The background features a stylized landscape. The top half is a bright orange sky with a subtle, textured pattern. Below the sky is a range of green mountains with sharp, pointed peaks. The bottom half of the image is a solid green area where the title is located.

QUESTMASTER GUIDEBOOK

YOU ARE NOW THE QUESTMASTER.

What you are about to play is a Storygame. In it you are going to make up the details that surround and shape the path of a young Apprentice on a quest through a magical forest called the Mystwood. This book is for explaining the role of the Questmaster, the player that will imagine the Mystwood.

The Questmaster's primary role is to describe a rich and mysterious environment for the other player to explore. The Quest can be to

reach a certain Destination, or to collect a specific thing or things. The route is made of strange places that you're going to make up from the prompts on the cards. *You will describe the details of each place, ask questions, sometimes directly to the Apprentice as a character, sometimes just for input from them as your fellow player.*

To do this, you're going to describe each part of the Mystwood with romantic detail, making each location something of your own. You're also going to play the role of any strange creatures or denizens of the Mystwood as they cross

paths with the Apprentice. The best ways to do this is to draw from any color, pattern, song, or memory you find to be beautiful, and to ask questions of the Apprentice, using their answers to make the world more vibrant and custom tailored to the experience you're both sharing. As you play through the Mystwood, reincorporate things you have already imagined. Build themes, and then weave those themes throughout the setting.



Of the Apprentice

The Apprentice is a student of magic, learning from a Wizard or Witch in a lone Tower somewhere safe and peaceful near to the Mystwood. Perhaps, in a clearing amidst the strange forest itself. Their Master is a wise and capable practitioner of magic, and the Apprentice is a willing student. Their relationship is one of mutual respect, despite the hierarchy of their roles. Beyond this setup the rest of the details are up to the other player to conjure. As you play, ask about the details of this master in the Tower.

The reason this Apprentice is taking a journey alone into a very strange and sometimes dangerous place is different each time you sit down to play. In every setup the Wizard is sending the Apprentice with confidence in their capability and trust in their resourcefulness. But where they must go, and what they must do, is based on what kind of Quest you choose to play through.

Your agenda as the Questmaster is not to stop the Apprentice from succeeding, but to illuminate the way, to fill it with wonder and danger and magic. No matter what combination of cards come

up the Apprentice will eventually make their way home. What you're playing to find out is the shape of those magical places, the new friends and lessons found along the way. And, most importantly, all the rich details of *being in the Mystwood* – what the forest looks like, what the people there are like; the weather, light, sounds and music. The details of this magical place are yours to conjure, so create themes, marvel at lost history, and mix laughter, wonder and eeriness into a rich reality for the Apprentice. *The journey is much more important than the destination.*

Of Testing the Apprentice

The Apprentice has three Traits
– *Steel*, *Stars* and *Flame*.

Each Trait is a measure of their confidence and demeanor related to one element of their personality, capability and virtue.

Steel is their courage, physical prowess and resolve.

Stars represent their knowledge and cunning, what they've learned and what they can discern.

Their *Flame* is a measure of how they use their words, empathy, and how likeable they are.

Having more dice in a Trait

means the Apprentice feels more confident and capable in that aspect of who they are. The less they have, the more doubt, weariness and uncertainty they feel.

Some cards will turn into moments where you'll be wondering what happens next. We roll the dice to make answering that question more fun. Each Test results in Success or Failure, but you're in charge of turning that into a storyworthy moment.

Some cards simply say "a Test of Fate" is required, this means that you will ask the Apprentice what they want to do about the situation

and how they describe their actions will determine which Trait to Test.

Passing through a maze could be one Test of Stars to see if the Apprentice successfully navigates the passages with their logic, or it could be a series of short tests at each turn to see if they are finding their way or only getting lost.

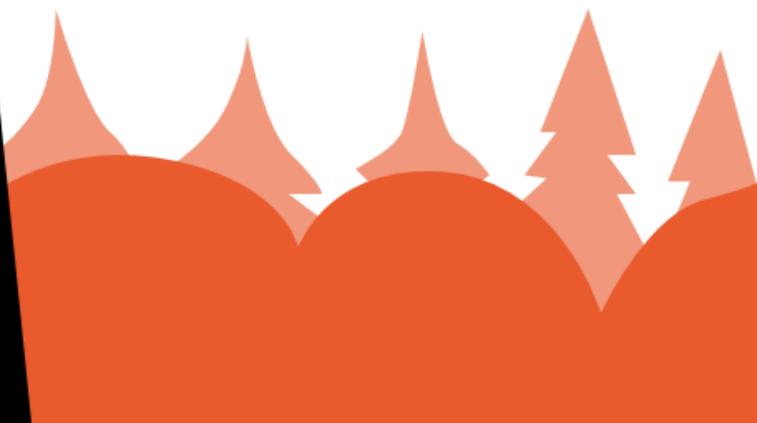
When the Apprentice wants to attempt something tricky or challenging, ask them how they are going to handle it. If they want to attempt something bold or physically dangerous, tell them to Test their Steel. If they attempt to overcome using their cunning,

education or past experience, tell them to Test their Stars. If they are just trying to talk their way out of it, or anticipate someone, tell them to Test their Flame. In some circumstances you can't Test a Trait that doesn't make sense. You can't talk a rope-bridge into being stronger, and you can't cut down a tree with a clever riddle. But you do have every right to play with the Traits loosely; it's fair to say you can Test your Stars to cross a treacherous rope bridge by being cautious and slow; or you could Test your Flame to talk someone into cutting a tree down for you.



If a Test calls out a specific Trait, you don't have to adhere to that judgment rigidly.

Any time the Apprentice comes up with an approach to passing a Test that is fun for both players, simply use the Trait that makes the most sense.



The Dice

A Test is simple: The Apprentice rolls at least one die from the Trait they are using. Each Trait starts with 5 dice to use, and the Apprentice can roll as many of them as they want. *All the even numbers they roll are called Hits* – the more they roll the better they succeed. *All the odd numbers are called Misses*. If they roll as many or more Hits as Misses they get their dice back and they've passed the Test. If they roll more Misses than Hits they barely manage to succeed, but they discard all of their odd dice in doing so. If they roll

only odd numbers, they have no choice, they have failed, and they loose all the dice that they rolled, and the situation gets worse for the Apprentice, but more fun for their character.

If the Apprentice rolls 3 or more Hits on a Test, that means their attempts work out even better than they could have guessed. Expound upon what this means by adding beneficial details to the results, such as good timing, an exaggerated result, or a lucky discovery.

Gifts and Flaws

Each Trait has a Gift – this marks some exceptional skill, talent or knowledge of the Apprentice. When the Apprentice is doing something that would be made easier by their Gift, they are allowed to re-roll all of their Misses once. This checks off that Gift, meaning it cannot be used again until it is unchecked.

The Apprentice might also acquire Flaws: something that holds them back. When the Apprentice chooses to roll their Flaw, they re-roll all of their Hits once, and can then uncheck a Gift.

Of the Cards

The Mystwood is conjured from paths and locations, and, occasionally, by moments of sudden danger. When the Apprentice travels the many strange places, searching for their Destination or next objective, you will flip over a card from one of these decks: *Green Cards are the Pathways*, these are the roads and directions throughout the Mystwood where the Apprentice chooses their stading. *Orange Cards are Wildwoods*, strange and unpredictable places within the Mystwood where arcane creatures and characters dwell

or gather. And *Black Cards are Darkhollows*, dangerous locations that reveal unsettling encounters.

Each card starts with two parts: The *Summary* is simple prose to set the stage in your mind, this is written at the top in italics. The *Elements* are a bullet list of evocative words that are meant to be springboards for your imagination, so you can add details to the scene and make it your own. Elements are optional, you must follow your own creativity first.

Green, Orange and Black cards also set up Scenes or Trials that will emerge while playing that card.

Scenes are just opportunities for the Apprentice to Test a Trait in some way, while you describe the strange opportunities and interactions with the denizens of the Woods. The Apprentice can choose to engage a Scene, or keep moving.

Trials are not so easy. When a Trial is listed on a card it means something is blocking or altering their path, threatening them, or creating a situation they can't avoid. To continue along their way an Apprentice must roll at least one Test against a Trial.

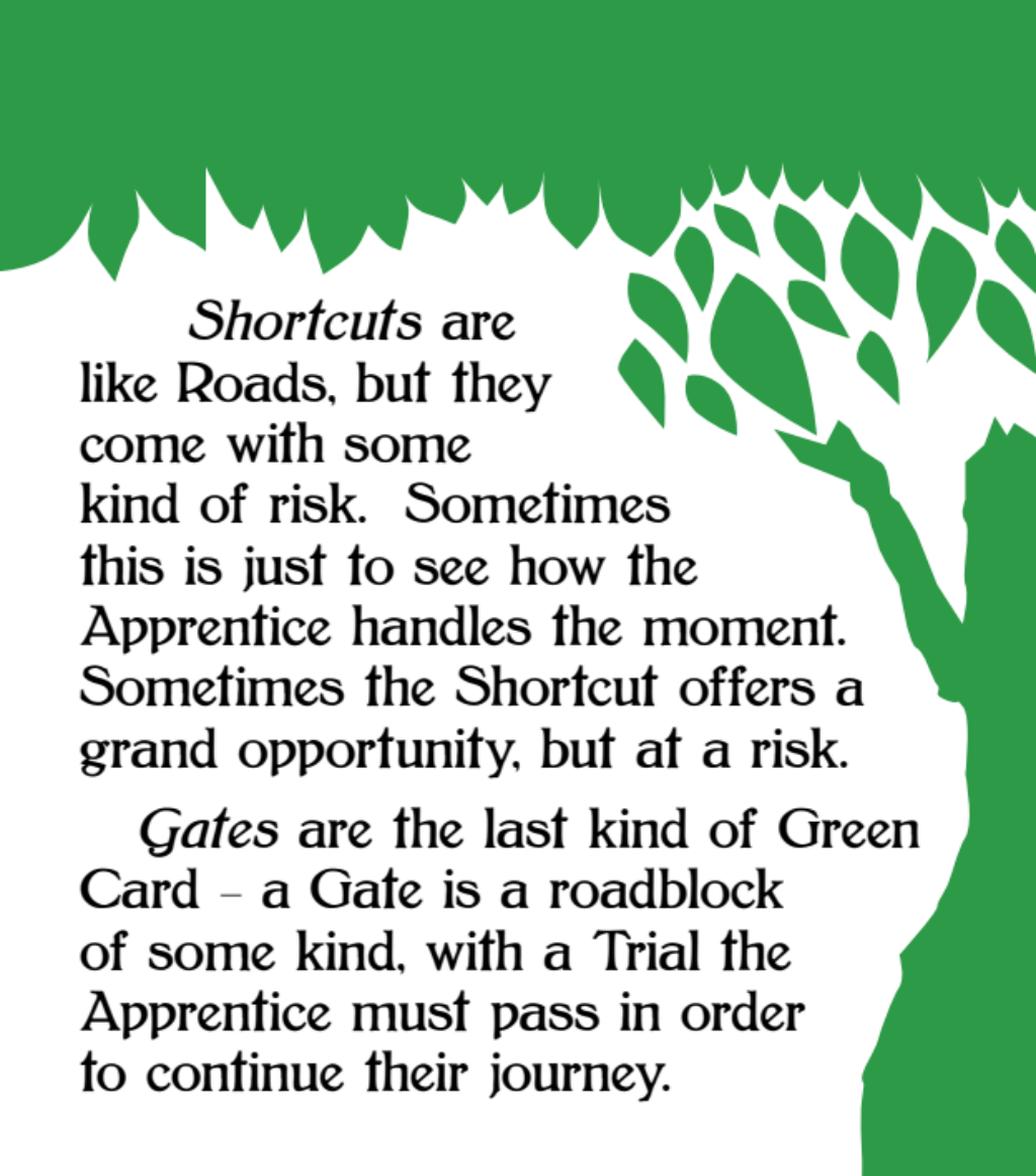
It's up to you to decide when a card is "finished," and when a Test

or series of Tests are completed. The Trials are not there to halt the Apprentice, but to add detail and mystery to what's happening. Use each scene not to weary or wear out the other player, but to draw out what is interesting about their Apprentice character, and to offer them insight into your imagined version of the Mystwood. Never 'trap' them on a card, or bar their way forward if it isn't interesting for the both of you. Only roll the dice if you have something interesting to find out.

The Green Deck: Pathways

Pathways are divided into Roads, Shortcuts and Gates.

Roads are safe passages with no threats or established Tests. For these cards the Exits will simply be named and listed, and with them any bonuses or alterations to the Traits the Apprentice has. Do not tell the Apprentice about the bonuses associated with an Exit, just describe the scene, and let the Apprentice choose based on their character and the nature of the moment. This is also a great place to ask questions about the world, the Apprentice, and their Master.



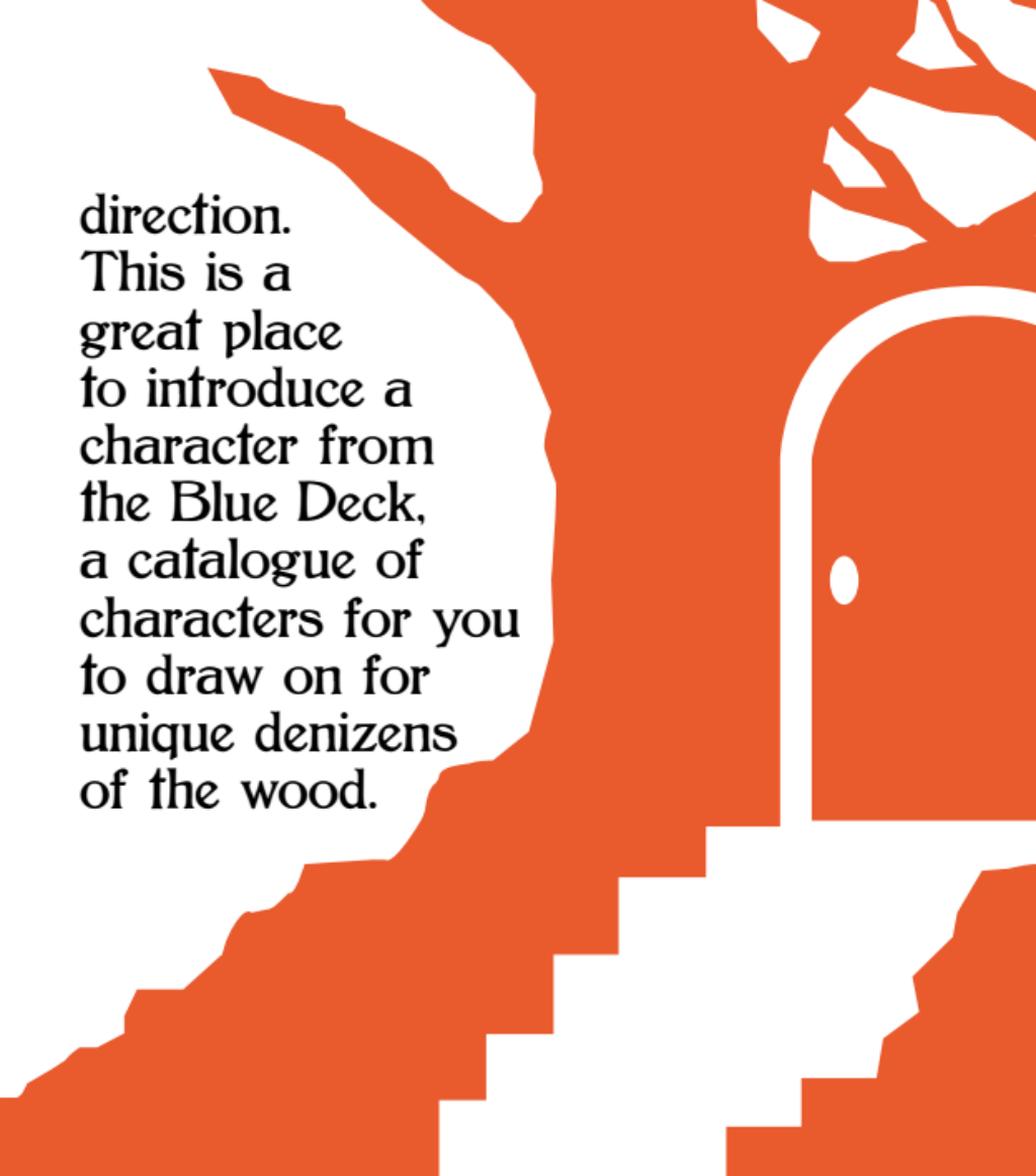
Shortcuts are like Roads, but they come with some kind of risk. Sometimes this is just to see how the Apprentice handles the moment. Sometimes the Shortcut offers a grand opportunity, but at a risk.

Gates are the last kind of Green Card – a Gate is a roadblock of some kind, with a Trial the Apprentice must pass in order to continue their journey.

The Orange Deck: Wildwoods

The Mystwood is filled with strange and inexplicable homes, camps, hovels and hideaways. Some places are safe – these are Restpoints. Whenever the Apprentice rests they can restore any Trait below 5 dice back up to 5 dice, or remove one Red card. These havens draw on serenity, beauty and wonder.

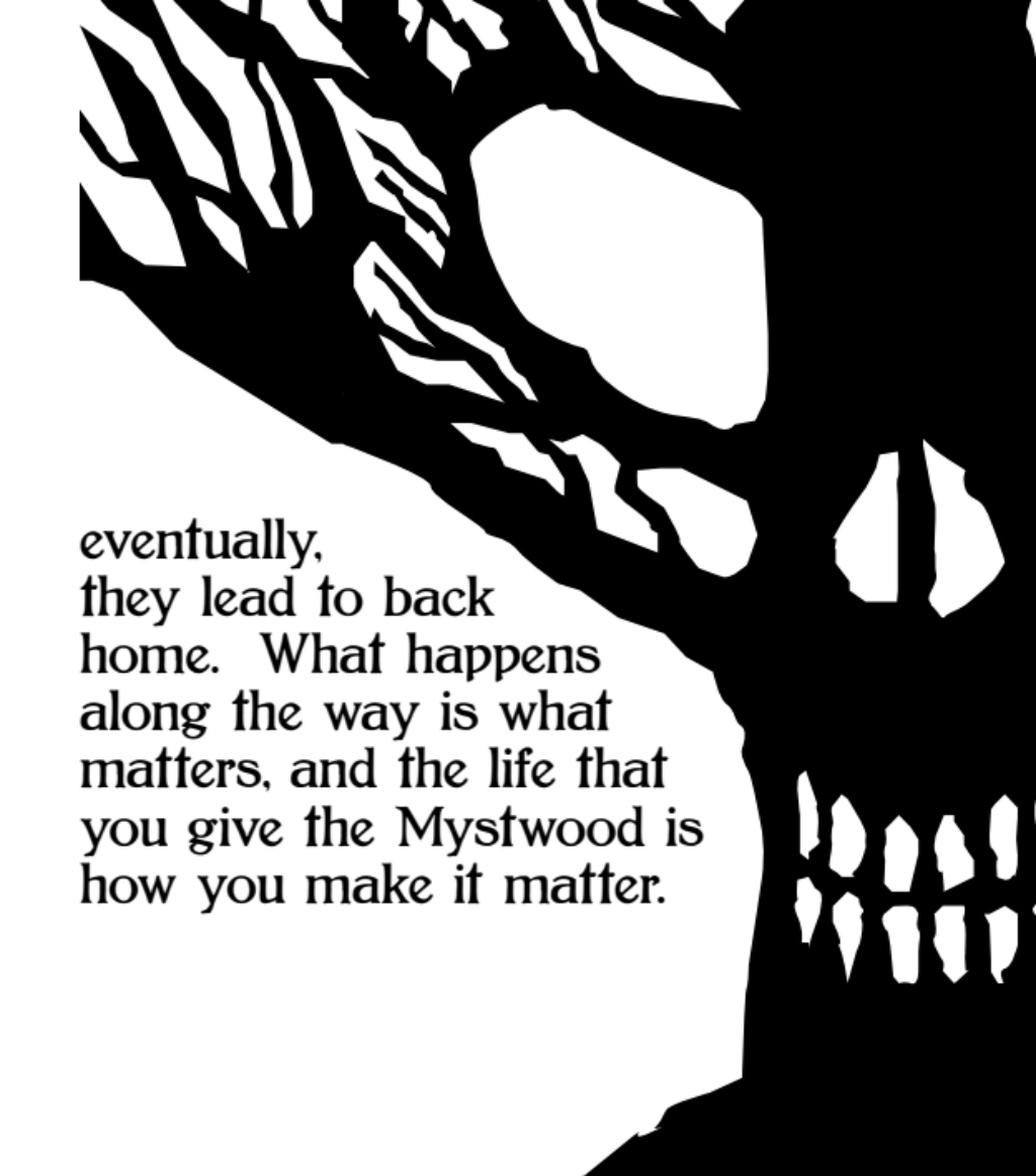
Wildwoods only have Trials and Scenes, which are themed around the doings of that location. Some of these are trivial. Some are harrowing. It's up to you, as the Questmaster, to give them life and



direction.
This is a
great place
to introduce a
character from
the Blue Deck,
a catalogue of
characters for you
to draw on for
unique denizens
of the wood.

The Black Deck: Darkhollows

When things go especially bad, dangerous or just unlucky, the Apprentice might cross into a darker part of the Mystwood. These are all drawn from the Black Deck. The Black Deck is always a frightful or unwelcoming place, sometimes with dangers to escape or overcome, sometimes with unsettling sights or strangers to endure. In no circumstance can any card lead to the Apprentice being killed or permanently stopped. It can lead to wounds, scars, horrible memories or flaws. But each card only leads to another, and



eventually,
they lead to back
home. What happens
along the way is what
matters, and the life that
you give the Mystwood is
how you make it matter.

The Red Deck: Harm

Red cards are misfortunes that happen to the Apprentice. Each of these cards are for the Apprentice player to draw, keeping them until they are to be played or discarded.

Red Cards could be anything from a serious wound, to simply re-describing the how the Apprentice looks. Once the card is in play, however it should be explained in the fiction you imagine.

Describe how the results of a Red card emerge in your fiction, but always feel free to dial it to the kind of story you want to tell.

The Purple Deck: Fortunes

The Purple Deck has friends, treasures, secrets and spells for the Apprentice to discover along the way. When things go well for the Apprentice they get to draw from this deck, keeping the card until it is used or discarded according to its rules. Some cards might require a draw from the Blue deck to detail how they work.

Just like Red cards, try to explain where and how these boons come into the fiction, make it a part of the story, not just a part of the system. Have them shape the tale.

The Blue Deck: Characters

The Blue deck is just a stack of named creatures and characters that might show up in the Mystwood. When you need inspiration for a new character, or when a card calls for a stranger to appear and you want it to have good details, draw from the Blue deck. These characters each come with a description, and most come with some kind of ability that could aid the Apprentice. It's not necessary for an important character to have a Blue card, this entire deck is just a suggestion.

Bonus Hits

If a rule offers "Bonus Hits" this means that the Apprentice adds those Bonus Hits to the appropriate Test when they roll. The Apprentice makes their roll as usual, but then counts those extra Hits on top of their roll, just as if extra dice had rolled more evens.

Reward Dice

Whenever the Apprentice rolls more than 3 Hits on a Test of Fate, they gain Reward Dice. For every 2 Hits higher than 3 Hits, they gain another Die in that Trait.

Whimsy and Style

This game is inspired by the whimsical feel of Brian Froud, Jim Henson and Hayao Miyazaki. Movies like *Labyrinth* and *Spirited Away* are the source. So don't feel like you've gotta stick to that, but there's no system for gunfights and dragon slaying. This is a quiet game, with a focus on wonder.

As you play, think of the things that you find beautiful about nature, life, traveling, meeting new people, animals, adventures, nightfall, campfires, songs, memories, weather and old friends. Breath all that in, and then breath it into your game.

Beginning

To begin, find your Questmaster sheet and the first Orange Card titled *At the Edge of the Mystwood* – read the title and opening description outloud, and then ask the Apprentice the questions listed. If you have any other questions always feel free to ask them. If you ever find you're short on good ideas, ask the Apprentice what they think.



