

THE ASSASSIN has murdered this world of suffering, garroting it with the crimson thread called desire. As the world dies, the parts worth saving depart along THE NIGHT ROAD, which pours from the fatal wound toward THE WORLD TO COME.

Since mortal minds cannot rightly conceive of the end times, we choose to imagine the hustle and bustle of those departing as a crowded day on the metro in Santiago, Chile.

In these twilight hours, eight chosen saints and bodisattvas—THOSE WHO TARRY AT THE DOOR—scour Santiago's subway stations, searching for those who will birth the next world and exposing the mechanations of asuras and demons.

metrofina!l [transantiago]

jonathan walton [beta] 2011.11.5

setting up to play

Invite four to eight (4–8) people—including yourself—to play an experimental tabletop game called *Metrofinál*. I always pitch the game as “bodhisattvas on the subway at the end of the world.”

Print out the game board (legal paper, single-sided) and the character/station cards (letter paper, double-sided). Cut apart the cards.

Find eight (8) tokens to represent the characters; dice of various size and colors work well, but other tokens—even the classic Monopoly playing pieces—are also fine.

Find crayons, markers, or colored pencils of three different colors, preferably colors that are easily distinguished, bright, and dark enough to effectively color over the grey shades on the game board.

When it's time to play, gather the players around the board. Deal out the station and character cards roughly evenly. If you have 5–7 players, some players will have more station cards and others will have more character cards, but each player should roughly the same number of cards.

the invocation

Read aloud the basic description of the game from the front of this booklet. Then read the following:

*You are **THOSE WHO TARRY AT THE DOOR**, also known as *The Petals of the World-Flower* or the eight doomed saints and bodhisattvas, enlightened individuals who have returned to the world of men even though the end times are close at hand. This is the cusp of the Age-To-Come and, with the assassination of the world, all souls are proceeded down the Night Road in preparation for the Great Blossoming.*

***THOSE WHO TARRY** will be trapped in the ashes of this world's destruction and will not escape to enjoy the next age. You make this sacrifice because you are the only ones who can call forth **THOSE WHO COME IN THE NIGHT**, also known as *The Seeds of the Blossoming Flower*, who will, in their unity, bring about the next age. Once these eight lost souls are unmasked, they will step forward, proceed along the Night Road, and seal **THE ASSASSIN'S** wound behind them. Then the world will perish in floods and fire and the Age-To-Come will have come.*

saints and bodhisattvas

On your character card(s), pick the options that describe your terrible beauty, visible to your fellow saints and bodhisattvas but thankfully concealed from mortal view. Feel free to write in your own options, if you like. After everyone is finished, read your descriptions aloud.

THE KITEMAKER

wind + paper

... wears a cloak

- of blinking eyes
- that speaks with far-off voices
- woven from ribbons of coloured paper
- _____

... over the body:

- of a frail old crone
- made out of sticks and rice-paper
- that shifts and floats like a soap bubble
- _____

... and speaks the language:

- of the fourteen winds
- of all four elements
- of graceful hands
- of stones

station to station

Turns are taken by players, going around in a circle, not by characters. If you are playing with fewer than eight (8) players, when it's your turn, first decide which character you will play this turn.

Then, your turn will consist of the following steps:

1. Decide whether to stay at your current location or move to a different station; you must move on your first turn and cannot stay at **ASSASSINATION STATION**.
2. If you are moving, decide whether to take or extend an existing metro line or begin a new one; then place your token at the new location.
3. Listen to the player with the card for that station describe the environment and situation there; initially, this description is sparked by the station's name, the situation listed at the top of the station card, the "elements" of the Night Visitor who will eventually be found in this station (listed under "4"), and the player's imagination. Later, build on what's been previously described.
4. Describe what your bodhisattva says, does, thinks, or feels, remembering that they are a being of intense spiritual potency and one not bound by the norms and conventional morality of mortal beings.

5. The other player, in turn, describes how the station, its environs and inhabitants (including any brought from other stations), reacts to or interacts with the bodhisattva(s), guided by the numbered descriptions (1–4) on the game board.
6. A player's turn ends when the situation in the station begins to escalate towards a new level of surrealness.
7. Each time a player ends their turn, fill in one of the four arcs that surround the station marker on both the game board and station card, marking the stages towards the discovery of a Night Visitor; the player holding that station card also takes a few notes to help them remember the current situation in the station.
8. Then, the next player takes their turn.
9. When multiple bodhisattvas are at the same station, they recognize each other and can search together. Don't all go to the same or different stations; cluster.

| | |
|----------|--|
| 1 | <i>There is an opportunity or a problem; a way opens or its blockage becomes more evident; mundane complications arise; people tell you their stories and accept aid; the flower begins to open.</i> |
| 2 | <i>Open the metaphors to reveal what's inside; things stop representing other things and become their true selves, beautiful, terrible or, most often, both; crowds flow like water, animals talk.</i> |
| | |

calling someone forth

When you reach the last stage of your search at a given station, only a bodhisattva embodying one of the two elements listed in the “4” box can complete the final step of calling forth one of the Night Visitors from that station. Once a bodhisattva does this, flip over their character card and follow the instructions there.



ESTADIO

*Everything appears
in black and white,
without color.*

| | |
|---|------------------|
| 1 | film grain, blur |
| 2 | memory lenses |
| 3 | zoeetrope |
| 4 | horse + wind |

misdirection

The sacred texts say: *Let us not hear of vain searching, but only of the path to the truth and the future.*

THOSE WHO TARRY AT THE DOOR are not infallible. However, this is not a game about their failures. Anything that happens in the game is part of the narrative of how they eventually triumph over the obstacles facing them.

The sacred texts also warn: *Not only the Night Visitors but others shall also come, Jackals-Dressed-as-Goats, and the chosen shall unmask them before the End.*

Though the game tells of the bodhisattvas' successes, it does not ignore the many traps laid for them by other forces. Unsurprisingly, the asuras and demons do not wish to be left behind when the present age ends. In an effort to earn themselves a place in the world to come, many have put on disguises and placed themselves in the path of **THOSE WHO TARRY AT THE DOOR**, hoping to be annoited among **THOSE WHO COME IN THE NIGHT**.

Consequently, it is often impossible to know who is and is not one of the hidden bodhisattvas until all the Night Visitors have been called forth. Sometimes you may encounter someone or something that you feel must surely be the one you seek, but they may in fact be a very clever asura.

breaking the rules

The players may eventually face a mechanically impossible situation. For example, one station may end up isolated from the rest, unreachable by any subway line. Or a station may be impossible to complete, since the two bodhisattvas who can call the Night Visitor forth have already vanished in the ashes of the world's destruction.

This is to be expected; the end of the world is messy.

There is no ready solution for such difficulties, but recall that **THOSE WHO TARRY** are beings of intense power and infinite resourcefulness. Surely you can figure something out. Perhaps you know a ritual that can cause a subway line to fork. Or perhaps one of the newly awakened Night Visitors can help call forth its missing bretheran.

Remember, this is the story of how you overcame all challenges and deceptions; persevere.

assassination station

During play, if one of more bodhisattvas chooses to visit **ASESINATO**, the other players will describe and play the station collectively. Remember that this station marks the place where **THE ASSASSIN** murdered the world and the beginning of **THE NIGHT ROAD**. Thus, it is a good place to perform rituals and assess the apocalypse.

When all the Night Visitors have been called forth and all of **THOSE WHO TARRY** have perished in the ashes of the world's destruction, gather all of **THOSE WHO COME IN THE NIGHT** at **ASSASSINATION STATION**.

Take turns selecting tasks from the list below—in any order—and performing them while the other players describe the station, its environs and inhabitants, and play their own characters. It's fine for characters to cooperate on these tasks or perform them multiple times.

- Gather together the last of the remnants of this world;
- Cast judgment on the exposed asuras and demons;
- lead the parade of souls down the **THE NIGHT ROAD**;
- bear witness to the world's destruction;
- lead a ritual in honor of those left behind;
- plant/water the seeds of the new world's flowering.

And then the game is done; enjoy what you've made.

acknowledgements

First, thanks to Daniel, Steve, and Willow for contributing to the character card descriptions. I've remixed some of their suggestions, but others are borrowed directly.

Metrofinal was originally two different games. One was **TRANSANTIAGO**, a surreal game about the Santiago metro created for Joe Murphy and Graham Walmsley's 2007 **MAKE GAMES FAST** competition and inspired by the spam messages "Hey Santiago, check out this watch!" and "notice of suspension." The other game was an unfinished **GAME CHEF 2006** draft about a Buddhist apocalypse: **WHEN THE FORMS EXHAUST THEIR VARIETY**. In 2009, it was also briefly a strange *Candyland*-esque game called **JOY-JOY CHOCALYPSE**.

As **TRANSANTIAGO**, this game has been played twice: first at JiffyCon Western Mass in November 2007 and secondly in Seattle for Jackson's birthday, October 2011. Big thanks to the players involved: Shreyas, Elizabeth, Rachel, Emily, John, Casey, Tori, Andy, Erin Sara, and Jackson!

I would also like to thank everyone who believed this game could actually be completed. Kevin Allen Jr. once called **WHEN THE FORMS EXHAUST THEIR VARIETY** "perhaps the most intimidating play experience I have ever heard [of]." But we did it, folks. Woohoo!