



A SMALL PIECE OF THE SUN

a roleplaying game about the theft of fire

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It is a dark, cold, hungry time. The First People are sick unto death. Their cousin, Coyote, hears their lamentations and wishes to grant them succor. He knows a place to find the cure to the ills that plague them. He can bring them a small piece of the sun.

But the Elemental Totems do not wish for **Coyote** to succeed; should he bring fire down from the mount the balance of the elements would forever be thrown off. Yet despite their abhorrence of his endeavor, **Armadillo**, **Beaver** and **Crow** are bound by sacred law to aid Coyote if he follows the ancient rituals. But can such a trickster ever really follow any such edicts? If he fails to, the First People are surely doomed.

But even if he succeeds the First People may be doomed. **Fire** is a dangerous gift, one suited both to create and destroy. If Coyote lets his foolishness outweigh his wisdom he may doom the First People even as he saves them.

Dramatis Personæ

COYOTE is cousin to the First People, but he is not one of their kind.
He is cousin also to the Totems, but neither is he one of their kind.
He occupies the space between. His feet span borders.
He is both foolish and wise.

ARMADILLO has dominion over the earth and its creatures.
He is the mountains that rise in the South.
He defines boundaries, between people and within them, as well as between worlds.
He provides safety to those who seek it, and takes vengeance against those who steal it.

BEAVER has dominion over the water and its creatures.
He is the rain that falls in the West.
He is the steward of creating and those who create.
He remains steadfast and blesses those who persevere.

CROW has dominion over the air and its creatures.
He is the wind that blows from North.
He is the judge of the sacred law and its enforcer.
He is the patron of change and the enemy of stagnancy.

FIRE is the spark of creation and the pyre of destruction.
He is the sun that rises in the East.
He is energy and motion.

Coyote seeks to steal fire from the mountain peak where it is jealously guarded by the Fire Beings. He uses his Wisdom, his Folly and – above all – his Tricks to defeat the Obstacles laid before him by the Totems. All the while Fire watches and remembers each instance of Coyote’s foolishness, for there will be consequences to every action.

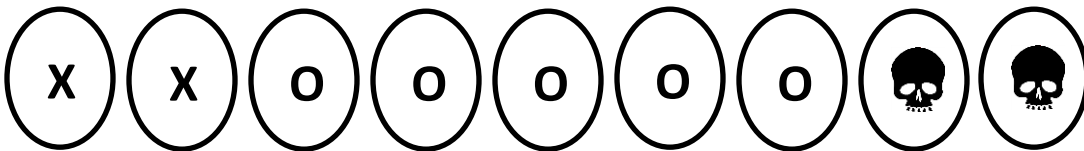
Materials

You will need:

- These rules
- 4 other people (friends preferable)
- 9 flat stones (see ALTERNATE RESOLUTION MECHANICS if stones prove problematic)
- 5 tokens of some sort for Trick Tokens and a bag or box in which to hide them
- One copy each of
 - Coyote Character Sheet
 - Armadillo Character Sheet
 - Beaver Character Sheet
 - Crow Character Sheet
 - Fire Character Sheet
- One or more copies of pages 2 & 3 of this text (more makes set up faster)

Before Play

0. Paint your stones – two should have Xs on one side only (for Folly Stones), five should have Os on one side only (for Wisdom Stones) and two should have Skulls on one side only (for Harm Stones).



1. Make sure each player (including you) has read the copies of pages 2 & 3. Whoever is going to play Fire should read this book in its entirety.
2. Let each player choose a character. As the owner of this text, ***you may not choose Coyote*** (in fact, I recommend you play Fire). Furthermore, ***do not let Coyote’s player look at any of the gods’ character sheets***. No matter how good a person might be at separating character knowledge and player knowledge, the temptation to alter play based on one’s knowledge of the gods’ particular likes and dislikes would be very, very strong.

Playing the Game

The game begins in Narrative Play. The three Totems set the scene and describe what lies before Coyote as he begins to scale the forbidden mountain. Coyote describes his own actions. Narrative play continues until one of the three Totems decides to put an Obstacle before Coyote. This Obstacle can be anything thematically appropriate for the given Totem.

Examples:

Beaver wishes to hinder Coyote and so has a river flow forth before him.
Armadillo wishes to hinder Coyote and so has the earth split before him.
Crow wishes to hinder Coyote and so has a raging storm arise before him.

When a Totem raises an Obstacle, Coyote may choose to **use a Trick Token to avoid the obstacle** before it is fully deployed. Coyote then narrates how his cunning Trick allowed him to do so.

Alternately, Coyote may choose to **attempt to overcome the Obstacle**. He then throws the Stones to determine the outcome. Coyote *starts* with three Wisdom Stones (the O Stones) and he always throws two Folly Stones (the X Stones). If Coyote is risking minor injury, he also throws a Harm Stone (the Skull Stones). If he is risking major injury, he throws two. Coyote grabs the appropriate Stones and throws them down on the table (note: be sure the person who owns the table is OK with you throwing stones at it).

Coyote succeeds with Wisdom if there are more Os than Xs. **Coyote narrates** how his great wisdom has allowed him to succeed.

Coyote succeeds with Folly if there are more Xs than Os. **Coyote narrates** how his foolishness has allowed him to succeed. **Fire notes** Coyote's successful action on the Owe List.

Coyote fails if there are equal numbers of Xs and Os showing, including zero of each. **The Totems narrate** how Coyote's action fails.

Coyote suffers Harm if a Harm Stone shows Skull side up. When Coyote suffers harm he acts more rashly and less wisely. Therefore his **number of Wisdom Stones is reduced** by one if one Skull shows. If two Harm Stones show Skull side up, Coyote's Wisdom is reduced by two to a minimum of zero. (For how to increase Coyote's Wisdom Stones see "Petitioning the Totems.") Harm can occur on any of the three above results. **The Totems narrate** how the Harm befalls Coyote.

In addition to using his Trick Tokens to avoid an obstacle, **Coyote may also use a Trick Token to flip a Stone of any type in any throw**. If he wishes, he may play multiple Trick Tokens and flip a corresponding amount of Stones in the same throw. However, once Coyote is out of Trick Tokens he is out; there is no way of acquiring any more.

Examples:

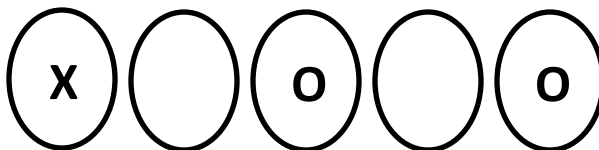
Armadillo has summoned a Stone Giant to waylay Coyote on his quest. Coyote decides that he will make a wager with the Giant that he will be able to lift more boulders than the Giant can.

Coyote succeeds with Wisdom

Coyote throws one X and two Os.

He narrates his actions: Coyote

lets the giant lift first, all the while taunting him and asking if that's all he can lift. When the Giant has lifted five boulders at once and is swaying unsteadily, Coyote runs past the over encumbered hulk on his way up the mountain.

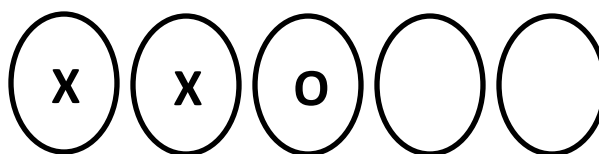


Coyote succeeds with Folly

Coyote throws two Xs and one O.

He narrates his actions: Coyote

lets the Giant lift first, but the Giant insists the weakling dog go first. Coyote tries and tries but cannot lift a single boulder. However, while he is pawing at it he manages to unearth enough of the soil beneath the rock that it begins to roll and slams right into the Giant's shins, knocking him down long enough for Coyote to scramble past. Fire writes down "Accidentally started a rock rolling," on the Owe List.

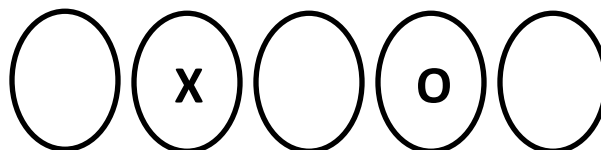


Coyote fails

Coyote throws one X and one O.

The Totems narrate his actions:

Just as in the first scenario, Coyote attempts to fool the Giant into picking up more than he can hold. The difference is that with Coyote's failure the Giant notices him attempting to run past and drops his five boulders down right in Coyote's path! Coyote's next throw will almost certainly have at least one Harm Stone added to it.



Banes and Boons

As Coyote goes about his quest to bring fire to the First People his actions are sure to alternately please and anger the Totems watching over him. These emotions are not simply the mere whims of the great spirits; they have real and palpable consequences for both Coyote and the First People he seeks to aid.

On each of the Totems' character sheets is a list of things that displease the Totem – Banes – and a list of things that please them – Boons. **Whenever Coyote commits one of these actions, the player playing the Totem marks it down with a check in the corresponding box.** When Coyote petitions that

Totem for aid, the Banes and Boons checked will either provide Coyote with a worse or better likelihood of having his petition granted.

But how is Coyote to know if his actions are delighting or angering the Totems? There are **Signs**; there will always be Signs. On each of their respective character sheets the Totems are provided with examples. Coyote must divine their will without this help.

Petitioning the Totems

At any point in play, Coyote may turn to the Totems and petition them for assistance. He may ask them to remove an Obstacle (one of their own or of another Totem), to grant him a divine plan, to provide him with shelter or anything else his sly little brain might think of.

When Coyote petitions a Totem for assistance that **Totem throws stones** to determine Coyote's worthiness. To do so the **Totem throws three stones** (of any type). **For each Boon** the Totem has bestowed upon Coyote, add one stone. **For each Bane** the Totem has bestowed upon him, subtract one stone. Also subtract one stone for **each previous time** Coyote has petitioned that particular Totem.

One icon showing means the Totem must **partially grant** Coyote's petition.

Two icons showing means the Totem must **fully grant** Coyote's petition.

Three or more icons showing means the Totem must **go beyond Coyote's petition** and alleviate a level of his Harm by **adding a Wisdom Stone** (up to five maximum).

Examples:

Coyote petitions Beaver to help him cross a wide and raging river. He has pleased Beaver twice and angered him once. This is his first petition to Beaver, so Beaver throws four Stones.

Base Number 3	+	Number of Boons 2	-	Number of Banes 1	-	Previous Petitions 0	=	Total Stones 4
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If Beaver throws **one icon**, he provides Coyote with a hollow reed through which to breathe while swimming the river. Coyote will need to add one Harm Stone to any throw he makes to cross the river.

If Beaver throws **two icons**, he provides Coyote with a lily pad on which to float across. Coyote need not throw any stones to cross.

(continued)

If Beaver throws **three or more icons**, he sends out his personal emissaries to tow Coyote across on the lily pad while fish leap from the river and make a tasty, mobile buffet for our canine friend. He recovers a level of Harm and gains (or regains) a Wisdom Stone.

In addition to using his Trick Tokens to avoid an obstacle or on his own throws, **Coyote may also use a Trick Token to flip one or more Stones in a petition throw.** As before, one Trick Token may turn one Stone, two may turn two and so on.

The Narrative Arc

This game consists of three chapters and a coda.

In **Chapter One**, Coyote ascends the forbidden mountain, traversing Obstacles thrown before him by the Totems and attempting not to anger them in the process.

In **Chapter Two**, Coyote devises a plan and steals fire from the mysterious Fire Beings. While the Totems can participate in this chapter, it is run by the player who is playing Fire and the information on how to run this chapter is included on Fire's character sheet. No peaking!

In **Chapter Three**, Coyote flees down the mountainside, clinging desperately to the fire he has stolen while the Fire Beings tail him in hot pursuit (Editor's note: Sorry).

In the **Coda**, the ramifications of Coyote's theft of fire on the First People's nation are narrated. The player who is playing Fire will lead this section as well, but everyone should feel free to chip in when the spirit moves them. This is the big finale, so be sure to go out with a bang and not with a whimper!

Questions and Answers

Q: My character sheet says I can summon a _____ (Wampus Cat, Bag-Owl, Lightning Snake, etc.) and I have no idea what that is. What should I do?

A: Just make it up. Odds are no one else knows what a Wampus Cat is, either, but if you keep in mind the mythological/mystical flavor of the game and keep it awesome, no one will complain.

Q: Wait a minute, so... is our trickster friend Coyote humanoid or canine?

A: Yes.

Q: Is it wrong for the Totems to set up Obstacles so that Coyote is likely to do something to earn himself a Bane?

A: Who am I to tell you if something like that is wrong? *You're* the mythical being here. If Coyote is being tricky, why can't you? Just remember not to overdo it; a stew with only one ingredient is pretty bland.

Q: Cool, so can I fulfill Coyote's petitions in a super-tricky-devious way?

A: If your test of worthiness came up with two icons or better, I would be wary of doing this. Totems are bound by Sacred Law to respect an honorable petition. On the other hand, if Coyote straight-facedly says "Make me a turkey sandwich," how could you stop yourself from filling that request oh-so-literally?

Remember, although **the characters** Armadillo, Beaver and Crow may be quarreling with **the character** Coyote, **the players** of the Totems are **working together** with **the player** of Coyote (and of Fire, as well) to create an exciting, fun and interesting time for all parties involved. If Coyote fails to steal fire that does not mean that the Totems "won." The only way to "win" this game is to have fun playing it. If you're doing something that's stopping people from having fun, stop. You're ruining it and you're not likely to be invited back.



Conflict Resolution Flowchart

GAME STARTS

ON ANY THROW: Coyote may play a Trick Token to **turn over any type of Stone**, be it his throw or a Totem's throw. This can be done multiple times per throw.

Narrative play

Totems **describe scene**.
Coyote **describes action**.
Totems **note Banes and Boons** while giving **Signs** to Coyote.

Coyote petitions a Totem

Coyote may ask **any of the three Totems** for assistance.

Totem throws stones

To determine Coyote's worthiness **the Totem throws three stones** (of any type). **For each Boon** the Totem has bestowed upon Coyote, add one stone. **For each Bane** the Totem has bestowed upon him, subtract one stone. Also subtract one stone for **each previous time** Coyote has petitioned that particular Totem.

One icon showing

The Totem must **partially grant** Coyote's petition.

Two icons showing

The Totem must **fully grant** Coyote's petition.

Three icons showing

The Totem must **go beyond Coyote's petition** and alleviate a level of his Harm by **adding a Wisdom Stone** (up to five max).

Coyote may use a Trick

Coyote **places a Trick Token down** and describes how his cunning trick allows him to avoid the obstacle before it's fully established.

Totem introduces obstacle

Coyote throws stones

2 Folly Stones (always)
3 Wisdom Stones (minus one for each Wound suffered to a minimum of zero)
0 to 2 Harm Stones (one if there is potential for a minor injury, two for grievous injury)

Coyote fails

If there are equal numbers of Xs and Os showing, **the Totems narrate** how Coyote's action fails.

Coyote succeeds with Folly

If there are more Xs than Os, **Coyote narrates** how his foolishness has allowed him to succeed. **Fire** notes Coyote's action on the Owe List.

Coyote succeeds with Wisdom

If there are more Os than Xs, **Coyote narrates** how his great wisdom has allowed him to succeed.

Calculate Harm

If a Harm Stone shows Skull side up, reduce Coyote's Wisdom one. If two Harm Stones show Skull side up, reduce Coyote's Wisdom by two to a minimum of zero.