

In a Grove

A Role-Playing Game for Four Players Based on the Short Story written by Ryunosuke Akutagawa and popularized by the film Rashomon

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The game involves players taking turns telling their attempting to explain the events surrounding a murdered husband and missing wife by directing the actions of their fellow players. Subsequent players must build off of certain facts established by previous players, but may otherwise alter the events as much as desired.

There is no dedicated GM, although each player adopts a high level of authority on their own turn.

Resources

There is only one resource, consisting of a list of established facts. Certain of these facts are pre-established by the game rules:

The Husband has been murdered

The Bandit was at the scene and has a history of murder

The Woodcutter finds a body in a bamboo grove

The Wife is missing

The following were found at the scene of the crime: A rope at the base of a tree, a comb, and an empty sake jug.

Players will establish additional facts at the end of each turn according to the following criteria:

1. Each fact must consist of only one fact. No compound facts are allowed.
2. Facts cannot be a direct or even an indirect indication of identity the murderer.
3. Facts cannot be a direct or even an indirect indication of what happened to the wife.

Starting Play

Each player takes on one of the following players (this game requires exactly four players):

The Infamous Bandit Tajomaru

The Wife

The Woodcutter

The dead husband, a samurai, whose spirit is channeled by a psychic

Next, each person rolls a 4 sided dice to determine who they must blame for the murder of the husband. The woodcutter is the exception to this rule. The woodcutter does not need to decide who the murderer is until the beginning of his turn.

Finally, the woodcutter declares three new facts as per the rules on establishing new facts.

Ongoing Play

Players take turns in the following order: The bandit, the wife, the husband, and the woodcutter.

Each turn consists of the following:

1. The current player declares who the murderer (according to how he rolled during game preparation) is and what happened to the wife (he is free to determine this as desired).
2. The current player creates an explanation of how this happened that is congruous with all established facts.
3. Any players has the right to challenge this explanation as incongruous with any given fact so long as they have at least one additional player to back them up. This negotiation continues until there are no more valid disputes.
4. All players act out this explanation together following the current player's explanation either through narrated or live action roleplay, as desired. Players are free to embellish and add new details to the explanation as desired, but the current player has absolute veto authority. A veto means that he can void any given action from the narrative, but he cannot dictate an alternate course of action to the person he has vetoed.
5. At the end of the turn (with the exception of the woodcutter's turn in which case this step is skipped), each player other than the current player creates one new fact. This fact must be something that occurred, was stated, or was present in the scenario that played out in step 4.

After the player of the woodcutter's turn, the game ends.

Conflict Resolution

As all players are acting as figments in a story told by the player whose turn it is, any conflict that arises during play is resolved by attributing near absolute authority of the player whose turn it is via unlimited access to the veto mechanism. All players must accept as valid any action during the roleplay phase that is not vetoed by the player whose turn it is.