actions during their turn when it is our turn, that way our story doesn't exist in a vacuum

The point of these behaviors is never to interrupt or stymie a player's descriptions or their character's actions, but to bolster the intensity of our story and better connect our shared vision. If some of us are uncomfortable with any of these behaviors, we can also veto or disregard these suggestions.

## FINISHING OUR STORY

If we persevere and ascend the mountains above the boiling Sunwater, we'll have accomplished our goal and led our people to safety. If we don't, we perish to the death of our world beneath the light of its sun.

Once we've overcome all of the challenge sources in our journey, we have accomplished our **goal**. We've arrived at our final destination, we've been saved, we've reached absolution. If we've all been killed or defeated, we have failed our goal, and our journey ends with our silent bones marking our passage.

Each of us takes turns narrating the **epilogue**: how our surviving characters feel, and their final actions.