



Pilgrim: A Game Chef 2010 Game

A Journey Through the Desert and the Soul

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The discussion thread at Praxis for this game is at <http://story-games.com/praxis/comments.php?DiscussionID=327>.

Prelude

Pilgrim is a story game born out of the theme and ingredients of the Game Chef 2010 design competition, and takes inspiration from Robert Silverberg's 1968 novella Nightwings, Aldous Huxley's 1931 novel Brave New World, and Joe McDaldno's 2009 story game Ribbon Drive.

The Premise

In a distant future earth, people undertake a pilgrimage through the vast global desert towards the city of Prees. Their goal is to be reskinned - to have their bodies and minds renewed, rejuvenated. The journey is a difficult one that lays one's soul bare. But to be reskinned, one's soul must be as barren and featureless as the global desert.

Will your soul be ready for reskinning?

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This game would not have been possible without all of you.

Setting

A World Ravaged By Time

It is the fourth age of humanity. None now remember how much time has passed between the first age of humanity and this fourth age. All that remains to remind us of the previous ages are the ruins of the once great civilizations of the past; the first age's pyramids in Geez and the aqueducts and Colosseum in Roum, the second age's towers in Tron and Prees, and the third's age's weather stations.

It was the weather stations of the third age that that brought on the global devastation that left the planet as one expansive desert, leaving only the great cities as the inhabitable areas of the world.

A New World Order

Thus it was that the fourth age was a time to rebuild the world as best as could be managed. The great cities were transformed into grand arcologies; huge oases in a vast global desert.

A new socialist world order was established. People were divided into castes based on genetic potential and temperament. Guilds were organized to manage the jobs to be done by all.

Many technologies of the previous ages were abandoned as troublesome; while others were retained as necessary tools for managing the new world order.

Over time, the rulers of the world sought to reinforce the caste system and re-established the use of genetic engineering and teratogenetic drugs to encourage babies of particular castes to develop with desirable traits.

Of Castes & Canon

Castes

In the early days of the fourth age, four castes were devised for the new social order. They are the Regnus - the ruling aristocrats, the Exetus - the managing elite, the Centrus - the skilled workers, and the Medrocius - the unskilled masses.

It wasn't long after the resurgence of genetic engineering and teratogenetic drugs that a new caste was created, the Bastus, for those with birth defects, mutants, and the infirm.

Canon

Social rules were needed to maintain the social order and regulate acceptable behavior between members of the same caste, and between members of different castes. These rules came in the form of the Canon.

The Canon was divided into four sections titled Audacity, Temper, Intimacy, and Indulgence.

The Book of Audacity deals with aspects of social status. The Book of Temper

concerns rights and expectations of remedy for personal transgressions. The Book of Intimacy details rules about love, sex, and relationships. The Book of Indulgence explains rights and privilege to wealth.

The Canon Condensed

The following is a brief overview of the Canon.

Audacity: You cannot rise above your caste; but you can fall to lower castes. Never believe yourself better than your caste dictates.

Temper: Do not exhibit anger, be it physical or emotional, towards those above your caste. You may deal with those below your caste as you see fit.

Intimacy: Relations with those within your caste is encouraged, but must be consensual. Desire no relations with those above your caste; but comply with all demands for relations from those above your caste. You may demand relations of any below your caste.

Indulgence: Expect the wealth and means due those of your caste; but expect nothing more. Do not request wealth or means above your caste from anyone. Do not give to those below your caste anything that is normally above their caste.

A Chance at Redemption

As in all civilizations with rigid rules and expectations, many simply cannot, or refuse to, live within the social boundaries set for them. They cross social boundaries, break taboos, and become burdened by secrets, guilt, and knowledge that would bring shame to themselves and others. However, in the city of Prees, the Skinners' Guild provides an opportunity for redemption and renewal; their mystical process rejuvenates the bodies, minds, and souls of those deemed worthy.

Alone in the world, however, the Skinners do not judge worth by caste or guild. They delve much deeper to find value in someone's existence. All are welcomed to attempt reskinning; but not all are able to successfully finish the process. Those that do win a new life; those that do not sometimes are lost within the process for all time, or worse die.

Character

Your character is a person burdened with guilt, secrets, or knowledge who has chosen to undertake the pilgrimage to Prees and seek reskinning.

Your character will be defined by a Caste, a Guild, three Talents chosen from those that define your Guild, two Burdens, and a brief description of your character as desired.

Caste

You and your fellow players will determine your castes by random draw. Every character's caste within the group will be unique.

Gather five cards numbered from one to five, with one representing the Regnus caste and 5 representing the Bastus caste. In order of player age, draw a card

at random to determine your character's caste.

Guild

Your character's guild represents their profession, the day to day work they perform to be a contributing member of society. As with everything, Guilds are organized by caste. Each caste is expected to join certain guilds.

Choose a guild from those available to your character's caste.

Talents

Talents represent aspects of your character that you can leverage towards avoiding undesirable circumstances and occurrences during play. The chosen guild defines the Talents available to your character.

Having chosen a guild, select three Talents from the guild's talent list.

Burdens

Burdens are the most important part of your character; and as such, they are the one thing part of your character left entirely up to you to define.

You define a Burden by noting which book of the Canon applies to the Burden, and the other character involved in its circumstances. The actual circumstances of the Burden will be discovered during play.

Characterization

Finally, add a little added description of your character - as much or as little as you wish. Physical description, demeanour, and so forth. Just don't lock down the description too tightly as to inhibit play.

The Guilds of the New World Order

The Regnus Guilds

Monarchs

The Monarchs' guild represents the rulers of the cities, and their surrounding regions.

- **Monarch Talents:**

Regents

The Exetus Guilds

Scholars

Rememberers

The Centrus Guilds

Planners

Surveyors

Ecclesiasts

The Medrocius Guilds

Servitors

Fabricators

Cultivators

The Bastus Guilds

Transients

Changelings

The Pilgrimage

The Journey Begins

The characters may begin play in a city, or already in the midst of their pilgrimage. Take some time to introduce the characters and establish the initial circumstance the characters find themselves in.

The player whose character is of the highest caste start play as the active player, all other players are supporting players during the active player's turn, with the player whose character is of the lowest caste becoming the first supporting player. The supporting players will be referred to as Player A, Player B, and so on from here on.

Play occurs in rounds, with each player having a turn as the active player in order of highest caste character to the lowest.

During each active player's turn, supporting players take turns asking questions and presenting difficult choices to the the active player. Supporting players do so in order of lowest to highest caste.

Burdens Exposed

Player A begins the active player's turn by asking a leading question. The active player responds to that question by framing a scene, in the process deciding which Burden is being explored.

Player B asks a follow-up question that is an undesirable or difficult choice for the active player, marking use of a Talent while doing so. The active player must now make a choice; accept one of the two choices presented by Player B, or use a Talent to present and choose a third, more desirable option.

If the active player chooses one of the choices provided by Player B, she places a token on her character's Burden. If, on the other hand, she uses a Talent to avoid that choice, she places a die on the Burden.

The active player continues to narrate the scene based on the choice made.

If there is a player C and a player D they each take their turn as described for player B.

After the last supporting player has taken his turn exposing the active player's Burden, the active player ends the scene and the player with the next lower caste character becomes the active player.

The City of Prees and The Skinners' Guild

Once any character has fully used all her Talents, the characters' journey is nearing its end. They have reached Prees and the Skinners' Guild; the endgame begins.

Each player in usual active player order now determines if the character's Burdens were lifted during his pilgrimage.

For each Burden, roll the dice that were placed upon it.

If the results of all the dice are lower than the number of tokens on the Burden, that Burden has been lifted from the character.

If only some of the dice are lower than the number of tokens on the Burden, then the Burden has only been partially lifted; but it the remaining shadows of that Burden are not grave enough to affect the reskinning process.

If no dice are lower than the number of tokens on the Burden, the weight of it remains on the character's soul and the reskinning will fail.

Finish the game in turn by describing the final outcome of your character's reskinning, whether it's successful or not.