



The Road to
Babel

A Task Production

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Genesis 11:7

"Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel – because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world.

The Road to Babel

INTRODUCTION AND / OR NOTES:

The Road to Babel game is an Escape Story – part escape room, part storytelling scenario in 4 acts, including a short “introductory” Act Zero.

Players will be required to solve puzzles to progress in the game, unlock memories and uncover the fate of a lone, unnamed protagonist. He wakes up in the Appalachian wilderness with no recollection of how he got there, and no language to express his despair.

At Fastaval, the game will come pre-packaged for all playing groups. No preparation is necessary. The players will enter a room, and find 4 envelopes on the table, a large sheet of paper, 4 pencils and the first “A letter from the author”. From that, I hope it is possible to surmise how the game unfolds as clues are cracked and Memories unlocked.

At a later date, a printer-friendly, “print-at-home” version will be released; however, as reading any text at all spoils the game, preparation and execution of an Escape Room type game presents unique challenges in game design.

Design philosophy:

In a normal Escape Room, physical puzzles like locks, keys, buttons, or even electrical equipment can be operated. Do it correctly, and the game progresses. Do it wrong, and nothing happens. This is easy when you can utilize padlocks and wiring.

It is hard to do on paper.

To “emulate” a lock clicking open or a bulb lighting up, the players will “crack” different ciphers and codes. Code words are provided, and if correctly cracked, the players will be rewarded with a real word and permission to open the envelope.

This also serves as game lore. Each time something incomprehensible becomes legible, it represents a small linguistic recovery. As codes are cracked, memories and language returns to the protagonist.

These envelopes contain clues to progress in the game, but there is also a heavy storytelling element. As the envelopes are cracked, more memories are revealed, and a fragmented story that can be interpreted very freely unfolds.

There is a lot of text in the scenario. To reduce the reading load during the game, most cracked memories instruct the players to destroy other memories. This puts an element of pressure on the players, reduces the amount they have to read during the game, and creates greater variability between runs. Some groups found the ghost in the watermill. Others witnessed bestial necromancy at the hand of a coven. Even others were stalked by antlered effigies that speak in low, buzzing voices.

However, this presented me with another challenge; how do I make sure that players will unlock all the clues they need to progress, regardless of which memories are destroyed? And how do I avoid too much clue redundancy?

As in all life's predicaments; the answer is math.

Acts I and II are labyrinths of clues and memories. In the below diagrams (Fig. 1 and 2), I set up all Memories so that each green arrow denotes "unlocking" and each red line denotes "exluding" between memories. Small red text denotes which clue fragments are unlocked, and black text denotes type of cipher to unlock a memory.

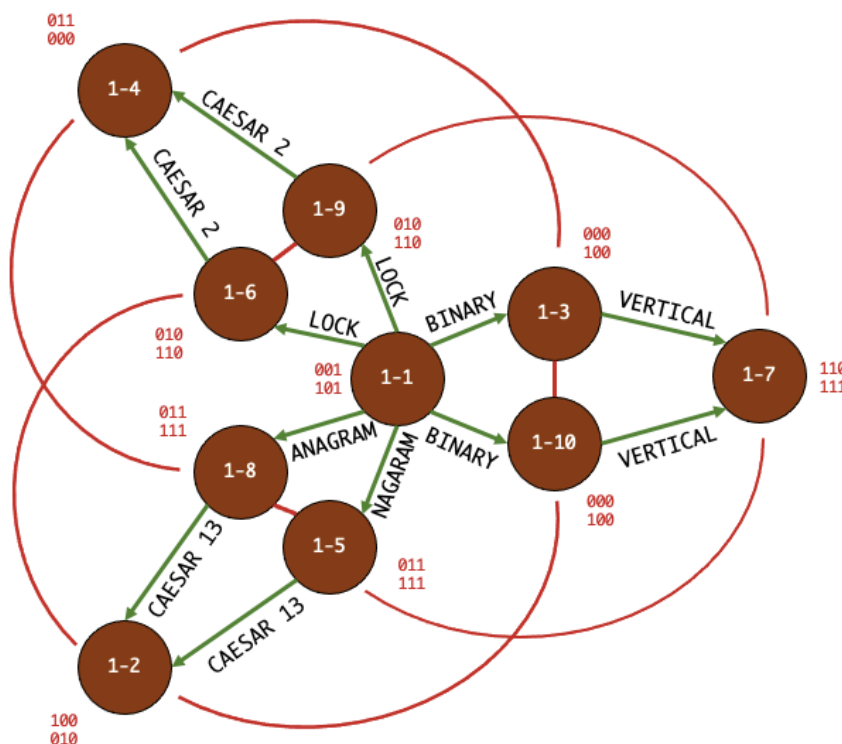


Fig. 1: Diagram of Act I. In this example, players are given 1-1. In 1-1, three clues are given; how to solve "LOCK" and "BINARY", and a clue to solve "ANAGRAM" ciphers. The players are provided with code words 001 (binary 1) and 101 (binary 5) as well; all 8 are needed to proceed. From 1-1, Memories 1-3, 1-5, 1-6, 1-8, 1-9

and 1-10 are available. However, whenever a code is used (e.g. LOCK), the other memory that could have been unlocked with that code is destroyed, as is another memory. By opening 1-6, 1-9 and 1-2 are destroyed. 1-9 has the same code words (001, 101), but 1-2 has 100 as well. Therefore, this code word should be available elsewhere. As the memories 1-3 and 1-10 are still available, 100 can be recovered from there, and so forth.

Level 0:
GATHERER caesar multi

Level 1:
OPEN 2-2 MELTWATER anagram
OPEN 2-3 BIRCH TREE reverse
OPEN 2-7 MOUND binary 5x5
2-9 EFFIGIES caesar -5
2-8 BRIDGE caesar 4

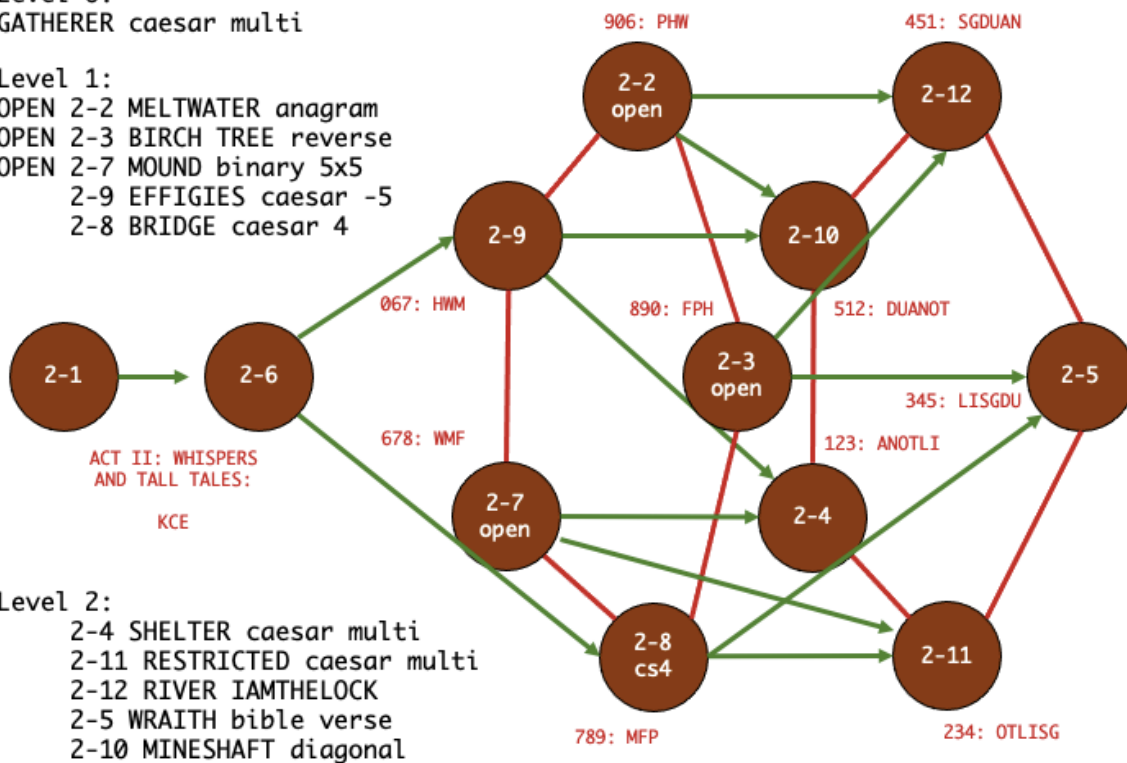


Fig. 2: Diagram of Act 2. Red letters and numbers refer to letters that must be unlocked in order to understand a 19 letter “runic” monoalphabetic cipher (1 letter is provided earlier in the game, 3 are provided in 2-6). In this Act, Memories exist in two separate “Levels”. Memories 2-1 and 2-6 are forced memories. 2-6 gives clues for 2-8 and 2-9, and 2-2, 2-3 and 2-7 are “open” Memories, that can be unlocked with ciphers known from act I. Thus, from 2-6, players can open any Level 1 Memory. Each Level is a pentagon, where each node excludes two neighboring nodes. Simultaneously, each node unlocks two nodes in Level 2 (one directly below + its counterclockwise neighbor). This system ensures that no two Memories in level 1 with overlapping clues can be opened, as any Memories with overlapping clues are mutually exclusive. Simultaneously, any two opposite (non-neighboring) node will reveal 6 Runes; 5 unique runes and 1 redundant. In Level 2, each memory excludes its neighbors and contain 6 runes; any two opposite Memories will contain 10 unique runes and 2 redundant, ensuring that any path taken through Act II will provide a full Runic alphabet with a constant redundancy of 3 runes.

In addition to code words, runes and clues that must be minimally redundant, Act II also contains a cipher string that is required to open the last Memory, 2-13, as well as the final Act III conclusion. The same mathematical principles have been applied to ensure minimal redundancy of a 10 number string.

Storytelling Philosophy:

I wanted to write a horror game set in my beloved Appalachia. But I also wanted an open-ended game, where numerous conclusions could be drawn, and many different tales could be told.

Thus, all Memories are written as open-ended as possible, ripe for interpretation.

I wanted the Storytelling element to counterweigh the Escape Room element, so I have tried to put in mandatory storytelling as part of the game progression. It is my hope that players will alternate between the two “modes” and feel creatively and logically entertained.

The game starts with a storytelling exercise that uses the players’ own Memories. Later in the game, these memories intermingle with the horror elements of The Road to Babel, to wrap up and intertwine the players’ own memories with the story. I hope that this will give the players a feeling that this imaginary Appalachia and their own worlds are somehow entwined.

The protagonist breaks the fourth wall. Constantly. This is very deliberate. He knows he is in a game. At the beginning of the game, he knows someone is sitting around a table and reading his thoughts. At that point, he knows that his language is bust, but somehow, he can communicate with these hallucinations. He even addresses that the players have no “roles to play”, as he knows that people on a role-playing congress would want to know their roles.

He also knows that there is an author. I wonder if he has realized that he uses a different font than I do, though. I don’t think he has read my letters anyway.

I’ll leave that up to you. Right now, I am just excited for you to read the scenario. If you want to play the game rather than reading it, I suggest you stop reading after this page and wait for the physical, correctly folded version of the game that I will send you once I get the instructions on how to do so.

Best regards

Benjamin Isar Jørgensen, TÆSK

P.S. The .pdf is 128 pages, which might seem daunting – but the word count puts the scenario at less than 30 pages, so don’t worry!

P.P.S. Pages 9-26 are cutout prints and won’t make much sense to you right now. Even pages are backs of odd pages, so that’s why things are upside down. It’ll look right when folded proper.

Good evening.

This is the author. I thank you for taking the time to play “The Road to Babel”.

Before you begin, I invite you to do an exercise to warm up your imaginations;

- 1) Sit back for a short while and think about times where you were alone in the woods. A solo camping trip, a jog in the countryside or maybe waiting for your coffee date to show up. It doesn't have to be scary.
- 2) Write three experiences from one or more trips on three separate notes; they should be one-liners and not related to a specific time or place. An oddly shaped tree, getting your shoe stuck in the mud or the beautiful songs of the birds, maybe?
- 3) Then, hand one note to each other player. You should now have three notes in your hand, one from each other person.
- 4) Read your new notes and set them aside. Drawing inspiration from your three new notes, make up a short anecdote – a story. When you are all ready, take turns and tell the others a short story – 2 minutes maximum - about that new, imaginary experience you had in the woods.

How did it feel to kick start your imagination? Take a brief moment and discuss.

Telling a story based on other people's memories is not something we usually do out in the world. But today, this is exactly our task.

The Road to Babel is a narrative experience. You will uncover memories of a lost soul in the heart of an immense forest, trying to find his way home. To tell his story, you'll read memories and fragments as they surface - and be requested to discuss, narrate, and improvise a story from them.

Through storytelling, cipher solving and creating together, you will craft a story about what did happen to that poor soul – why he ran, and if he ever found his way home.

This is my own last entry. The rest of the tale is narrated by our protagonist. When you are ready to begin, open Act Zero: Initiation, and read the first message from him; “Entrance”.

Yours faithfully

-B.

ACT ZERO:

[INITIATION]

ACT I:

[[[X-N-D-X-N-D-X]]]

Isaiah 32:4
The mind of the hasty will discern the truth,
And the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak
clearly.

ACT II:

111]
210
100
200
100
110
012
[011

ACT III:

[[[人 人 人 十 卩 三 卩 卩 卩 卩 卩 卩 卩 卩 卩 卩 卩]]]

I admire your creativity, but there is nothing of interest
back here.

[YOU LIE]
[THERE IS NOTHING HERE]
[GO BACK]

You should concentrate on the front of this paper.

[WAIT]

V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I
 U T S R Q P O N M L K J
 ↘

1

2

[[XNT VHKK MDDC SGHR]]	[[ZSR LMR CTCPW RGKC]]
↓↓↓ ↓↓↓↓ ↓↓↓↓ ↓↓↓↓	↓↓↓ ↓↓ ↓↓↓↓ ↓↓↓↓
?0? ??L? ?E?? ??I?	??? ??? ?????Y ?????

1-1 HOMETOWN

A: 01110	N: 00001
B: 01111	O: 00010
C: 10000	P: 00011
D: 10001	Q: 00100
E: 10010	R: 00101
F: 10011	S: 00110
G: 10100	T: 00111
H: 10101	U: 01000
I: 10110	V: 01001
J: 10111	W: 01010
K: 11000	X: 01011
L: 11001	Y: 01100
M: 11010	Z: 01101

] NAG A RAM [
Have you seen this before?

[IAMAKEY]
[7 17 15 19 24 15 2]

1-3 REPLACEMENT

[WORDSVAREWR
ITTENEBEHIN
OTHERWORDS
WORDSTAREWR
ITTENIBEHIN
DOTHECRWORD
SBEHIANDOTH
ERWORLDSSARE]

1-5 BLASPHEMY

Y Z A B C D E F G H I
X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J
13

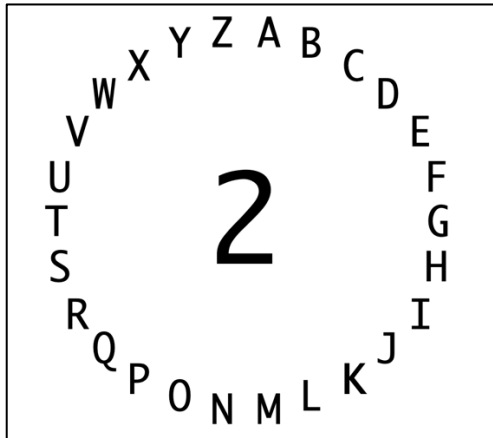
1-6 SORCERY

Y Z A B C D E F G H I
X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J
2

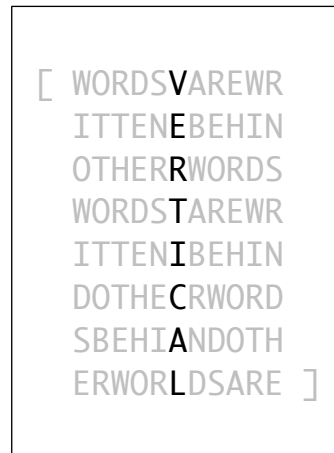
1-8 FOUNDATION

Y Z A B C D E F G H I
X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J
13

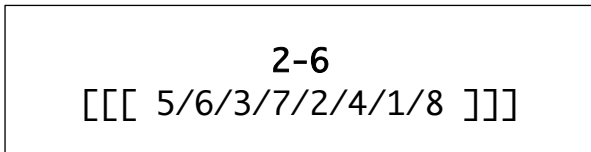
1-9 FARMERS



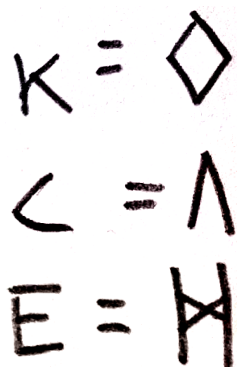
1-10 WATERMILL



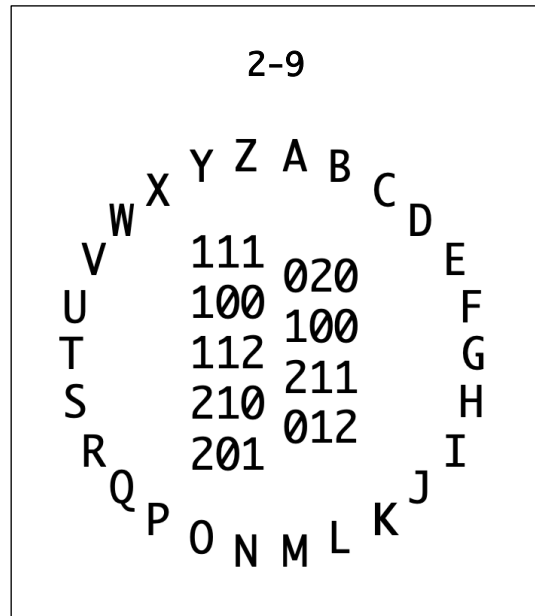
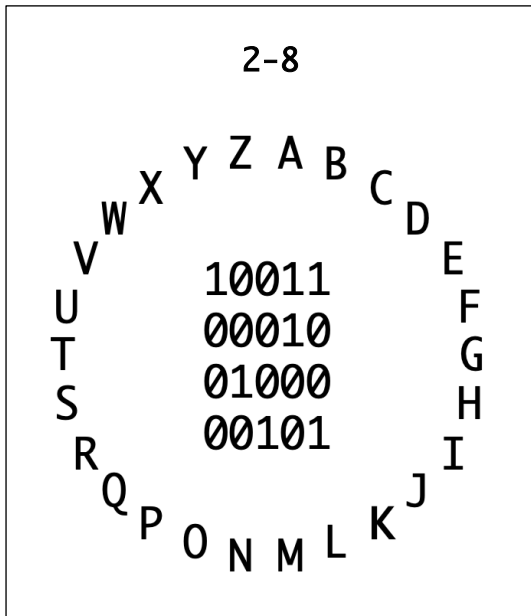
ACT II DISAGREEMENTS



2-1 DEEP BACK



2-6 GATHERER



You already have the tools to solve 2-2, 2-3 and 2-7.

2-2 MELTWATER

[WORDSAREWRI
 TTIENBEHINDO
 THEARWORDSAR
 EWRIGTTENBEH
 INDOTOHERWOR
 DSAREWNRITE
 NBEHINDAOTHE
 RWORDSARLEWR]

[IAMTHEKEY] 13 20 7 16 13

2-3: BIRCH TREE

Deuteronomy 28:28
*The LORD will strike you with madness, and with blindness,
and with astonishment of heart;*

[IAMTHEKEY] 13 20 7 16 13

2-7: MOUND

2-11
[[[6/1/7/4/9/5/8/3/0/2]]]

2-4
[[[2/6/1/5/7/4/3]]]

2-8 BRIDGE

2-11
[[[6/1/7/4/9/5/8/3/0/2]]]

Deuteronomy 28:28
*The LORD will strike you with madness, and with blindness,
and with astonishment of heart;*

2-9: EFFIGIES

[WDORDSAREWRI
TTIENBEHINDO
THEARWORDSAR
EWRIGHTTENBEH
INDOTOHERWOR
DSAREWNRITE
NBEHINDAOTHE
RWORDSARLEWR]

2-4
[[[2/6/1/5/7/4/3]]]

2-10 MINESHAFT

D = ~~N~~ U = Π
 A = \uparrow N = \downarrow
 O = ~~X~~ T = Ψ

2-4 SHELTER

A = \uparrow N = \downarrow
 O = ~~X~~ T = Ψ
 L = Φ I = \ddagger

2-11 RESTRICTED

O = ~~X~~ T = Ψ
 L = Φ I = \ddagger
 S = λ G = ~~X~~

2-5 WRAITH

L = Φ I = \ddagger
 S = λ G = ~~X~~
 D = ~~N~~ U = Π

2-12 RIVER

S = λ G = ~~X~~
 D = ~~N~~ U = Π
 A = \uparrow N = \downarrow

2-9 EFFIGIES

H = \downarrow
 W = \uparrow
 M = Φ

2-2: MELTWATER

$$P = 3$$

$$H = \downarrow$$

$$W = \uparrow$$

2-3: BIRCH TREE

$$F = \downarrow$$

$$P = 3$$

$$H = \downarrow$$

2-8: BRIDGE

$$M = \phi$$

$$F = \downarrow$$

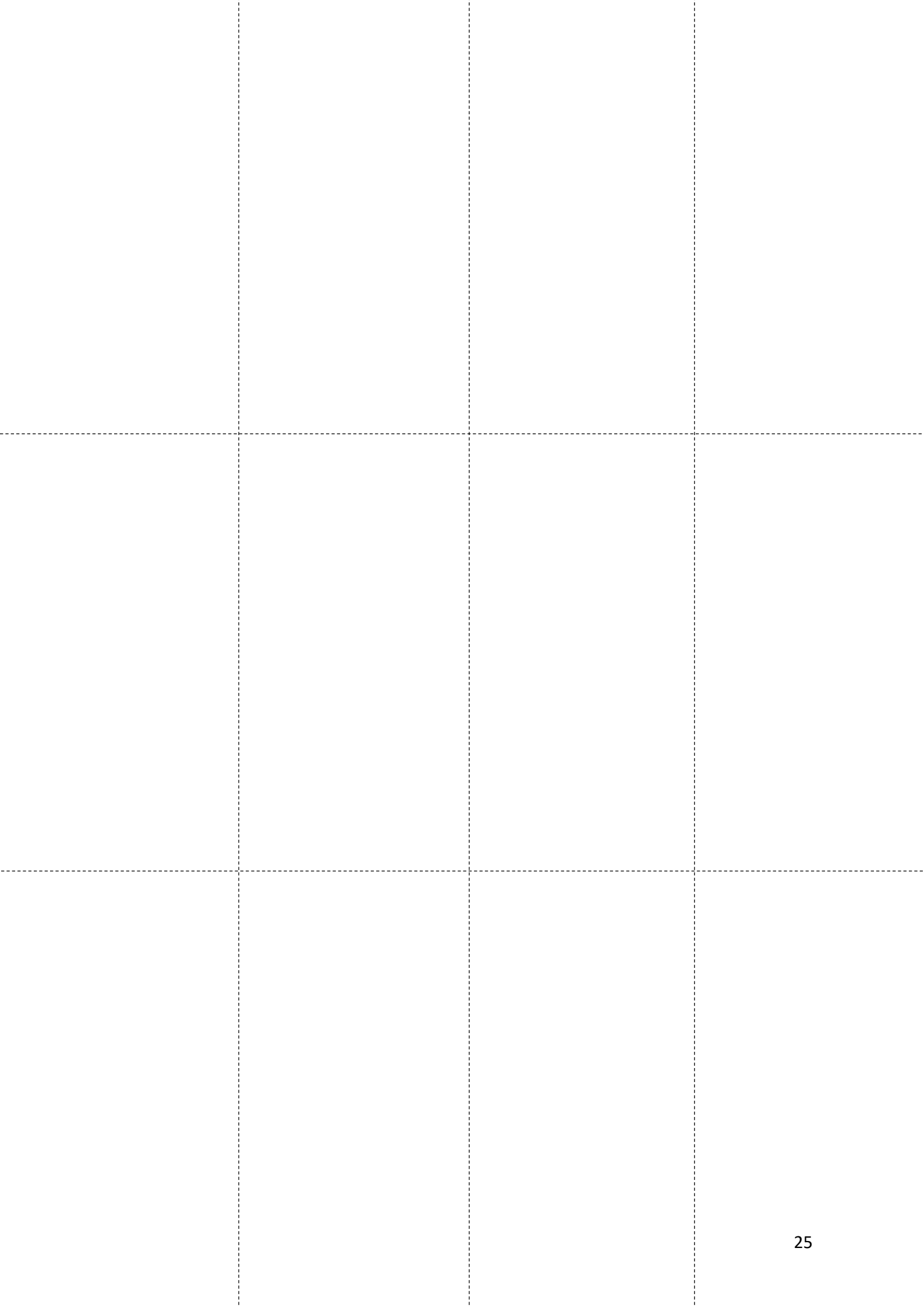
$$P = 3$$

2-7 MOUND

$$W = \uparrow$$

$$M = \phi$$

$$F = \downarrow$$



0-1. ENTRANCE: [TO BE READ ALOUD]

I thank you, strangers. Thank you for yer time, and yer willingness to lend help to an old soul.

I find myself in the middle of the woodlands. Just woke up, dehydrated, with tattered clothing and aches all over. I have no recollection of how I got here or why I came.

These woods, I know pretty darn well, though I haven't seen this stretch of trees before. Must be far from home. I do reckon I can follow my own tracks back to town, given the time. And to do that, I need your help tellin' my story. Or, as it was, piecin' it together.

[* * *]

In here, you'll find a set of Rules. It is essential that these are followed, if ya want to get this game to work. Apart from them, y'all need to agree to one simple commandment:

An **ACTION** like this one below is a **full halt**. Y'all ain't allowed to read on afore you've done what it says, ya hear?

ACTION: *Lay the 7 RULES OF BABEL on the table, so that everyone can see it. For each rule, read it aloud and discuss why this might be important.*

AGREE that you will follow them. Then read on.
OPTION: *Look at the other side of the Rules.*

Now, y'all. Right now, ya shouldn't bother with trying to make sense of who you are in this pickle I've got myself into.

The Good Book don't concern itself with who tellin' them stories, neither should you. Y'all just helpin' each other findin' some truth about what happened to me out yonder.

After all, what is the truth but an agreed upon set of lies?

With that out of the way, git on to **0-2: [DESTINATION]**, now.

READ ME NOW

[ENTRANCE]

0-1

0-2. DESTINATION:

Babel, my home sweet home, nestled smack in the middle of them Appalachian Mountains. I reckon a few hundred souls callin' it home, includin' the tobacco farmers scattered 'round the countryside.

The Appalachias are some of the oldest rock on God's Green Earth, and if you ever saw a Scots highland or a Norwegian mountain range, you sorta get the looks of it. In fact, all them mountains were one happy family before God Almighty let the Atlantic split the continent asunder.

They are ancient, steep and unforgiving.

The roads up here are a mess, plain and simple. Old dirt roads crisscross the hills, lettin' the odd truck or horse wagon pass through. That is, if snow or gravel don't send you on a daylong detour 'round the mountain.

Climb atop one of them peaks, you'd be lucky to spot a town way off in the distance. We ain't got electricity yet, so you ain't gonna spy no street lights twinklin' in the night.

While the few flat areas are used for farmin', the overwhelmin' part of land here is claimed by fowl, critter, bear and some things that ain't human nor beast.

In that unforgivin' heartland, Babel sits. A few churches, a schoolhouse, a general store and a country doctor. And of course, a Sheriff, though he ain't a full time one.

It's a good town, with good people. We take care of one another in the rough times. We eat, pray, and sing together. We share our crops, our music, and our moonshine, and we look out for our neighbours' kids when they are tillin' the fields.

In a little while, we'll go back and explore the voices and minds of Babel, but first; we'll have a look at that fine mess I done wrangled myself into.

Turn to the next letter now. I call it [**PREDICAMENT**]. Y'all should work together to figure how that jumbled word spells out Predicament; **when ya can see it**, open it and read on.

READ THIS WHEN INSTRUCTED TO

[DESTINATION]

0-2

0-3. PREDICAMENT:

But I am not in Babel. I am here now. In a massive expanse of verdant desperation. Lost in all the lushness.

My memories, they've done slipped through my fingers like mud, but some things still stick. I can recall my kinfolk and my church, and I can recall the safety of Babel. I can recall the warmth of the town hall dances and the security of being settled close to other families and trusted folk.

What I can't recall is what set me off runnin' into the woods come nightfall, what's kept me out here for what feels like days on end. Why I up and fled town.

I know the trees and the sounds and the smells out here, but I can't recall the names attached to 'em, or anything at all. I can't read my almanac, and when I try callin' out in the woods, my words jumble up like rattlin' acorns.

I need you to help me sober up and regain my language and my memories. Try and help me understand what has happened on my way out here. Try and help me find my way home.

[* * *]

In the other pile, turn over the first paper. The one that says [WAIT]. There's plenty of coded words on that one; the first pieces to gettin' my bearings back.

<p>ACTION: <i>Solve the two encrypted sentences;</i> [[XNT VHKK MDDC SGHR]] [[ZSR LMR CTCPW RGKC]]</p>

Beneath the paper, you'll find three envelopes. Y'all should be able to decipher the one called [[[X-N-D-X-N-D-X]]]. The word APHASIA done hid itself in that one, behind the string 3/2/4/3/5/5/3. **Work together, now.** Once you've found out how XNDXNDX together with that string becomes "APHASIA", open the envelope and read on.

And remember to look back, especially when you are lost. After all, that's the way we're going

???

f
S f
r S
l d
f l

[RADEINTEPC]

0-3

THE 7 RULES of BABEL

COLLABORATION

This game is a **team effort**. When working on a cipher, tell the others what you are thinking and how you've cracked it.

INCLUSION

Keep ciphers, notes and other things **in the middle** of the table where everyone can see. Don't lay claim to anything.

ATTENTION

When someone is reading or telling you a story, **listen**. Put down your pencils and **take a break from the ciphers**.

REITERATION

For each Memory and instruction read, or tale told, **repeat and rephrase**. What were the main points and story highlights?
Can you **connect the story** to other Memories?

INTEGRITY

Do not open an envelope with an uncracked cipher. Whenever you crack a cipher, open the envelope immediately. **Do not cheat**.

CLEANLINESS

Keep a tidy table. When you are done with a note, lay it aside where you can find it. **Do not clutter**.

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

When a cipher is solved, **make sure everyone understands** how it was done. You will need all players to finish the game.

The Road to Babel – Hints

We are not sure about the instructions.

They are open to interpretation. Just don't open anything you haven't cracked. Talk amongst yourselves, and find a solution that you are all happy about.

We're stuck!

In general, when you're stuck, check if you have read all instructions or if you left something unread.

We are stuck on a specific code!

Most times, you have several codes available to crack. Why not try another if this one feels like a dead end?

We only have one code, and it's too hard!

If you are stuck on a code, you are probably trying to solve it with the wrong cipher. If you feel like you tried everything, see below for specific hints.

0-3: It's an **anagram**. Shift the letters around.

[WAIT]: Use the letter wheel to go from X to Y or from Z to B. **How far do you jump?**

ACT I: What is the difference between codes **with two and three brackets?**

1-2: What do the brackets mean? Have you done this before? **Try another shift**, hmm?

1-3: It's binary. **You have the code.**

1-4: Use the **letter wheel**. Find the right shift number somewhere.

1-5: You have seen **outward brackets** before. What did they mean?

1-6: "I am the lock". **Do you have the key?**

1-7: What goes up, must eventually come **down**.

1-8: The **proper order** of things is often a mystery to me. You, too?

1-9: Some **keys open more than one lock**. Do you have one?

1-10: Brain cells and computer bits aren't that different. **How do you read them?**

1-11: Have you seen **the arrows?** What do their directions signify?

ACT II: To the maddened mind, up is down and down is **up**.

2-2: See **1-5**.

2-3: Uneven brackets usually signify **reading direction**.

2-4: Three brackets are harder than two brackets. And require **more shifts**.

2-5: You should **read your Bible** more carefully.

2-6: How did you solve **APHASIA?**

2-7: Some problems need to be attacked from **another direction**.

2-8: A simple **letter wheel** shift. Two brackets. But what is the number?

2-9: Look for the answer on the **opposite side** of the letter wheel.

2-10: Go down the **stairs**, into the darkness.

2-11: Do you have a string with the **same number of digits?**

2-12: This configuration seems familiar. What did you do in **Act I?**

h8&g2K*pT!sQ3c\$4oLz5R7w9N1fXyUxZbV6jEiAqYvGnHmJdSvF0aWl0+PkD?I
(*)/;:=_?.;,.^!G9VF!**PAGE:1/2**b5H20y4M7u3g0YLoÅ6T7*rDPcI=Qpjkw
E!uZsBvAoNfmcdeLiRIuM_NI0pxlk2R03o4TfL.I=0MlrH7cYf9nPq2hg5JjFy
b6BtEiRZKwWv4o1lQxmuNpA3Xd89y0azDsm0_kC=U_T(/\$Xe`"y]cB=Z\$Ea(4v

[I WAKE UP]

language gone, my memory is bust. My thoughts rattle
around my noggin in the incessant babbling I see below.

DELIRIUM

I don't reckon where I am. My memory of where I come from is
harder even, when I can't think straight, my words jumble
up whenever I try speaking'.

[JOLTS OF ELECTRICITY THROUGH MY]

somehow, whenever I speak you... I am coherent. We
done talkin' in another layer of time, or in another, older
tongue. Must be related to your nature; y'all ain't
physically out here with me. It's like I can speak inwards,
but not outwards. The connection between brain and world has
been severed. But not between brain and hallucination.

Heck, maybe they'll even make sense at some point?

ACTION: *Take another look at the rules. Remind each other
why you agreed to them. Then read on.*

DELIRIUM

[BREATHING COMPOSURE STANDSTILL]

Here in this first document; dormant memories of Babel lie
under linguistic lock and key. I can't get to 'em, and neither
can you. Not until we...

BRACKETS SEIZURE THE SEIZURE TO SEIZURE ATTENTION SEIZURE PAY

[NERVE AND MUSCLE TISSUE ACID ACCUMULATING]

All these memories driftin' around like god damn haints. That's what we call spirits ghosts 'round parts. "Haints", 'cause they haunt us like things we either try to remember or try to forget.

Have a look for yerself. My head unstable, like a rickety coal mine, fit to cave in. Right th time, I can't even understand I'm tryin' to recollect.

ACTION: *Glance at the codes on Memories "1-2" through "1-11". Do not open or try to crack any one of them.*

You will get to that part later.

... Okay. Let's get language workin' again, first thing. Try an' remember where I came from and why I ran. See the first memor; the one call'd [HOMETOWN]?

That word you can read plain as day, so that memory is right there for openin' in a bit. But the other ones? Uypglcqq? Lips-high-ember? Buncha numbers?

I haven't got the faintest notion what they mean.

[IDRIFTOFFDREAMINGOFBABEL]

ACTION: *Open the memory "1-1 [HOMETOWN]" and read it.*

[DEEP DARK SLEEP]

fczTx2mz\$vR5\$A}^sh~>0plo<W1)g;|RL4Ba`_`{!AfY!#X2Tc*MoSU^Um&cB2
1^i>LmD7?00TsJ!A3FL04M"O&GmNj^WJNeJemB;3eP{809>I3Bs?RiPgS%Va+R
T40X1LL{MyDc0SXQNFYyS9y?7qCkW^_FdgCvXZDYFdXmqCmFk^e_B}B;=T^>Bo
e_1Hx__>S*C]nYm0[ExWhFuJN!l\$R5wXuUtvmc+H!8MJWH2%3nvT>;=eVLr#A4

*Origin: Mid 19th century: from Greek, from aphatos, 'speechless', from a-, 'not' + phanai, 'speak'.
Noun (Medicine): Inability or impaired ability to understand or produce speech.*

READ ME FIRST

**ACT I:
APHASIA**

h8&g2K*pT!sQ3c\$4oLz5R7w9N1fXyUxZbV6jEiAqYvGnHmJdSvF0aWl0+PkD?l
[]*)/;:=-_?.;,.^!G9VF!1aJzXq;8nSb5H20y4M7u3g,0Y6T7*rDPcI=Qpjkw
E!uZsBvAoNfmcdeLiRIuM_NI0pxlk2R03o4TfL.I=0Ml rH7cYf9nPq2hG5JjFy
b6BtEiR1lk//u6gro7899y0azDsm0_kC=U_T(/\$XeZkwwv4o1`"y]cB=Z\$Ea4v

*CROSSROADS LOOKOUT CAMPSITE MARSH WATERFALL MEADOW PEAK VALLEY
ROCKS TREELINE GROVE TRAIL BROOK TUNNEL POND CLEARING RUINS RISE*

[I WAKE UP AGAIN]

... That one hurt... **The other memories are closed**, sealed off by ciphers 'cause they don't wanna be remembered. Crack those jumbled words, and you can open up the memories. **Each time we crack one, a small part of my language is recovered.**

But give up on the word, an' the **memory** keeps shut like them pearly gates eyein' a sinner, never to be reclaimed.

ACTION: *AGREE that you will follow the rules. Do NOT open an envelope before you have cracked the word. And that you will OPEN a Memory as soon as you have cracked it.*

] ANAKEGAIPUWI [

Y'all should be able to figure how to open all them **Memories**, working from scraps of paper in [HOMETOWN]. These are Ciphers, some lockdown my head kept on the memories to keep 'em from comin' back.

Apart from [HOMETOWN], there's nine more of Babel here, numbered 1-2 through 1-11.

The order you crack 'em in don't matter. Ya don't have to crack 1-2 afore ye can git on to 1-3!

Once you've opened or destroyed all of 'em; should try and make sense of that stack of boxes on the last envelope. When y'all fill the boxes, open it on yer way.

fczTx2mz\$vr5\$A}^sh~>0plo<W1)g;|RL4Ba`_`{!AfY!#X2Tc*MoSU^Um&cB2
1^i>LmD7?00TsJ!A3FL04M"O&GmNj^WJNeJemB;3eP{809>I3Bs?RiPgS%Va+R
T40X1LL{MyDc0SXQNFYyS9y?7qCkW^_FdgCvXZDYFdXmqCmFk^e_B}B;=T^>Bo
e_1Hx__>S*C]nYm0[ExWhFuJN!l\$R5wXuUtvmc+H!8MJWH2%3nvT>;=eVLr#A4

READ ME LATER

ACT I:
APHASIA

1-1 HOMETOWN

*TIP: Have the narrator lay the papers down as they read, so everyone can see.
Switch narrator often, to not strain your voice.*

I don't remember much. I don't remember how I got here, or what I was fixin' to do here. Or who I was, or where here is. West Carolina, Franklin... I reckon it doesn't matter now.

I got flashes, fragments, like bits of a broken mirror. Riflin' through the kitchen drawers. Yellin' at somebody. Me pullin' on my hat, but forgotten my jacket. Nausea and pain. Strange sounds and the dust flying around in the sunrays like bewildered fireflies.

Maybe I ran from a deed I done, maybe I lost it to moonshine or maybe I followed someone who had taken something of mine out into the woods?

Then nothing. Then darkness an' travels an' silence. Driftin' and moving with no sense of direction or time. I wake up here, in the silent mists between the pines and rottin' underbrush.

[101 INTENTION – NOWHERE 001]

I remember Babel. Warm stoves and security. Trusted folks and barn dances. Lookin' after each other when the dim barn lights is our only ward against the things and wickeds that roam out there in the night.

I wish I could remember community and kinship. How the town comes together in mourning when tuberculosis takes another young life or another child returns from the woods; mute, crippled and epileptic.

And I wish I knew why the thought of Babel stings me like a vengeful hornet.

ACTION: Read the document "READ ME SECOND".

[HOMETOWN]

1-1

1-2 RESIDENCE

***ACTION:** Destroy the unread letters 1-6 and 1-10 now*

[BORROWED MEMORY; FEMININE VOICE]

For the past months, I've been waking up in the middle of the night. At the exact same time, by the clock next to the door.

Few nights ago, I got the idea of opening my door and walking out on the porch. The gray light was barely reachin' the woods behind my house.

"This is our home! Go away! Y'all ain't welcome!" I yelled into the woods. Fired my gun into the air. No answer.

Of course not. They never answer, they just observe.

Sleep did ease for a few nights. No movements in the tress. No scratchin' voices. No lanky limbs blendin' in with the birch trees.

But tonight, I awoke, same time as always. This time, they are closer. I hear creaking on my porch, seeing the hulking figures at my windowpanes, and almost feeling something large tryin' to diffuse itself into my home.

[100 SECRETS – UNCHARTED 010]

Peerin' down at my hands, I almost regret. Almost. That ain't no proper way to end it. That ain't no way for my own life to take a turn.

*Even if I knew that that thing weren't who - or what - it pretended to be, kin and neighbours ain't fixin' to be pleased when they lay eyes on what's left come mornin'.
If they can even make out a body for what it is?*

I do reckon it had to be done, though. And I reckon I gotta run, if I don't wanna stare down the gallows come sun-up.

[WHY DO YOU ██████████ THIS KNOWLEDGE?]

[[ERFVÖRPAÐR]]

1-2

1-3 REPLACEMENT

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 1-10 and 1-4 now*

[RUMORS IN TOWN; FEMININE VOICE]

The Capgrasses had themselves a pair o' young'uns, a boy and a girl, who stayed out past their bedtime one fine autumn day. You can reckon the parents fretted up a storm, and when they finally done come home, both siblings claimed to be one another.

They say a person with a straw hat and branches stickin' outta their head come from the woods. Someone they say they seen around church. They asked them if they "wanted to swap heads". The kids say that they fell asleep, and when they done woke up, each had the mind of the other one.

Of course, witchery like that couldn't rightly happen. Must've been some sort of delusion, we all reckoned. The kids eventually settled in their new roles, one of 'em downright content with their new body. To this day, they still prefer to answer to the name of the other one, like they never switch'd back.

[000 REDACTED - SECRETS 100]

I dreamt that this here fever, this germ gone into my noggin couldn't be cured, and I was afeared to die. But then an old lady made of straw, with stones for eyes, went and said that I could be cured.

But the fixin' would mean swapping my head for that of a deer. That its raw bloody bones would go and suck all the venom outta my brain, she said.

[11100
10001
01001
11011
01011
00011
01110
11011
00111
10101
00101]

1-3

1-4 WARINESS

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 1-3 and 1-8 now*

[BORROWED MEMORY; MASCULINE VOICE. NEIGHBOR? ME?]

So, Preacher got called to a farm, 'cause the dog gone mad and a dog gone mad is a sign of the Devil tryin' to slip into the home.

The Sacks farm hound had gone missin' for a few weeks, after a huntin' trip in the deep backwoods. When it showed up at the farm one mornin', it had all the same teeth, all its paws and the same ol' eyes. But its mind? Well, that done slipped away like daylight at sundown.

Preacher did agree that Oliver weren't right in his dog head; Poor old Oliver took to standin' still for hours, bark in what almost sounded like human words, and the Sacks kin said it would perch on the walls like gravity was turned sideways. Though we never rightly believed that part.

When they took 'im out back to off him, the hound started tossin' himself around like a rag doll caught in a gust, gone wilder an' stronger for each step. When they finally got to the barn an' Mama Sacks pulled the trigger, she up and swears it took two reloads afore old Oliver lied still. Even said the blood was thicker and darker than any blood she ever saw, an' believe me, she saw her fair share!

[011 DARKNESS - REDACTED 000]

They done I tracked 'em past the Sacks homestead, and deeper into the darkness. Reckon they took him this way, kickin' an' screamin'. The smell lingers heavy in the air, and I can almost hear their faint talkin', like locusts through the underbrush. Im'a track 'em. Im'a bring him back.

[DO NOT TRY UNDERSTAND]

My heart is poundin'. Them things ain't neither man, nor critter. They're just awfully good at lookin' like both.

[[ὀρθόγραφος]]

1-4

1-5 BLASPHEMY

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 1-8 and 1-7 now*

[MEMORY; NEWSPAPER? DID I DREAM?]

“In a recent turn of events, the serene town of Jericho, AP finds itself embroiled in a controversy.

Police have descended upon the Congregation of Mountain Grace; several arrests have been made, with accusations ranging from ungodly worship to sodomy and cult practices.

Concrete evidence seized at the house of worship suggests worship of pre-Christian beast idols and mutilation of livestock. Several heads of various animals were found on the premises.”

[111 WOODLAND – DARKNESS 011]

...I reckon we would be standin' in the circle, claspin' hands that felt strong and hard like knotted trees. There would be this thing in our midst, fangled of bloody bones and severed skin that would try to move and commune with us. Maybe a slain hound or a small deer?

I reckon I damn well knew the sound was not in my head, but out there in the night. Just travelin' through the head and eyes of this thing that was neither hound nor deer nor anything that should ever be mistaken for it...

т
S т
r S
l a
f l

] LPSHYEMBA [

1-5

1-6 SORCERY

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 1-9 and 1-2 now*

[RUMORS IN TOWN; INDETERMINATE VOICE]

. . . Now, some young'uns would stay clear of the Wilson cobbler shop. Said him and his kids had evil eyes just like his ma, and that she never got a proper burial, on account of her bein' a witch.

One day, some of the sawmill boys, full of liquid courage, decided to pay the ol' Wilson house a visit. Rather than the cobbler and his kin, they found pale, antlered straw dolls. Human-size, and lifelike of the whole clan.

They started hearin' voices 'round the house, and them dolls began movin', like they insisted on comin' alive. The boys, they high-tailed it to town, yellin' devilry and witchcraft, but no one believed the drunks at the time, and no one went to investigate.

Weeks after, Wilson and his kin got his fill of whispers. Packed up and left for Jericho, AP.

Never did show up in Jericho, though. Wonder if they just stayed out in the woods?

[110 REMEMBER – UNCHARTED 010]

I think I had a niece. Or maybe a sister. Or maybe it was my brother's wife? A young lass, who was very dear to me. She got lost. Not in the woods, but in her mind.

They planted their evil in her, gave her antlers and seizures and ill intent. Had her drink dark liquids and speak their foul words. If not for them, we'd still have her laughter and music, not the memory of her dangling in the trees.

They'll try to hide in the woods. I'll find 'em.

[I A M A L O C K]
[K Y J G D T S I U N B F H L R P O V C X Q W M E A Z]

1-6

1-7 SUSPICION

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 1-5 and 1-9 now*

[CARETAKER'S NOTES; FEMININE VOICE]

So, we had another case of this, bout six summers past? Remember? One of the Bickerstaff girls, she up and vanished into the woods. We figured she was a goner after a month, but lo and behold, she strolls back into town. Tattered clothing, cross-eyed, and braided hair like something outta a folk tale.

Eventually, she starts yappin' about a town in the woods, where all the people of Babel be livin', but these ones walk funny and their mouths don't really move when they speak. Even one of the ladies – her Mama-of-the-Woods? – did her hair, afore they let her go for “not being the right kind”.

They tried to get more outta her, but within the hour, her memory goes bust like rotten apples, and now she just sits there starin' into the wall. Like her memories were repressed because they wanted to.

[110 REMEMBER – WOODLAND 111]

They caught me. They done put me in the clinic or jail or somethin' that's supposed to be both. Bound me to the bed, said that I was sick and weren't straight in my head.

But I knew why. I knew none of them were the ones they claimed to be, and that I'd be done for if I let them come back to cut me up.

[██████████ NO CLARITY TO BE GAINED HERE]

Between the pain and the nausea, I gnawed the ropes that bound me down, smashed the mirrors so they couldn't track me and ran, ran out into the night to try an' find my way Home.

[DESTINATION
NAUSEATING
CRISSCROSS
EPILEPTIC
BIBLICAL
BACKWOODS
MISTWARD
HOMESTEAD
TRANSLUCENT]

1-7

1-8 FOUNDATION

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 1-4 and 1-5 now*

[BORROWED MEMORY; MASCULINE VOICE]

In the heart of Babel, some big ol' structures stand like giants peepin' through the thick mist. There's the meetin' house, the big ol' warehouse and smithy, the town hall, and the fixer-upper place they call a clinic, where they also sell goods and feed for critters.

But them rocks they're steepled on are age-old, not like the shaky huts we plopped down for our town square. Folks who know their history will spin a yarn 'bout how the town was founded on rocks chiseled by primeval hands, and that nightmares about tall shadows and haints plagued townsfolk for generations.

Now, 'bout the name Babel? Well, reckon it's 'cause them cellars and crypts under this town are chock-full of ancient words, secret sentences that ain't no one can read no more.

[011 DARKNESS – WOODLAND 111]

The stink of gasoline, broken twigs and moonshine hang heavy in the air as I strike the match. If this won't rustle 'em, nothin' gonna.

Mist rolls in as I huff on the flames. That done riled up the shadows, drawing in like ghosts at congregation. Maybe they're spooked by the chaos. Maybe they're just attracted to the heat, like fireflies to a still pond.

A'course, town ain't gonna take kindly to a feller settin' that property ablaze. So I'll take it to the woods, hide out an' reckon this here is the toll I gotta pay.

f
S
J
i
f

[TOFANNIUD]

1-8

1-9 FARMERS

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 1-7 and 1-6 now*

[RUMORS IN TOWN; MASCULINE VOICE]

In a modest red farmhouse, few miles outta town, one of the families of Babel callin' it home. Farmer Rasmussen is well liked, mild-mannered and mellowed by all his years of livin'.

Rasmussen and his children have found some solace at the church, even though he still believes in some Swedish superstition; right before tragedy struck his family years back, he swears he met a Långsvart – a Tall Dark One.

One misty morning, he returned to his homestead. Atop a knoll, a dark, translucent 8-foot figure approached him. Didn't do nothing, just walked along for a mile or so, with Theodore petrified plumb to his bones. And when they got to the farm, the tall one turns to the farmer and says "Good night, old Friend" and vanishes into the fields.

[010 UNCHARTED – REMEMBER 110]

I knew I ain't had much time. That whatever had done it was deep in the woodland by now. I wanted Rasmussen to tag along, he lost someone years back. And he knew about the shadows, I took it.

Couldn't find 'im, or his girls. Farmhouse was plumb empty, 'cept for the smell of smoke. Must've gone into town.

I had to pick up the pace. I grabbed his double barreled and a long piece of rope. Ran into the night to catch that thing afore it was too late.

[C S G Y L Q F J B O P H K D R U A N M W T X Z E I V]
[I A M A L O C K]

1-9

1-10 WATERMILL

ACTION: *Destroy the letters 1-2 and 1-3*

[RUMORS IN TOWN; FEMININE VOICE]

Years ago, a miller name o' Wernicke lived here. Man couldn't talk sense to save his life; All alone in the mill, he'd grind the grain and saw the lumber like clockwork, even after he gone daft.

Old folks from town knew him when he'd be speakin'. They said he just started ramblin' one day. Like he done forgot how to put sentences together. The words would come out all wrong, and he wouldn't grasp if ya asked him to do something.

Doc said he had a stroke, and that he might never get his marbles back. 'Cept this one Sunday mornin' right before church, where, for a brief moment, his words came back to him, and he just uttered;

"They are in the mill. Can hear them and understand them now."

[100 SECRETS – REDACTED 000]

I found the watermill in the dense fog. Thought the cold stones of the cellars would ease my headaches and my nausea.

There's this tall shadow makin' itself home here, like a ghost or worse. And it's appeared in the windows and walls and blandin' in with the mildew on the stones.

Can't make out its features, but as my shivers grow worse and my senses grow numb, its stare intensifies, until that haint is all I see and its words are all I hear, shoutin' an' beatin' an' yellin in codes and tongues and graves.

Then nothing. Next thing I remember, I'm in the woodland, the mill nowhere to be seen and them ghostly voices around me like a rainstorm. Then I descend into the mist.

[10011
11001
01110
11010
00101
10010
00111
01110
01010]

1-10

Ezekiel 33:22

Now the hand of the LORD had been on me in the evening, before he who was escaped came; and he had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more mute.

1-11: AWAKENED

ACTION: *If you feel you have cracked enough memories, **destroy** the last one. If not, try to crack it, and return here when you have either succeeded or given up.*

I think I've been sleepin'. Tryin' to escape delirium. I've gone driftin' between slumber and upright awake, dreamin' of Babel and what compelled me to run out into this mess in the first place.

I've regained some of my memories. I can talk and read again. Recollected some parts of what happened. Others are lost; but I'm beginnin' to fathom what happened back yonder. You, too?

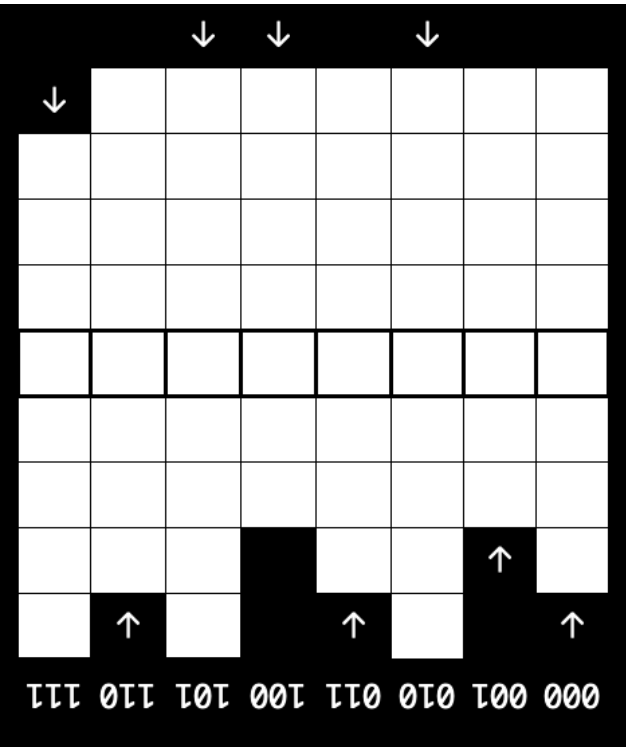
You probably guessed it, but the *parts of my memories written in italic* are what I myself remember from Babel. To agree on what really did happen when I done left my home town, y'all gonna draw inspiration for my Memories to tell another Tale, just like before ya even met me.

ACTION: *Hand out the four papers marked 1-12 [DEPARTURE] and read them. Reveal what your instructions are to the other players.*

*Then, discuss what happened in the Memories you have cracked. The Memories are **open for interpretation** and you should **NOT** just retell what happened in them.*

AGREE on who should take which Memory and read on.

When y'all are ready to spin a new tale, the player who done picked Part I will begin.



1-11

1-12 DEPARTURE – Part I; Everyday Life

“Life was good, back then.”

You’re gonna start this tale. You will tell a story about a normal day in Babel, way before I ran into the woods. How was folks to each other? How was my everyday life?

Give some details for the others to latch onto and build on; Who were my **relations**? What was my work? Did I have conflicts? Was I religious? Get creative, now!

ACTION: *Take one of the Memories you have all read; one that inspires you about everyday life in Babel.*

Don’t aim to retell the text, but take a few keywords and tell the others how normal life in Babel was for the protagonist.

For more inspiration, consider one of these:
“The rocking chairs creaked on the porch”
“Goin’ to work on Friday, to Church on Sunday”
“Helping a neighbor with a small trouble”

Don’t spend more than 5 minutes thinkin’ up the tale. We have so far to go, and so little time to get there.

When the others are ready, announce that you will **start**:

ACTION: *When everyone is ready, narrate an anecdote or Tale about the protagonist’s everyday life in Babel; 2-3 minutes maximum.*

When you are done, let the next player tell Part II.

Remember too keep the time.

1-12

[DEPARTURE]

Part I

1-12 DEPARTURE – Part II: Disaster Struck

“A fateful day.”

You will be the second to narrate. The first player will conclude their tale about everyday life in Babel and ask you to continue.

What happened on the day I high-tailed into the green yonder? Were things already in motion, was it a snap decision or a forced reaction? Did someone mentioned in Part I send me away? What did happen the day my world collapsed?

ACTION: *Take one of the Memories you have all read; One that inspires you about the drastic change that compelled the protagonist to run into the woods.*

Don't aim to retell the text, but take a few keywords and tell the others what happened in town that changed everything.

For more inspiration, consider one of these:

“A strange man wandered into town”

“Old feuds sprang up when a secret was revealed”

“I was the only one who saw it coming”

Don't go spendin' more'n 5 minutes thinkin' up the outline of the tale. We ain't gots all night, ya reckon?

ACTION: *When instructed by the first player, narrate an anecdote about how the serenity of Babel turned awry, and how that prompted the protagonist to leave; 2-3 minutes maximum.*

When you are done, let the next player tell Part III.

1-12

[DEPARTURE]

Part II

1-12 DEPARTURE – Part III: Into the Woods

“A route less trodden.”

You will be the third to narrate. The second player will conclude their tale and ask you to continue.

What happened when I hightailed it outta Babel? Which route did I take out, and what did I see? Was it a pursuit or a flight? Was I trackin’ someone for revenge, or did someone – or something – follow or hinder me?

Get inspired from what you have learned from my Memories of Babel. Be creative, but brief.

ACTION: *Take one of the Memories you have all read; one that inspires you about what happened during the departure from Babel.*

Don’t aim to retell the text, but take a few keywords and tell the others about what happened to the protagonist on the day he ran into the woods.

For more inspiration, consider one of these:
“I thought I knew all the trails outta town”
“The heavy rain unmasked patterns in the ground”
“Unusual amounts of critters today”

Don’t spend more’n 5 minutes thinkin’ up the tale. We have miles to trek, and ain’t no time to get there.

ACTION: *When instructed by the second player, narrate an anecdote about the turn to the woods, and what might have hindered or helped the protagonist; 2-3 minutes maximum.*

When you are done, ask the fourth player to continue and conclude.

1-12

[DEPARTURE]

Part III

1-12 DEPARTURE – Part III: Unexpected Events

“Desperate action and deeds left behind. But then...”

The others will tell my story from before things went haywire, up until I am deep in the woodland.

You will wrap it all up and apply a twist to the story. Be creative. Was I stalked? Trapped? Surprised by beast, weather, or presence? Did I encounter something I never expected?

Don't spend more'n 5 minutes thinkin' up the tale; Babel is still far off, and we need to get there tonight.

Your story will end with me collapsing in an unknown part of the woods.

ACTION: *When instructed by the third player, provide an overview of the story told by the others; life in Babel, the events that changed everything and the protagonist's flight from his hometown.*

Take inspiration from what have been told, and add a surprising twist; be brief, 2-3 minutes maximum.

When you are done, perform the next ACTION.

ACTION: *Reveal the Cipher below and invite the others to decipher the ACT II envelope with you.*

When the word is readable, announce that we will proceed to ACT II.

A: 001	J: 101	S: 201
B: 002	K: 102	T: ???
C: 010	L: ???	U: ???
D: ???	M: ???	V: 211
E: 012	N: 112	W: 212
F: 020	O: 120	X: 220
G: 021	P: ???	Y: ???
H: 022	Q: 122	Z: 222
I: ???	R: 200	Å: 000

1-12

[DEPARTURE]

Part IV

ACT II
CHAPTER ZERO

Ecclesiastes 9:3

This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one event to all: yes also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

Rememberin' is hard work. Y'all have had yer noggin's crunchin' an' turnin' and grindin' for the past hours or so.

I reckon it's high time for y'all to go get some fresh air. Grab a soda or a whiskey to calm your nerves and fuel yer brains.

ACTION: *Take a break of 10 - 15 minutes.*

Get some fresh air.

*Your blood sugar is getting lower.
Get something to eat. Get refueled*

Talk about other things.

I mean it. Trust me.

When yer all refueled an' got a fresh mind to grind with, y'all can get on to the real ACT II;

ACTION: *Open ACT II, CHAPTER 1: THE ROAD HOME*

BEGIN HERE

CHAPTER ZERO : INTERLUDE

DELIRIUM
ACT II

ACT II: DELIRIUM THE ROAD HOME

We done made it this far. I have regained my language, my knowin' of my own self and some of the **things roaming around Babel**. With my words comin' back, I can feel my amnesia clearin' out like mists before sunrise.

But damn. I wish it wouldn't, ya know?

As I'm makin' my way back to Babel, I may come across some of the places I laid eyes on my way out. Them memories that I done kept locked up, fer good reason, they gonna come creepin' back. To make sense of this tangle I got goin' on, we gonna need us a map.

Get a big blank piece of paper, and put it in the middle of the table. Everyone, work together on drawin' the followin':

- A sense of scale. Make a long line, write a unit. 1 mile? 5 kilometers? Could even be 3 hours of walkin'.
- A forked river, twistin' and turnin' through the land. Don't forget a few little creeks feedin' into it.
- A lake or two, if ya feel like it.
- Then, add high points. Plateaus and mountain tops. Appalachia is nothing but. Add some more.
- A few deserted buildings or structures.
- Dotted lines for roads, unused for decades.
- Woodland. Lots and lots of Woodland.

All of y'all should name some of the peaks, woods and rivers now. Make up names that sound like something in Appalachia.

ACTION: *Put all of the above on the map.*

Each player should draw and name at least 3 places on the map. The ones you name don't have to be the ones you drew.

Do not draw in Babel. You haven't found it yet.

Spend 5 minutes maximum.

Now then. We got us a map, an' some sense of the scale and direction of my turn into the woods. All y'all can continue doodlin' on the map. There ain't much land here that ain't covered by steep rock or thick bushes.

With a map handy, **we're gonna start explorin'**; we're way out in the Deep Back now. And if we ever wanna have a prayer of getting' back to Babel, we gotta put that map to good use.

ACTION: *Add an X to the map, in the far wilderness.
Write 'Deep Back' next to it.*

Fact, ya might wanna jot down an X whenever I remember somethin' new. Draw in new places as they're needed.

The Memories ain't playin' by the rules of time, and won't open in the order they happened. So don't fuss over where to start, or if you mark a memory near the last one.

By and by, that old map o' yorn will give us an idea about the route I took. Remember, **you can all add places to the map** if'n ya wanna. The more places you find, the more I'll remember.

[]

We know where to begin. Now we need to know what happened. **Take a gander at all them closed papers** lyin' afore ya. These contain my fragmented Memories of my run in the woods. Bad visions and wicked omens.

We can't access them as they lay there, spread out like lost critters in a corn field. **Try openin' the only one that you can read right now;** the one ya just added to the map;

ACTION: *Open 2-1 [DEEP BACK [and read it.*

*This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that
there is one event to all: yes also, the heart of the sons
of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while
they live, and after that they go to the dead.*

Ecclesiastes 9:3

CHAPTER 1: THE ROAD HOME

**DELIRIUM
ACT II**

ACT II: WHISPERS AND TALL TALES

Some of these memories of mine, they's so dang scattered that I can recall only a few sentences that branded that corner of my mind like a disfigured cattle iron.

Incomprehensible and permanent.

I call 'em Whispers. You'll know them by their weird script.

There's one right in here. Inside it are instructions on what ya gonna do with a Whisper, as well as the Whisper itself; try and open it, 'cause ya gonna need them sentences in a bit;

This is where ya gonna tell yer tall tales.

To do that, we'll need to explore how you all tell stories;

ACTION: *Decipher and read the Whisper. Then, allocate the four marked papers and read them in private. Last, nominate a player to be the first Narrator.*

Done nominated a player? Good, you can all huddle around, like possum scouts 'round a cracklin' camp fire.

The first Narrator will read the Whisper again. The **name**'ll tell'm about the **place** where the Tale happened. And the sentences in there? These are prompts for your Tall Tale!

ACTION: *Narrator: Improvise a short Tale about the experiences of the protagonist, using inspirations from your Direction, and one (or both) of the sentences in the Whisper.*
All others: Add an X for the unlocked Whisper to the map. Agree on a fitting keyword to remember the tale by, and a name for the place. Add those to the map.

Ya liked their story? Good. Chances are, however, that not all them details agreed with the way you each would have spun it.

To rectify that mess, git on to ACT II: DISAGREEMENTS

DON'T OPEN UNTIL INSTRUCTED

CHAPTER 2 : WHISPERS AND TALL TALES

ACT II

CREEK - WHISPER 2-1

ACTION: *Read the FIRST WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS below in full. When read, follow them closely.*

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WHISPER 2-1

- 1. Pick a First narrator if you haven't done so.*
- 2. Have the First Narrator tell a Tale - a short, improvised story about something the Protagonist experienced in the woods. Put an X on the map.*
- 3. Inspiration should be drawn from one (1) of the sentences in their Direction combined with one (1) or two (2) sentences from this Whisper.*
- 4. After the conclusion of the Tale, have each other player retell the story, using their direction.*
- 5. During a retelling, players should not use inspiration sentences from the Direction. These will be needed later.*
- 6. After three retellings, you should have heard four different versions of the same story, but with four different explanations of what really happened.*

“Shy rustling, like the trees ‘emselves are learnin’ to speak”
“They’re all afraid of the water and all the secrets it held”

/ / / / / / / / / /

LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Pick a First and Second Narrator. Everyone should be First Narrator at least once. If they want to.*
- 2. The First Narrator should tell a Tale, inspired by one of the sentences in their Direction combined with one or two sentences from this Whisper.*
- 3. The Second Narrator should retell the Tale according to their direction. They should not use inspiration sentences from their own Direction.*
- 4. Add an X and a word to the map where the Tale happened.*

Λ Γ Η Θ ϖ

DIRECTION: GHOSTS

When telling or retelling a Tale, **warp it to be about the Spirits** who have haunted these hills longer than the trees remember.

You want the protagonist to be **the victim of ghosts in the mist** and haints that impersonate humans.

These shadows are **tall, dark and intelligent**. They will lure their victims into the fog to disappear. Sometimes they walk through walls and steal soul and sanity away from sleeping folks. And other, darker things that I will leave you to come up with.

When telling a Tale, consider incorporating one of these:

“They lure people and speak with **voices like deep water**”

“Might be spirits of the **people who got lost in the woods**”

“They say **she could and did talk** to the ones in the mist”

“Done split itself, becoming a **hundred shades at once**”

DIRECTION: WITCHCRAFT

When telling or retelling a Tale, **warp it to be about the humans who follow unholy practices**.

You want the protagonist to be **the victim of witches and parishioners who have turned to the dark gods**.

The witches work with **head magic**. Splitting of minds, **reading thoughts** by dissecting tissue and seeing the future by ingesting foul liquids. And other, darker things that I will leave you to come up with.

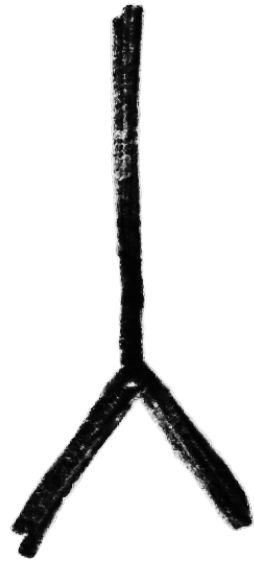
When telling a Tale, consider incorporating one of these:

“Debts must be paid,” they said. “And **prophecies fulfilled**”

“Witches **used to come to the river**. And maybe *from* it”

“She was a betwixt, a **thing in-between**. She never slept”

“The cephalomancers **split heads in two to tell the future**”



DIRECTION: CREATURES

When telling or retelling a Tale, **warp it to be about beasts that take human form** to hunt unsuspecting humans.

You want the protagonist to be the victim of **unknown monsters that lurk in the darkness**. A **hidden species** with the power to **warp body and voice** to impersonate humans and animals.

They might be **the reason beasts and critters** behave oddly. When changing their form, they might **eat their own kin**. And they might do other, darker things that I will let you come up with on your own.

When telling a Tale, consider incorporating one of these:

“It moved clumsily, not like insect, but neither like man”

“As if someone hollowed out a deer and wore its skin”

“Molded of clay and muscle, but **no one filled in the details**”

“**an older species of out there, hidden and skilled hunters**”

DIRECTION: REASON

When telling or retelling Tale, **warp it, so seemingly supernatural phenomena** can be explained naturally.

You want the protagonist to **be the victim of things** can be explained naturally. Drinking too much and sleeping too little. Going mad from dealing with things he’s done or seen.

The **truth can be more terrifying** than any superstition.

All the wickedness that the others describe... it can be explained by **natural phenomena**. You will ascribe hallucinations to madness and infection rather than otherworldly presence, monsters or devilcraft.

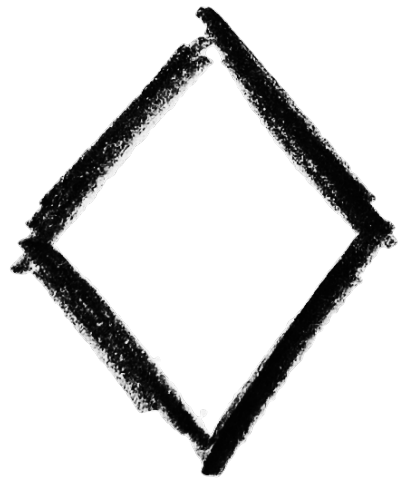
When telling a Tale, consider incorporating one of these:

“But when light fell right, **it was clear it was just a...**”

“Shouldn’t have **eaten those mushrooms** or drunk that water”

“It could just have been done by **the lunatics who lived here**”

“**Could just have been rotting corpses** of animals in the woods”



TUNNEL - WHISPER 2-2

ACTION: *Perform LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS.*

”And then, my mind opened up for intrusion by other things”
”Something strong is preventing me from getting in there”

/ / / / /22/ / 8/ / 6

TRAIL - WHISPER 2-3

ACTION: *Perform LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS.*

“My hand is broken, but I’m breathin’ and I stopped bleedin’”
“Can feel more an’ more eyes on me, flickerin’ in the bushes”

/ / / 0/ /22/ / 8/ /

MEADOW - WHISPER 2-4

ACTION: *Perform LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS.*

“Ain’t never been alive, but that doesn’t mean they’re dead”
“The lights come together in the meadow. I run.”

7/ /15/ / / / / /21/

SWAMP - WHISPER 2-5

ACTION: *Perform LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS.*

“My blood mixin’ with the swampwater, luring even more”
“Even after a century of preachin’, we ain’t got rid of them”

/ /15/ /16/ /15/ / /

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CLEARING - WHISPER 2-7

ACTION: *Perform LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS.*

“I can’t move a limb to save my life. Then the tingling comes”
“The scratching continues. And that growl wasn’t my stomach”

/24/ / 0/ / / / / / 6

TREELINE - WHISPER 2-8

ACTION: *Perform LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS.*

“That’s why they didn’t cross the border long as he lived”
“Just as I reach the treelines, the shakes take hold of me”

/24/ / 0/ / / / 8/ /

CROSSROADS - WHISPER 2-9

ACTION: *Perform LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS.*

“My head hurts so bad. I can’t see them. Which way to go?”
“Strange old symbols found on rocks and trees, even on bones”

/24/ / / /22/ / / / 6

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WATERFALL - WHISPER 2-10

ACTION: *Perform LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS.*

“Did I lose somethin’? Dangling by the end of that rope?”
“I can’t fall asleep afore I find it. Must not.”

7/ / / /16/ / / /21/

RUINS - WHISPER 2-11

ACTION: *Perform LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS.*

“I keep shivering as I put myself up against the wall.”
“Wind’s getting colder, and the screeching’s getting’ louder”

/ /15/ / / /15/ /21/

CAMPSITE - WHISPER 2-12

ACTION: *Perform LATER WHISPER INSTRUCTIONS.*

“Nothin’ taken, just scattered to learn what I was livin’ off”
“... hanging up there, where I can’t reach it. I vomit again”

7/ / / /16/ /15/ / /

↑↑↓↑↓↑↑

↓↑↑↑

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ACT II: DISAGREEMENTS

Y'all heard some rumors from Babel. You've unlocked some of the dark things buried in my Memories. You know your way around the haints and spectres of the mountains.

And you damn well know which Direction you want to spin the narrative. That's why ye'll get a chance to disagree with the first Narrator.

Now it's time for the rest of you fine folks to show that first Narrator what for.

Take turns **retellin' their story but twist the narrative** with the details and worldview that suits yer Direction.

ACTION: *Each other player must retell the first Narrator's story. Twist the story to fit your Direction. Explain the unexplained according to your beliefs.*

But save your inspiration sentences for when you become the First Narrator.

Tellin' Tales is how ya explore this mess I'm in. Gettin' different perspectives, ya might reckon'. You should **prioritize the Whispers**, as they hold the keys to **crack 2-13**, which I'm fair sure is the way out.

Any time you open a Whisper, a new player should take on the role as the First Narrator; using a sentence from their Direction and the Whisper as inspiration for another Tale from my way home to Babel.

We gotta keep pressin' if we ever gonna make sense of this tangle. Right now, another Memory is resurfacin', and I ain't sure I like what I recollect.

Use this here clue and that letter wheel o' yorn. Help me **crack the Memory [[[2-6]]]**, and more light'll be shed on my travels, like break o' day on a cold frosty mornin'.

DON'T OPEN UNTIL INSTRUCTED

CHAPTER 3 : DISAGREEMENTS

ACT II

2-1 DEEP BACK

I am awake now. Fully, wide awake, I reckon. Ain't no more of them seizures, no more runnin' around the woods like a rattlesnake in cowboy boots. My breeches are tattered, and the stubble on my face tells me I've been here for some days.

My mind is clear like rainwater now, and I'm beginnin' to recollect the things I've seen and the places I've been in these woods. And I ain't sure I like it.

Where I am now... **this is the deep back**, Ain't no towns or huntin' grounds or farms or anythin' for miles around. I'm plumb lost. And terribly vulnerable.

There is an eerie hush here. Not a tree makin' a whistle in the wind. Not a bird chirpin', or a fly buzzin. Solemn, insistent silence curated to captivate my attention in all its absence.

[* * *]

I still ain't rightly certain what went down back in Babel. But Whatever did go down, I gotta get back and face whatever accusations my neighbours and kin may have. It's the right and proper thing to do.

I should get going. Better just **pick a direction** and head back. How else you reckon you learn the mountain, if not by getting' lost and finding your way?

ACTION: *Lay Memories 2-2 through 2-12 in your midst. Glance at the codes, maybe even pass the Memories around. But **don't crack or open** them yet.*

Instead, open "ACT II: WHISPERS AND TALL TALES"

[DEEP BACK]

2-1

2-2 MELTWATER

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 2-3 and 2-9 now.
Add an X to the map near a stream of MELTWATER.*

The land was formed by rock risin' up and rain pourin' down. These creeks and rivers have cut their way down through the mountains for millions of years, the water never questioning the direction it flows in.

I stopped here on my way out. On one side, steep rock stand sentinel over the flow. On the other, wide-leafed trees drink through thick roots, spreadin' like infection through the mud and the water.

As I lay on my knees, trying to quench my thirst, I was rattled by something stalking through the underbrush, next to the creek.

I lifted my gaze, startled to see a deer stag eyein' me from the woods. Just a few paces away, standin' on two legs, with its one remainin' antler swinging every which way as it tried to find its balance.

It sounded like it called out. In a raspy, buzzing voice. Like something inside it tried its hand with the tongue of men, but failing.

I high-tailed it for the creek, the sludge graspin' at my feet and the stink of infection and venison heavy on my back.

As it took flight, I heard its bellows and felt its misshapen wobbling through the mud. I reached the safety of the water, and had a peek back. The stag was standing at the bank, mouth agape and eyes alight, with its front legs dangling, like broken branches on a rotting tree.

Then, the water carried me away.

f
s
r
i
f

2-2
] ALMTREET [

2-3 BIRCH TREE

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 2-8 and 2-2 now.
Add an X to the map where the BIRCH TREE withers.*

As I make my way back – or what I assume to be the direction of Babel – I come across a young birch tree. I recognize it by its risin' up from a depression in the ground, rottin' carcasses of various critters congregatin' as I draw nearer.

I can still see the reddened bark, but the fresh heads are gone from the tree now.

[* * *]

When I came by here the first time, the decomposin' head of some horned animal was suspended by a piece of rope in one of them branches. It just hung there, halfway rotted through and with some black liquid smeared all over the horns and the eyes, like a sore memory hung out to dry.

The head turned from side to side in the wind, slowly surveyin' its domain, and I took care to avoid its gaze.

On the ground near the tree, another head lay cleaved in two. Maybe a horse? It had been split open or sawed in half, the bone structure and vessels forming intricate labyrinths, from which the talented may glean pathology or prediction.

At that point, I was hardly surprised, hardly horrified. The flies had found their feasts, and I chose not to linger.

2-3
] EER]
THC
RIB]

2-4 SHELTER

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 2-10 and 2-11 now.
Add an X to the map where the SHELTER was built.*

I come upon a shack in the wilderness, hidden beneath loomin' conifers. Like a bloated spider in a verdant web.

An odd family, from somewhere beyond the mountains lived around here. A momma, her husband, her brother, and a son who might have been sired by either of the men.

The Brocas were tall, lanky and had almost see-through skin, with staring expressions and long fingers that they kinda didn't know how to use properly. They done long departed, so I took shelter there on my way to God knows where.

[* * *]

But in my fevered state, I could hear their long-gone voices, carryin' through the mist. Like the cackly gossip of crows, strikin' dark deals in the pines around us.

I tossed and turned. Sweatin', heart poundin', distorted, buzzing words hammerin' my brain like a woodpecker on a hollow tree.

Couldn't stand it. Preferring darkness to madness, I returned to the underbrush, leaving their inbred apparitions behind.

[[[0-B-D-G-M-A-0]]]

2-4

2-5 WRAITH

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 2-11 and 2-12 now.
Add an X to the map where the WRAITH presides.*

That's a little house or chapel or somethin' betwixt; just leanin' towards the rock in a place it ain't supposed to be. I'm still somewhere in the deep back, and ain't no one should live out here.

Rain's comin' down like nickels, and I'm shiverin' fierce, so I better make my way inside an' wait out this storm.

[* * *]

The inside looks like someone done combine a mining depot and witch coven all in one. Scrawlin's on the rock wall no Christian soul can read. Sharp knives and tools to excavate dirt and stone. Critter skulls, bloody twine, black lanterns and things I can't identify.

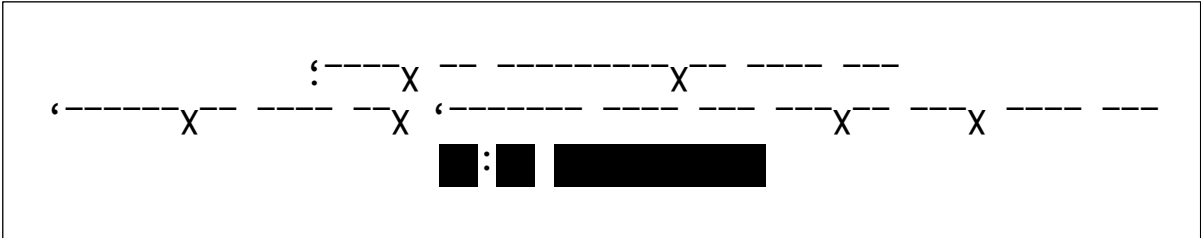
And somethin' worse.

[* * *]

At some point, I think I saw the thing at the altar, leafin' through the rotting pages of the Good Book. Some haint, the lingerin' malice of a witch done lived here, or

Either it done seen me an' decided I was welcome to stay in its little abode, or it don't recognize me as anything human or sentient no more.

As the storm passed an' I want to leave, the form freezes and turns its shapeless gaze in my direction. It's like the very air holds its breath, waiting for my move...



2-5

2-6 ■■■A■■■E■■■ER

I recall having a companion out here, least for some of the miles. Someone who knew the lay of the land, but still kept behind me all the while.

It called itself something, some name. **Passenger? Chatterer?** I got this faint-as-a-whisper recollection of it (He? She? They?), somehow hovering behind me, herding me forward or stalking me like a shadow. Talking to me in a deep, hollow buzzing, maybe even shieldin' me from the things that only they could see.

Like a native god, intrudin' into my mind.

It was familiar, like a face from from town, someone I know well. They spoke in the same manner as me, calmin' me with the same sayings Ma used to utter way back when.

I remember talkin' to 'em, feelin' safe and cozy an' all, even though I think they were wearing the antlered skull of some hefty critter perched on their head like a crown, and their garments hung on 'em like bed sheets on a fence post.

Just nudging me along, projectin' their sense of knowing the woods better'n anyone directly into my fevered mind.

[IAMTHE■■■A■■■E■■■ER]

Can't rightly say if and when that thing wandered off on its own path.

Maybe I just lost my vision of it when the haze and madness and muck cleared, an' I got back to talkin' and rememberin' again.

Maybe it is still around.

ACTION: *Add an X to the map where the ■■■A■■■E■■■ER arrived. And an X where it (maybe) departed.*

[[[B-U-Q-A-C-N-D-J]]]

2-6

2-7 MOUND

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 2-9 and 2-8 now.
Add an X to the map where the MOUND lies.*

This little mound seems too familiar to me. I came by here on my way out, while my mind had scrambled itself and I ran for some callin' in the unseen abyss of the woods.

When I passed the first time, there were lights flickerin'. I reckon I saw figures in the midst. Towerin' ashen folk, taller than myself. Not with limbs stretchin' longer, but with heads stacked on heads where their heads oughta be.

I don't think they saw me, or maybe they bided their time, followin' me once I'd moved on.

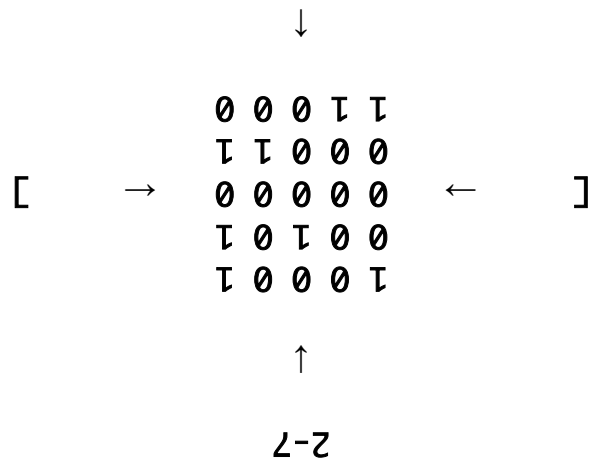
[* * *]

Whatever the object of their fascination, it was either long gone or unseen by my eyes as I come back here.

In the daylight, I went closer, findin' little markers on the rocks. There were scripts I couldn't read, runes that made no sense. Some of the markers looked like graves, with names that were English or Scandinavian, but they were washed out, tainted by unkind years and hard to read.

But proper graves, they oughta be pointin' East, as tradition dictates. Instead, them here's gathered in a circle, lookin' inwards at somethin' I can't figure.

I wonder who came all the way out here just to be buried in unhallowed ground?



2-8 BRIDGE

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 2-7 and 2-3 now.
Add an X to the map where an old BRIDGE stands.*

This here bridge stretches all into the mist, from one mountain to the next, it feels. Crossing deep water, just a trip, a scream, a splash and a sudden death below me.

Many remote structures like these were built back when coal was ample and sweat was cheaper than dirt. Men came, chasin' fortunes, but left with backs bowed and spirits shattered – if they left these mountains at all.

I came through here, alright. As I walk past the two oaks standin' vigil at the bridgehouse, it all comes back.

[* * *]

A voice called me from the bridge. A voice tryin' to sound feeble and helpless, hopin' I'd come out and fall to my death.

What I heard was something akin to my brother's voice, more than anything else. A voice so like his, repeatin' my own words back to be, as if tryin' to learn to be one of us.

I kept chattin' with it and walked backwards until I couldn't hear it no more. Like I was always told to do if the mist ever tried to lure me like that.

Then I turned and ran. 'Cause that there ain't no brother of mine, callin' my name and playin' tricks in the fog.

The only brother I ever had is supposed to be dead.

[[XNEZCA]]

2-8

2-9 EFFIGIES

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 2-2 and 2-7 now.
Add an X to the map where the EFFIGIES were found.*

I recollect them looming oaks of this grove, their ancient roots bustin' through the dirt like angry fists. I see the damp ashes from my fire in their midst.

And I remember what I found here.

[* * *]

Effigies. Small in stature, like children made from scratch. Just a few feet tall, supposed to be a boy and a girl, judging by their scant clothing.

I tore 'em apart, both of them. Their limbs were animal bone, bundled up with hay and twine. Hearts full of carved stone, and bandages around their chests to hold it all together.

I burned their remains. Paper, clothing, bandages, bits of bone. I even tried to burn them carved stones, although my head wasn't right, so I reckon it made sense to me at the time.

As I did so, I felt a presence. A larger one of them, a parent or guardian or someone needin' 'em for somethin'.

I fled, in the direction I'm trudgin' from now, I reckon. The presence didn't linger, or maybe I snapped out of it. Or maybe I was just jittery from hallucinations and thirst.

[* * *]

. . . Them stones are gone now.

I gone through the ashes and coal till my hands were black as sin. They ain't here. Somethin' done picked up their effigies' hearts, and I reckon some other bones and bandages gonna come alive one of these nights.

[[XCNLAKA]]

6-2

2-10 MINESHAFT

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 2-12 and 2-4 now.
Add an X to the map and write MINESHAFT.*

This is hardly a mineshaft no more. The rocks around it hint at rickety shacks put up by the companies, lost to the oppression of time and poverty.

Folks've gone missin' here, in recent times. I may be gettin' closer to Babel, cause I've heard whispers about this place, and I know why the mining company finally caved and rerouted their traffic.

I remember that I followed something into the mineshaft, maybe looking for answers? Believin' that I'd somehow find what I was looking for beneath the roots and rocks of this Earth?

Maybe it wasn't answers. Maybe it was just safety or shelter.

[* * *]

I remember looking down the shaft, feelin the presence of a thing full of anger and still considerin' going down there.

I remember holding a rusted shovel in my hands, my last line of defense. Somehow scaring off whatever is down there.

I swing the shovel in the near darkness. Hitting my mark, my victim retracts, and I ditch the shovel, not botherin' to stick around to see the effects and I leg it out of there with all my limbs and none of my sanity.

[MOUNTAINS
DIRECTION
UNFOLDED
EARTH
DUST
WITHIN
DOWNFALL
DOWNFALL
DEATH]

2-10

2-11 RESTRICTED

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 2-4 and 2-5 now.
Add an X to the map in a RESTRICTED area*

I'm not sure I came out this way. But I know this here part ain't supposed to be wandered into no more.

I was part of a searchin' crew out yonder, years back. We were lookin' for a logger who done strayed into the woods, heartbroken and all. Searched for four days until Sheriff called off the hunt. Would've died out here, said he. Probably did himself in anyway. Body never showed up.

Only a week later, we went looking for a postman who got lost on his way to Sinai Hollow.

No trace, looked for days. Did find his satchel and hat, hanging on a stump, like he sat down to rest and just fell backwards into thin air.

A month down the line, some kids from a secluded farm out here got snatched out of their bedroom at night; The dogs tried to lead us up a straight cliff, to the other side of the mountain. We kept lookin' for three weeks, but them kids were gone like mist off a smoldered campfire..

Sheriff closed off the forest, puttin' up signs sayin' the forest are restricted for reforestation or due to dangerous pitfalls or some such.

But he suspects the same as we all do, that them folks were all swallowed up by something intelligent out there, somethin' that ain't gonna be found.

[[[1-D-1-P-I-D-U-0-E-B]]]

2-11

2-12 RIVER

ACTION: *Destroy the unread letters 2-5 and 2-10 now.
Add an X to the map somewhere by the RIVER*

If this river is the one I think it is, it runs from Babel to here, quenchin' the thirst of some smaller hamlets along its journey. It'd be right pleasant if I could just mosey up the stream, but between undercurrents, waterfalls and sheer distance, I might as well just jump the cliffs and save the river the trouble of doin' me in.

Upriver, there've been baptisms for longer than you can remember. I even got baptized in the River as a young'un, like all my kind. Upriver is calm waters flowing robes, and all your family ready to holler "Hallelujah" after each dunk, one, two three times!

In the downriver hamlets, where I think I am now, however... Those towns would send the unwanted or the insane out to the river to cleanse themselves, and sometimes they came back all catatonic, sometimes they just stayed in the river hamlets and started a new life, livin' by their own sermons or even strikin' deal with the witches of the woods.

[* * *]

I think those hamlets are deserted now. They should be.

But where do you reckon all that madness went, when the river folk tried and cleanse 'emselves? Evil and chaos like that don't just disappear, it gotta go somewere...

Dark's creepin' in, and I better gulp down what I need, prayin' no drop of that unholy water seeps into my flesh.

[F B C U P K V H A N O X R D Q E J M L I G S T]
[]

2-12

ACT II: ACCEPTANCE

We're nearing the end of the line here. Hunger, exhaustion, hypothermia, madness. All got to me in the end.

I realize I ain't makin my way back to Babel, not in one piece as it is. Them haints that done followed me, lured me, ran from me... they gonna get the best of me afore sun rises. By now, y'all have widely different ideas on what's happened out here, and why.

Remember the first little notes y'all scrawled way back when? 'bout your own Memories of the woods? Y'all need to find them again, 'cause they's gonna help us spin four last tales.

Shuffle the notes around and trade until y'all have three notes ya neither wrote nor used for yer first Tale. Then pick either a Whisper that done been used earlier, or something from yer Voice.

Sit back, combine these four elements and conjure one last Tale; the tale of how I finally caved and collapsed in the woods.

Yer tales won't be retellin's of the other folks, not this time. This time, y'all got free reins to take the narrative where yer Voice pleases.

Don't worry about if yer tale goes with the other three. Go ahead and spin the ending you want to hear.

ACTION: *Divide the notes from the first exercise, so each player has three novel notes. If the note refers to modern inventions, reinterpret them to fit the age we are in now.*

Each player chooses a Whisper or an Inspiration from their voice and use that and the three notes as inspiration for a short tale ending with the collapse of our protagonist.

Tell your tales one at a time. Then read on.

How was that? Hearin' your own worldly memories moved to Appalachia, intermingled with horrors and haints and hopelessness?

Maybe one of you's right; maybe I did die on that mountain. Maybe this here's just my soul lingerin' on, talkin' to you. Or maybe I'm finally wide awake, and on my way home now?

[* * *]

To conclude the business of Babel, y'all need to get to ACT III. You probably learned to read them letters, an' figured that somethin' in the woods wanted me to *wait for death* on the last envelope. But that ain't the whole story to it.

See, the string of numbers you used to crack this here envelope is the last key to that mess.

Add the numbers "6/14/12" to the start of that one, for a total of **13 numbers**. Then go back to the ACT III envelope and use the letter wheel to make more sense of the words.

[* * *]

6/14/12/7/24/15/0/16/22/15/8/21/6

[WE ARE WATCHING]

/ / / / / / / / /

[[[T-E-N-Z-X-L-F-H-Y]]]

2-13

ACT III: COMPREHENSION

Well. We done tried gettin' me back to Babel.
Maybe we succeeded. Probably not.

Maybe I've been found. Teeth clattering, torn clothing,
bruises shown up outta nowhere and a mind that is about as
cohesive as a tool shed run through by a freight train.

Maybe my body was found, dismembered, strung up in a tree or
stuffed in a crack in the rocks. Chewn or frozen. Heavily
modified with twine, stone or antler.

Or maybe my kin has come to accept that I ain't never comin'
home, that the woods done swallowed me up like all the other
souls claimed by them mountains.

[* * *]

It's a mighty fine map you have there. Did you draw in all the
places I remembered in the last session? Good.
The map still needs some adjustments, though;

1: Put a little square somewhere. Write my name next to it. I
didn't tell you my name, did I? You figure it out.

***ACTION:** Do what he says.*

That is my last known location. Where I was finally found,
maybe where my satchel was discovered. Maybe where I became
worms and pale markers to warn others to not take this road.

2: Put 6-8 new X'es randomly on the map.
Maybe along my path. Maybe somewhere else in the woods.

***ACTION:** Stop reading. Update the map.
Return here when you are done.*

You've probably guessed by now. A lot more than you have
discussed happened to me out there.

The complete story can never be told, as I just can't remember. **Those memories are gone**, like haints in the mist. Each new X represents one of those Memories that we either done destroyed, or never had a chance at to begin with.

3: As you've gathered, to call Babel a town is generous. Make a small circle somewhere, where you would put a settlement. Near a mine, a creek or a few roads. This is town of Babel. Draw the circle now and write "Babel" next to it.

***ACTION:** Add Babel to the map.*

4: Y'know, you got that sense of scale all messed up. All wrong. Happens aplenty with with civilized city folks like yourself. Gotta set things straight, so go ahead and **multiply the number on your scale by 3**. That's more like it.

***ACTION:** Change the scale.*

The wilderness of Appalachia is vast. Vast beyond reckonin'. You can drive for days or hike your boots off for weeks and not lay eyes on a single soul. The mountains paths are trickier than a fox in a hen house, and the ground's been hollowed out in the search for coal and survival. Earth is treacherous. Roads are abandoned.

I wasn't lost for a day or two, as you might have reckoned. Naw, I was out there for weeks.

5: The mind craves conclusion. What happened to me out there?

Look at the markers for me and for Babel. Am I **found** somewhat close by? Or **gone** way out yonder, on the opposite side of the map? Or maybe I am just plain **dead**, my earthly remains somewhere easy to spot, but darn hard to reach.

For yer final conclusion, read **ACT III, CHAPTER 2: CONCLUSION**.

*Obtain wisdom, obtain understanding: thou shalt not forget,
and thou shalt not decline from the words of my mouth.*
Psalms 4:5

CHAPTER 1: COMPREHENSION

ACT III

ACT III: CONCLUSION

We have inklin's on what happened in Babel.

Why I ran.

We've uncovered Memories of the horrors out in the woods.

You each have a conclusion you believe in.

It's high time we decide what really went down.

ACTION: *Sum up the whole narrative.*

*Discuss with the others what you all
- not your Directions - believe.*

What were your theories?

Who were the villains?

Finally, read the last entry:

[A FINAL LETTER]

Thank you for your help.

CHAPTER 2 : CONCLUSION

ACT III

Welcome back.

I thank you again for taking the time to play “*The Road to Babel*”.

It is hard to conclude anything about your experience in advance. But I hope you felt challenged by the ciphers and entertained by discovering and interpreting the Memories of our poor protagonist.

Did you manage to create a cohesive narrative experience ?

The best stories – and the best horror – stem from the larger world around the narrative, rather than just the narrative itself. Therefore, I have asked you to destroy Memories, so you might ponder their contents, rather than satisfy your curiosity and be done with it.

You have just discussed what you think really happened.

Myself, however. I am not exactly sure. I don’t know if he ran from something, after something or he plain old lost his mind, due to toxic moonshine or bacteria in his brain. Or if there is – perhaps – some truth to the things I myself experienced in the woods?

“The Road to Babel” is inspired by dreams, ideas and scares I had when I traveled Appalachia alone in 2019. During my time in the mountains, I studied urban legends and local folklore, and I spent weeks camping in the Deep Back.

I have deliberately not given names or details to the entities our protagonist encounters. The entities in this game are unique to The Road to Babel, albeit inspired by Appalachian and Scandinavian folklore.

Tall, shadowy figures are abundant in Danish folklore. Shapeshifters find a home in Appalachia and in our deep fears and delusions. Witches are everywhere. So are neurological disorders. These entities are probably something betwixt all of them.

I’d be delighted to hear about your experience playing this game; please do not hesitate to reach out to me with your thoughts, theories, or paranormal experiences.

Until then, safe travels.

-B.

Read me last

[A FINAL LETTER]