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A ROLE-PLAYING GAME



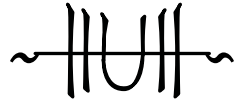
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Under Hollow Hills



*F*or Gunnar Tinius Nelson (1897–1986), who got along with fairies and opened invisible doors for at least three generations of my family.

& *F*or Kamille Winiecki Hitz (1972–2019), dancer between worlds.
—Meguey

*F*or Veea Lynn Baker (1950–2020), who loved games, stories, and mysteries, and who taught me to talk with the bees and the spiders.
—Vincent

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Content warning: Contains elements of fairytale horror, violence, and sexuality. If you know your fairy tales, you know we mean it!

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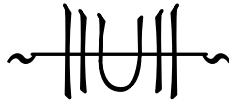


a lumpley game





Eric Orchard



Under Hollow Hills
by Meguey & Vincent Baker
with Faie, Elliot, & Tovey Baker

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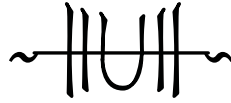
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Mike Bukowick




Introduction:


The Circus & the Game

Rules

- ☞ The game is about the performers and crew of a circus traveling through fairyland and the mortal world.
- ☞ Each of you has a role that you play, called your playbook. Your playbook gives you a unique role in the conversation, and special conversational rules you can use.
- ☞ One of you takes the role of Mistress of Ceremonies. You're responsible for the places the circus performs and the audiences it performs for. You prepare a unique playbook for each performance.
- ☞ The rest of you take the roles of the circus' performers and workers, according to the playbooks you choose.
- ☞ Your playbook gives you "plays" you can make: rules you can follow to expand the conversation or change its direction. When you make a play, roll dice and proceed according to your roll.
- ☞ Every session of the game is a new place for you to perform and a new audience to perform for. You arrive, you get the lay of the land, you meet your audience, you plan your performance, and finally you perform. Your performance has the power to change things here, so you decide how to use that power.
- ☞ The game and its system of plays are designed to protect and preserve your consent and communication as a player, and also to be compatible with any support & communication tools you choose to bring with you from outside the game.



The Circus



There is a traveling circus under the Hollow Hills. It travels by moonlight, small wagons creaking in the night silence. It travels lost roads, where fireflies and whisps hover to watch it pass, where goblins peer down from their treebranch perches, or owls. It travels the night world and the day world, fairyland and the living earth, and places otherwise, and no border can keep it.

You are its performers and its crew, its ringmaster, its clowns and tumblers, its lookouts and roustabouts, its planners and problem-solvers, its stars. You are its celebrated headliners and you are the fugitives who travel, opportunistically, with it. You are the mysteries it poses, the dramas it performs; you are music, juggling, acts of death-defying peril, pratfall comedy, you are moments of beauty and moments of loss. You are the circus and the circus is you. You have dangerous secrets to tell.

You go where you go and you perform where you choose. To you, a human child's birthday party in a vacant lot is the same as a command performance of the great Crowned Heads of Fairyland. (And *more like stuffed heads*, saith the Hob.)

Wherever you perform, you change: you change the seasons, you change the fortunes of those you perform for, you open their eyes, you awaken their hearts, you lull them to sleep. You change yourselves. This is the game: we change.

Step up, step up. Come great, come small, come revelers all!

& The Game

Under Hollow Hills is a game of the imagination, of whimsy, of words.

To play, you'll need a group of 3–6 players, including you, and at least 90 minutes' time set aside.

The game has no set ending or end goal. You can play it once, twice, a dozen times running. Each time you play, each episode or session, is one complete performance of the fairy circus: the circus arrives in a new place

in fairyland or in the mortal world. It sets up, it gets the lay of the land, takes the measure of its audience, drums up enthusiasm, gives its audience to know what to expect. It renews old acquaintance and makes new friendships and enmities, leaves performers behind in disgrace or in retirement, takes on new performers as they present themselves. It conducts itself withal with dignity or otherwise, and ultimately performs, to the audience's applause and acclaim, or else to its dismay. Here ends the episode, and you can end the game here, or else schedule a next episode with your friends, and do it all again anew.

Instead of playing on a board or in hands of cards, Under Hollow Hills plays in the conversation you have with your fellow players. Each of you takes on a certain role, called your "playbook," which gives you both a position in the conversation and special conversational rules for you to follow. For example, if your playbook is the Boondoggle Hob, you might be called upon to speak as the circus' ringmaster, announcing its acts and addressing its audience with banter; and when you do so, you might roll dice and ask questions about how your audience responds: are the excited? relieved? frightened? blasé? If, on the other hand, your playbook is the Stick Figure, a clown and acrobat, you will likely be called upon to describe your antic performances, rolling dice for a creative spur: is your performance comical or restrained, death-defying or absurd, surprisingly scary or surprisingly touching?

This is how it is for each player: You're in conversation together, addressing and answering one another, acting out your own special roles and following your own special rules, as the game plays and as the story of the circus unfolds.

And *follow along, follow along!* saith the Hob. *Why are we standing at the threshold when the door is open?* Next is to choose playbooks: step through!

Playbooks

Before you play, choose a playbook.

One of you must play the Mistress of Ceremonies, the MC, Under Hollow Hills' game master.

(Note that while "mistress" may be a gendered word, gender is a game in fairyland, and you can play it however suits you.)

Your job isn't to play a fairy in the circus, but to give the circus places to perform and audiences to perform for. You get to run ahead of the circus planting thorn bushes, you get to make one audience member bored and another eager, and you get to shout helpful suggestions whenever you have one. You get to throw roses and peanut shells.

Someone should volunteer now!

Everyone else, choose one of these circus playbooks:

- ☞ **The Boondoggle Hob:** Goblin kind, strong, wry, grand, and uncouth.
- ☞ **The Chieftain Mouse:** Mousey kind, valorous, honorable, romantic, and loyal. *(Note that while "chieftain" may be a gendered word, gender is a game in fairyland, and you can play it however suits you.)*
- ☞ **The Crooked Wand:** Witchy kind, practical, private, insightful, and calculating.
- ☞ **The Crowned Stag:** Fairy nobility, regal, generous, self-involved, and radiant. *(Note that while "stag" may be a gendered word, gender is a game in fairyland, and you can play it however suits you.)*
- ☞ **The Feather-Cloak:** Shifty kind, and a bird, resourceful, cheerful, busy, graceful, and humble.
- ☞ **The Interloper:** A mortal human being who's intruding into fairyland in disguise, intending to steal fairy treasure.
- ☞ **The Lantern Jack:** Pisky kind, enchanting, sprightly, full of fun and malice.
- ☞ **The Lostling:** A mortal human being lost or stolen into fairyland, now at home here.

- ☞ **The Nightmare Horse**: Unique and yourself, guiler, bewitcher, dweller in night sky and deep water.
- ☞ **The Seeker**: A mortal human being who's come boldly into fairyland, seeking something or someone the fairies have stolen.
- ☞ **The Stick Figure**: A made thing given life and animation by magic, curious, naive, foolish, and self-aware.
- ☞ **The Troll**: Troll kind, powerful, undignified, dangerous, and patient.
- ☞ **The Winding Rose**: Flora kind, tough, beautiful, temperamental, with no patience for fools.

Additional Playbooks?

These 13 are only the core set of Under Hollow Hills' circus playbooks. Many other playbooks exist, and many more are possible, each with its own take or twist on the fairy, creature, or person it presents.

Any player can bring additional playbooks to the game with them. When you do, show the playbook to the group and make sure that everyone's happy to include it in the game.

The 13 core playbooks are laid out in full in [*Chapter 1: the Circus Playbooks*](#).



Summer & Winter Imagery



When you create your character, you create two lists of images, one for summer and one for winter. (If you're playing a human character: bold and careful, free and careful, or otherwise; but the rules are the same.) Use this imagery when you describe yourself and your trappings.

You begin play in full summer (or fully bold, or fully free), but you'll step back and forth between Summer and Winter over the course of play. As you do, you change your imagery to match.

Suppose that you're this version of the Boondoggle Hob:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| ● Mushrooms, the bullfrog | ○ Fish bones |
| ● Luminous eyes | ○ Bristly hair |
| ● Berry black | ○ Pumpkin brown |
| ● Stolen clothing, silk gown | ○ Stained apron |
| ● Mannish, forbidding | ○ Womanish |

At the beginning of the game, you're in full summer. When you describe your stolen silk gown, you can describe it as berry black. You can describe your bullfrog-like, bulging, luminous eyes, your wiry beard, and your forbidding scowl.

But imagine that, over the course of a few sessions of play, you've stepped several steps toward winter:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| ○ Mushrooms, the bullfrog | ● Fish bones |
| ● Luminous eyes | ○ Bristly hair |
| ○ Berry black | ● Pumpkin brown |
| ○ Stolen clothing, silk gown | ● Stained apron |
| ● Mannish, forbidding | ○ Womanish |

Now you can say that you've put an old apron over your gown, pumpkin-brown with stains. You can say that your eyes still glow but they're sunken now, not bulging like a bullfrog's. You can even say that your teeth have sharpened until they're like translucent needles, sharp as fish bones.

As you step from summer to winter and back, use your imagery to signal the changes to your fellow players.



Plays, Dice & Consequences



Your playbook gives you both a role to play in the game, and your own special conversational rules to follow and invoke. Many of the conversational rules in the game are called “plays,” as in, “I’m going to make a play for it,” “I’m playing it close to the vest for now,” or “how are you going to play this?”

For the circus players, your plays are direct, and take your character’s point of view, like “confront someone,” “draw someone out,” “take someone’s breath away,” or “retreat behind thorns.” They’re listed in your playbook.

When you make a play, roll dice to narrow the range of options you can choose from. Roll two 6-sided dice, add them together, then add your playbook’s modifier for that play. For instance, you might roll 2d6-1 when you *confront someone*, but 2d6+2 when you *draw someone out*.

As you step from summer toward winter and back, you also step your plays’ rolls up and down, so that your imagery and your plays reflect each other. Your plays’ rolls are, like you, never the same.

When you roll, a final sum of 7 or higher is a strong play, called a “hit.” A final sum of 10 or higher is a very strong play, a “10+ hit.” A final sum of 6 or less is a misplay, called a “miss.”

Each play describes the immediate consequences of a hit or a miss, and you should all follow them closely.

Your plays are listed in your playbook, and are laid out in [*Chapter 2: Plays & Consequences*](#).

For the Mistress of Ceremonies, you have three different sets of plays to make: NPC plays, which the various inhabitants of fairyland and the mortal human world make; place plays, which fairyland or the mortal human world make on their own behalf; and MCs’ plays, procedural moves like “call for a break” or “go around the table in turn.”

You don’t roll dice for your plays. Instead you simply announce them by name, or describe them implicitly, and let the other players’ respond how they choose.

Your plays are laid out in [*Chapter 5: the MC’s Principles & Plays*](#).



Places & Performances



The game follows the circus' tour. You come to a place and meet the people who'll be your audience. You talk to them, you feel them out, sniff the wind, get the lay of the land. You announce yourselves, set up your performance, sell tickets or issue invitations, plan your show. Ultimately, you perform, giving your audience the performance they want, or, perhaps, the performance you think they deserve. After that, strike your tents, collect your measure, and move on! Your next audience awaits.

It's the Mistress of Ceremonies' job to create the place and the people in advance, before you play, and it's their job to present them to you and speak for them.

The outline of the session is laid out in [*Chapter 3: Sessions & Shows*](#).

The Mistress of Ceremonies' playbooks for creating occasions, venues and audiences are laid out in [*Chapter 6: Occasions to Perform*](#). They are:

- ☞ [*In Fairyland: A Betrothing*](#)
- ☞ [*In Fairyland: The Breaking of the Ice*](#)
- ☞ [*In Fairyland: A Celebration of the Hunt*](#)
- ☞ [*In Fairyland: A Closed Bridge*](#)
- ☞ [*In Fairyland: A Funeral*](#)
- ☞ [*In Fairyland: A Gift-Giving Occasion*](#)
- ☞ [*In Fairyland: The Goblin Market*](#)
- ☞ [*In Fairyland: A Harvest Murder*](#)
- ☞ [*In Fairyland: The Horrible Feast*](#)
- ☞ [*In Fairyland: Freeform Occasions*](#)
- ☞ [*In the Mortal Human World: An Arts Festival*](#)
- ☞ [*In the Mortal Human World: Lost in the Woods*](#)
- ☞ [*In the Mortal Human World: A Rite of Passage*](#)
- ☞ [*In the Mortal Human World: A Thinning of the Veil*](#)
- ☞ [*In Any World, or Between Them: We Are Ourselves the Occasion*](#)

A system for connecting performances together into a touring season is laid out in [*Chapter 8: The Tour*](#).



Arthur Rackham



Consent & Communication Tools



Since *Under Hollow Hills* plays out in your conversation with your friends, it's designed to make communication between you quick, easy, and reliable. You can count on the rules to help you speak and be heard, ask questions and be answered.

Holding your dice:

In the heat of the moment, it's easy to accidentally talk over someone or get talked over yourself. When you have something to say, or a play to make, but you don't need to interrupt the person who's speaking, you can hold your two dice in your fist out into the middle of the play space. This is a signal that you need to be heard before play can proceed.

Watch for the other players to make the signal too. You don't want to talk over them either.

If the other players miss the signal and overstep you, it doesn't count. Tell everybody to back up, do overs. No rolls stand, and nothing happened, until you've had your say.

Calling for a line, weathering the storm:

When a situation is developing in a way you don't like, but you don't want or need to interrupt the game to address it, there are two plays you can use to deal with it.

Weathering the storm is a play for when a situation is developing against you, but not in a way that you can't abide. "Oh no, this is bad. Let's go ahead and see where it ends up."

Calling for a line is for when a situation is developing against you, and you don't want it to, but you can't see how to redirect it all by yourself. You want or need the other players to back you up. "Oh no, this is bad. Help me out here?"

Calling for a line and *weathering the storm* are laid out in detail in [*Chapter 2: Plays & Consequences*](#).

Interrupting the game:

However, when a situation in play is developing in a way you don't like, you might prefer to address it directly with the other players. It's always appropriate to interrupt play at any time, for any reason you need.

Extra-game Support Tools:

While Under Hollow Hills is designed to protect and preserve your ongoing consent and communication throughout play, it's also appropriate to bring external support tools into the game with you, if you use them.

Present your chosen support tools to the group and get their buy-in before you play.

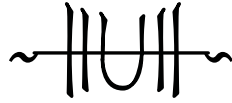
Dice fudging:

If you prefer to roll your dice behind your hand, on your phone, or casually out of others' view, so you can fudge them if you need to, you may.





Ash Cheshire



Chapter 1: *Circus Playbooks* Rules

- ☞ Choose a playbook.
- ☞ Follow the rules in your playbook to create your character.
- ☞ At the end of creating your character, introduce your character to the group, then go around for “bindings,” special rules that make the relationships between you more concrete and more unique.
- ☞ The Mistress of Ceremonies doesn’t choose a circus playbook. You create places and occasions for the circus to perform instead.

Creating a Character

To create your character, choose your playbook, then create your name, your summer & winter (or the equivalent, for human characters), your plays, your place, your trappings, and your bindings.

All of the playbooks share these rules.

Your job as a player is to:

- ☞ Make your character vivid.
- ☞ Play your part in the circus.
- ☞ Take the bad with the good.

Your Name:

- ☞ Follow your playbook's rules to create your name.

Your Summer & Winter Imagery, for Fairy Characters:

- ☞ From each of the five lists of images in your playbook, choose 1 for summer and 1 for winter.
- ☞ You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?
- ☞ Begin play in full summer: mark all of the lines in the summer column.
- ☞ Choose your pronouns for summer and for winter too.

Your Bold, Free, & Careful Imagery, for Mortal Human Characters:

- ☞ From each of the lists in your playbook, choose 1.
- ☞ You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?
- ☞ For each that you've chosen, customize it. Characterize it differently for bold and for careful, or for free and for careful.
- ☞ Begin play fully bold or fully free: mark all of the lines in that column.
- ☞ Choose your pronouns for bold and for careful, or for free and for careful, too.

Your Place in the Circus:

- ☞ In the circus, at need, you can take any and all of your playbook's listed roles.

Your Plays:

- ☞ You can make all of the obvious plays, and your own playbook's plays.
- ☞ Mark +2 next to your choice of three plays, +0 next to two, -1 next to two, and +1 next to all of the rest.
- ☞ In total: +2, +2, +2, +1, +1, +1, +1, +1, 0, 0, -1, -1.
- ☞ These are only your plays' starting rolls; you'll have many opportunities to change them.

Your Trappings:

- ☞ You get all of your playbook's listed trappings.

Your Bindings:

- ☞ Everybody introduces themselves. On your turn, tell everyone your name, your playbook, your summer imagery (or your bold or free imagery, for human characters), your place in the circus, your playbook plays, your wagon, and any other trappings you think the rest of the players might find noteworthy. Answer any questions anybody has for you.
- ☞ Once everyone's introduced themselves, go around again for bindings. On your turn, ask for volunteers for your playbook's bindings.
- ☞ If no one volunteers, so be it and move on. If more than one volunteers, accept them all, choose one, or ask them to decide between them, as you like.
- ☞ On the others' turns, volunteer as you choose.

The Boondoggle Hob

You are the Boondoggle Hob. You're goblin kind:
strong, wry, grand and uncouth.

Your Name:

Choose a name that sounds like nonsense.

Examples: *Ermatilla, Harebrake, Kimbledorn, Nighley Bluw.*

Your Summer & Winter Imagery:

- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Fish bones, humus, mushrooms, may thorn, wormy apples, beetles, churned mud, spring peepers, the bullfrog, the rooting boar, poison ivy.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Crooked nose, lumpy face, long jaw, pointed ears, pointed face, luminous eyes, shaggy hair, spiky hair, bristly hair, lined face, ugly face, glittering eyes.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Berry red, berry black, pine green, pumpkin brown, cream, periwinkle.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Stolen clothing, golden fillet, satin gown, heeled boots, silk shoes & pattens, working clothes, tidy apron, stained apron, shapeless felt hat.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for summer and for winter as well.

Your Place:

- ☞ Ringmaster; ☞ Cook
- ☞ Performer; ☞ Heel dragger
- ☞ Always there to comment upon others' work.

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Distract them with tricks & visions
- ☞ Provoke them
- ☞ Make yourself something else
- ☞ Shrug it off

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A big, rumbling wagon pulled by a pair of surly bull-pigs.
- ☞ A polished, knotted skull-club, and a wicked little hook-shaped knife.
- ☞ A raw hide war coat, stained with old adventures, shedding wiry hairs.
- ☞ A pet snake, yellow and black like a hornet, but more wicked and not so tame.
- ☞ A traveling kitchen, jumbled, full of good smells.
- ☞ Books of children's stories, homey recipes, jovial songs, and accounts of murder.
- ☞ A knothole of wood, peer through it and you see what's invisible.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ *[x]* finds themself consistently on my bad side, all undeserving. Every session, I must find some reason to **confront them**, if I can. Who?
- ☞ I've taken an absolutely unaccountable liking to *[x]*. Every session, I must **draw them out**, if at all possible. Who?

Boondoggle Hob Plays

When you **distract someone with tricks & visions**, roll. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 3 of the following. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 2.

- *You make something appear from nowhere. What?*
- *You make something disappear from someone's hand, to reappear elsewhere. What and where?*
- *You make something disappear from someone's hand, never to reappear, except perhaps in your own pocket later. What?*
- *You change something into a bird and release it to fly away. What?*
- *You feed something to something and make it reappear in your hand. What and to what?*
- *You summon a vision in the air, of something beautiful, terrible, whimsical, or sentimental. What?*

...And meanwhile, **on any hit**, no one who can watch your tricks can pay attention to anything else. **On a miss**, ask the MC what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps you give the game away.

When you **provoke someone**, roll. **On any hit**, say something mild, harmless, innocuous, inoffensive, and they absolutely must consider it a terrible insult. **On a 10+ hit**, furthermore, without realizing it, they've taken a weapon into their hand. **On a miss**, say something that they rightly should consider a terrible insult, and if you can't think of any such thing, take it that they've insulted you.

When you **make yourself something else**, roll. **On any hit**, you become your choice of:

- *A big old croaking raven.*
- *A flight of a dozen starlings.*
- *Thousands of centipedes, millipedes, beetles, and worms.*
- *A single black wasp.*
- *A beautiful young deer, russet red, with a first year's antlers.*
- *A quizzical and stubborn old mutt dog.*
- *A burning firebrand, pine-pitch smoky and scattering sparks.*

You remain so transformed for as long as you choose. **On a 10+ hit**, afterward, you can vanish into nothing and reappear later. **On a 7–9 hit**, at the end of your transformation, you must return to your own naked self. **On a miss**, instead of transforming yourself, you simply step to full winter.

When you're wounded, shocked, affronted or dismayed, and you **shrug it off**, roll. **On any hit**, you're unhurt and unaffected and need not choose any response at all. **On a 10+ hit**, you don't even consider their attack to be an insult, but **on a 7–9 hit**, you may. **On a miss**, your attacker chooses how you must respond.



The Chieftain Mouse



You are the Chieftain Mouse. You're mousey kind: valorous, honorable, romantic, and loyal.

Note that while "chieftain" is a gendered word, gender is a game in fairyland, and you can play it however suits you.

Your Name:

Choose a mouse name, and be sure to choose one suitable for a mouse of distinction.

Examples: *Clover the Fearless, Ezekiel the Deadly, Anatole the Kind, Ruby the Fierce*

Your Summer & Winter Imagery:

- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Laughing brook, sunlight and leaves, wind in tall grass, the forest floor in autumn, apples, the smell of moss and water, river stones, the crisp winter morning.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Handsome whiskers, bright eyes, buck teeth, cute face, soft fur, sober little face, thoughtful frown, curious beauty.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Smoke gray, white, pale gray, chestnut, dark brown, golden brown, golden blonde, strawberry blonde, amber, rufus red.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Fancy clothing, velvet coat, velvet cape, high boots, well-made plain clothing, worked mail, soft shoes, wool hood, felt hat, rakish cap and cockade.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for summer and for winter as well.

Your Place:

- ☞ Ringmaster;
- ☞ Planner;
- ☞ Barker & caller;
- ☞ Overseer of work;
- ☞ Always there with an observation.

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Address them courteously
- ☞ Seek out the little wild things
- ☞ Sit counsel with them
- ☞ Summon the Mousy Clans

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A well-made painted cart with a high driver's seat, pulled by a comically small pony.
- ☞ A deft and sharp little sword.
- ☞ A heraldic shield, hung with pelts of weasel, mink, fox and owl.
- ☞ A boar spear nearly five feet long.
- ☞ Maps, histories, genealogies, and studies of flora and fauna.
- ☞ A blessed stone: place your hand on it and you cannot speak untrue.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ [x], though not a mouse, has sworn allegiance to me. I can never lie to them or deny to *sit counsel with them*. Who?
- ☞ [x] has, in the past, rendered worthy service to the Mousy Clans. I can never *put them off* or *waylay them*. Who?

Chieftain Mouse Plays

When you *address someone courteously*, roll. **On any hit**, they must answer you courteously in return, no matter their intentions or animosity toward you. **On a 10+ hit**, furthermore, they must address everyone else courteously as well, while you are present. **On a miss**, while they must nevertheless answer you with courtesy, they may, if they choose, answer you with a cutting and sarcastic false courtesy that you may consider an insult or that may even wound you.

When you *sit counsel with someone*, roll. **On any hit**, hear them out, listen carefully, and ask questions to better understand. When you're ready, tell them honestly what you think their best next play might be. If they make that play, they roll it at +3. **On a 7–9 hit**, however, if they follow your advice, they're beholden to you, and if they decline to follow it, you may take it as an insult. **On a miss**, give them unthinking bad advice, and if they decline to follow it, you may take it as an insult.

When you **seek out the little wild things**, roll. **On any bit**, ask questions; the MC must answer them truthfully. **On a 10+ bit**, ask 3. **On a 7–9 bit**, ask 2.

- *What news from the little wild birds?*
- *What news from the bee clans?*
- *What news from the beetles and worms?*
- *What news from the star-chasing night winds?*
- *What news from the voles, the moles, the munks, and the other lesser clans?*
- *What news from the cousin bats?*
- *What news from the crows, whom I address from the safety of a brier?*
- *What news from the old sleepy cat, who no longer hunts?*
- *What news from the porcupine and the skunk, who fear none?*
- *What news from the bear, to whose ear I creep?*

On a miss, in seeking out the little wild things, you've blundered into a hunter. Ask the MC where you are and what's doing.

When you **summon the Mousy Clans**, declare who you're summoning, and roll.

- *A cadre of seasoned warrior mice, armed for fighting.*
- *A bonny hundred of worthy mice, eager to work, brawl, sing, dance, & play.*
- *The beauties of the clans, soft, sweet, playful, and pretty.*
- *The elders of the clans in all their wisdom.*
- *The Clans Entire, by their thousands and thousands.*

On any bit, they answer your call at once. **On a 7–9 bit**, though, or **on any bit** if you're summoning the Clans Entire, the MC chooses a complication that comes along with them:

- *Their mothers.*
- *A rival clan's chieftain to contest your rule.*
- *Renegade mice recognizing no clan.*
- *A panther.*

On a miss, they don't answer your call, or not in full or not at once, and the MC chooses a complication to explain why.



The Crooked Wand



You are the Crooked Wand. You're witchy kind:
practical, private, insightful, and calculating.

Your Name:

Choose a common name, plus a fantastic name, a sinister image, or a comforting image, and connect them together.

Examples: *Granny Jack, Jenny Undertow, Alice Alivaker, Timothy Bones*

Your Summer & Winter Imagery:

- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Broken branches, mud, ravens, the trailing willow, torn lace, smoke from a chimney, drowned roots, vine-twisted wood.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Wrinkled face, hidden beauty, ageless beauty, shining eyes, hooded eyes, blinded eyes, cut out eyes, knotted hair, long beard.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: White, gray, deep red, midnight blue, black, brown.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Old clothing, knit gloves, shawl, a floppy hat, a jaunty hat, a subtle brocade, elegant clothing, worn clothing, an antique breastplate or helmet.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for summer and for winter as well.

Your Place:

- ☞ Fortune teller;
- ☞ Conjurer;
- ☞ Always there with a secret to tell.
- ☞ Planner;
- ☞ Problem solver;

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Blindfold them
- ☞ Lay them bare
- ☞ Sink into the mud
- ☞ Throw the bones

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A creaking weather-warped cart, pulled by a cheerful old ox.
- ☞ An old weapon, more interesting than it first looks.
- ☞ Someone's antique bronze armor, given to you for safe keeping, you forget whose.
- ☞ Birch-bark books written with words stolen from the creation of the world.
- ☞ A shimmering golden thimble. Rap someone sharply with it and you transform them into a bird, in which form they stay until you release them or they sing the correct song; or a potted plant, in which form they stay until you release them or they bloom flowers; or a hen's egg, in which form they stay until someone cracks the egg or they hatch themselves.
- ☞ An annoying cat.
- ☞ A glowing hot coal that will never cool.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ I once turned [x] into a little bird, put them in a cage, and let my cat stare at them with its yellow eyes. I can never again *waylay them* or *blindfold them*. Who?
- ☞ [x] once revealed to me their heart's true love and longing. I can never *put them off*. Who?

Crooked Wand Plays

When you *blindfold someone*, roll. *On any hit*, you rob them of some of their sense or some of their senses. *On a 10+ hit*, choose 2. *On a 7–9 hit*, choose 1.

- *They don't notice what [x] is doing.*
- *They forget [x].*
- *They feel safe and out of all danger.*
- *They feel lost, disoriented, and out of all certainty.*
- *Tell them something. They believe it uncritically, as long as they're blindfolded.*

On a miss, ask the MC what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps by blinding them to some things, you'll awaken their awareness to others.

When you *lay someone bare*, roll. **On any hit**, you reveal something to them, about them. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 2. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 1.

- You reveal to them their secret heart.
- You reveal to them the hearts and natures of those nearest to them.
- You reveal to them their best way forward.
- You reveal to them their lost past.

Whichever you choose, you don't know what they learn, but ask them how they react to the revelation. However, if you have a glass, a basin, or an oracle to read, you can catch a shadow or a mirror image of their revelation. Ask them what you see.

On a miss, choose 1 anyway, but in the act, you lay yourself bare as well. The MC chooses 1 against you, and asks you how you react in turn.

When you *sink into the mud*, roll. **On any hit**, you can't be found, and any trouble that comes, passes you by without touching you. You choose when to emerge. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 1 of the following as well.

- You emerge healed of any wound, shock, resentment or grudge, with your person and your dignity intact.
- You emerge in full summer.
- You can bring someone else into and out of the mud with you.
- You forget what's come before, and emerge with your mind fresh and clear.

On a miss, any trouble that comes, finds you buried in the mud, unable to escape without a friend's help. You can bring someone else if you choose; they're trapped as well. Ask the MC what's happening.

When you *throw the bones*, roll. **On any hit**, ask the MC questions; the MC must answer them truthfully. **On a 10+ hit**, ask 3. **On a 7–9 hit**, ask 2. You must make up your own questions, and there are no limits laid on them. If the MC's answer is later proven wrong, you may consider it an insult or even a terrible shock. **On a miss**, ask 1 anyway, but then ask the MC what goes wrong. Perhaps the simple act of asking will transform the answer.

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Catch eyes with them
- ☞ Stand regal before them
- ☞ Step into the woods
- ☞ Summon your court

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A wagon changeably cozy and regal, pulled by a proud bull. In your wagon is the best bed in the circus, by far.
- ☞ A servant, a silent elfin boggart called Tirophene.
- ☞ Sword and armor befitting, laid out in a figured chest, under the bed.
- ☞ A musical instrument of mortal make, contrary and unmastered.
- ☞ A mirror. Look in it and in your own face you'll see your father's face, your mother's face, your past, your future, what you've lost, what you've kept, and/or what you'll yet have.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ [x] and I dally on occasion and we're easy in one another's company. If I *confront them*, *put them off*, *waylay them*, or *stand regal before them*, they may consider it an insult. Who?
- ☞ I've treated [x]'s feelings too thoughtlessly before now. I can never again *open up to them*, and if I *catch eyes with them*, I make myself beholden to them, whatever they choose. Who?

Crowned Stag Plays

When you *catch eyes with someone*, and you mean it, roll. *On any hit*, they have to choose: you fight each other, or you fall passionately into each others' arms. *On a 10+ hit*, they can choose one now, then change their mind and choose the other in a little while instead, if they want to. *On a miss*, they can still choose one if they want to, but if they want neither, they can grin or scowl or look away instead.

When you **stand regal before someone**, roll. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 3 of the following. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 2. If there are more people here than one, decide whether your choices apply to one, some, or all of them.

- *They must stop and take a step back from you.*
- *They bend a knee, reflexively.*
- *They may not speak, act, or depart until you give them leave.*
- *Invite them to come forward and address you. They must.*
- *Bid them welcome and to make free. Your hospitality now prevails here, for them, above any other law and custom.*

On a miss, they must stop and take a step back, but then they're free to act as they choose.

When you **step into the woods**, roll. You can bring friends with you, if you invite them and they choose to come. **On any hit**, choose 1 of the following.

- *You're in wild orchards, where the apples and pears grow boozy and feral. There's a fast-moving little old ciderer.*
- *You're in a place of comfort and leisure, with steaming hot pools and mossy bowers under the swaying, whispering trees. There are night-singing birds.*
- *You're in the dark woods, where the trees have turned cruel and treacherous tracks lead. There's danger.*
- *You're at a "hunting lodge," in fact a woodland palace of twenty rooms. There's a staff of elfin servants, fussy, disapproving, and eager to please.*
- *You're at a place of high wild beauty, a wooded craig close to the stars, with an ancient stone circle and a spring of water so pure and cold that you can become drunk on it.*

On a 10+ hit, in addition, look for it and you'll find the royal road to the court of your father, the King of the Forest, with white birches standing honorguard. **On a miss**, you're lost in the woods, and separated from your companions. Ask the MC where you are.

When you **summon your court**, declare who you're summoning and roll.

- *Your bodyguard, 8 fearless stags, themselves royalty.*
- *A dozen of your courtiers, each more beautiful and gracious than the last.*
- *Your teachers and advisors, steadfast, loyal and wise.*
- *Your warrior elite: ten of wolf, ten of eagle, ten of walking blackthorn, and ten of elfin skirmishers.*
- *Those of the other players' characters whom you consider to be in your court.*

On a 10+ hit, they answer your call at once. **On a 7–9 hit**, only one or two of them appear now, with the rest prepared to come, if you still indeed require them, at their best convenience. **On a miss**, the same as **on a 7–9 hit**, except that you're beholden to all who come.



Jody Edwards



The Feather-Cloak



You are the Feather-Cloak. You're shifty kind, and a bird: resourceful, cheerful, busy, graceful, and humble.

Your Name:

Choose a color and a short name, and combine them in either order.

Examples: *Yellow Jo*, *Bob White*, *Sallie Blue*, *Periwinkle Kim*.

Your Summer & Winter Imagery:

- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Nests, bracken, sunbeams, mossy stones, willow catkins, little running streams, pine cones, snow storms, red berries, fog, branches clacking in the wind.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Bright eyes, dancing eyes, bushy eyebrows, trilling laugh, two-tone hair, soft hair, downy beard, quick body, compact body, spindly limbs, round face, sharp features.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Soft gray, golden brown, buttercup yellow, sky blue, copper-flecked black, moss green, leaf brown, glittering black, speckled black and white.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Long striped stockings, a velvet hood, many pockets, brass buckles, a cob-web lace gown, a fine shirt with ruffles at the neck, weather-worn rough coat, bright-colored linen vest, drab clothes, neatly cut clothes, sweet-smelling clothes.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for summer and for winter as well.

Your Place:

- ☞ Barker & caller; ☞ Lookout;
- ☞ Aerialist & tumbler; ☞ Provisioner;
- ☞ Always there with advice and gossip.

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Make them blink
- ☞ Serve them tea and honeycakes
- ☞ Hide away
- ☞ Watch for your chance

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A small tidy wagon festooned with ivy, pulled by a gentle mare with a little foal gamboling alongside.
- ☞ A changeable cloak of real and embroidered feathers, warm and waterproof.
- ☞ Neat crates and bundles of useful things: buttons, buckles, ribbons, needles and thread, candles, combs, wire, scissors, sharpening stones, polish, paint, grease, and sweets.
- ☞ Teas, teacakes, teapots, cups, and saucers.
- ☞ A tiny golden crown: pin it to your cloak and you may go as a bird.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ I once beat [x] in a challenge. I can never again *draw them out*. Who?
- ☞ [x] sheltered me in a time of great danger. I can never *put them off* or *hide away from them*. Who?

Feather-Cloak Plays

When you *make someone blink*, roll. **On any bit**, choose 1 of the following.

- *They thought you were one place, but no, you're someplace else.*
- *They thought they were ready, but no, you've caught them off guard.*
- *They thought they were paying attention, but no, their attention wandered.*
- *They thought they had something well in hand, but no, they've lost their grip on it.*
- *For a second they thought they saw something startling, and it leaves them uncertain. What?*
- *You really do something or they really see something startling, and it leaves them astonished. What?*

On a 10+ bit, however you decide to play it now, take +1 to your roll. **On a miss**, ask the MC what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps they've been onto you all along.

When you *serve someone tea and honeycakes*, roll. Your magic can help them change their fate. **On any bit**, they may, as they wish, become invisible until the next setting of the spheres, sun or moon. **On a 10+ bit**, choose 1 of the following that they may, if they wish, also receive.

- *Comfort, calm, and courage.*
- *Good fortune and increase, up to and including a coming child.*
- *Progress toward summer.*
- *Insight into the weakness of their rival or enemy.*
- *Some favor of the one they name, and if their intended refuses, it's an insult to you, your magic, your tea, and your cakes, all.*

On a miss, they choose 1 of the above to receive for themselves, but they do not become invisible.

When you *hide away*, roll. **On any bit**, no one can find you, no matter how carefully they search, and no trouble alights on you. You choose when to emerge. **On a 7–9 bit**, choose 1 of the following, though.

- *Someone carries you off by accident. Ask the MC where they're taking you.*
- *The effort to keep so still chills you. Step toward winter.*
- *You're sharing your hiding place with something small and nosy. Ask the MC what or who.*
- *You forget what's come before, and emerge with your mind befuddled.*

On a miss, you hide between worlds, and when you emerge from your hiding place, you're no longer with the circus. Ask the MC where you are now.

When you *watch for your chance*, roll. **On any bit**, choose 1 of the following to tell the MC.

- *At the precise moment that [x] happens, I do [y].*
- *[x] happens just when I predicted it, and I'm already in motion. I do [y].*
- *Eventually [x] happens, right? When it does, I do [y].*
- *If [x] happens, I'm going to notice it or realize it at once. Does it? If it does, I do [y], but if it doesn't, I do [z].*

On a 10+ bit, however you decide to play it next, take +1 to your roll. **On a miss**, ask the MC what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps your very act of watching changes what will happen.

The Interloper

You are the Interloper. You're a human being who's intruding into fairyland intentionally, in disguise, to steal fairy treasure. You've joined the circus because it will provide you cover and bring you to places where treasures abound.

I don't know what it is that you seek, but you've certainly heard of such things as a purse that never empties of coins, potions of true love or immortality, coats of invisibility, rings of good luck, flying boots, harps that play themselves and sing with beautiful maidens' voices, swords that can carve through armor or stone, and bullets that never miss their mark.

Your Name:

Choose a human name.

Your Free & Careful Imagery:

- ☞ Choose 1: Sky, field, cloud, sun, moon, wind.
- ☞ Choose 1: Jaw, eyes, hands, hair, face, lips.
- ☞ Choose 1: Blue, red, green, orange, brown, gray.
- ☞ Choose 1: Mask, shoes, boots, coat, clothing, gown, hat, vest, cloak, hood, gloves, scarf.
- ☞ Choose 1: Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

For each that you've chosen, customize it. Characterize it differently for free and for careful.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for free and for careful as well.

Your Place:

- ☞ Novelties, trinkets, tickets & refreshments;
- ☞ Crew;
- ☞ Worker;
- ☞ Lookout;
- ☞ Always there, watching and listening quietly.

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Pass yourself off to them as *royalty incognito*
- ☞ Touch them with iron
- ☞ Pocket something
- ☞ Take to your heels

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A corner in a friendly wagon where you can ride and sleep, curled up in your blanket. You don't need much.
- ☞ A human memory: a loved one's face, a farm on a hillside, warm evenings by firelight, a job in a town with neighbors and employer.
- ☞ Fairy poison you've dropped into your eyes. Weep, and you'll wash it out and return to mortal life.
- ☞ A key, a nail, or some other piece of cold iron. No fairy can bear its touch, so it'll betray you to any who see it.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ [x] knows what I am, but keeps confidence for their own reasons. I can never *confront them* or *pass myself off to them as royalty incognito*. Who?
- ☞ [x] is my honest friend, though they don't know what I am. I can never *put them off*, and if I ever *touch them with iron* they must choose to die. Who?

Interloper Plays

When you *pass yourself off to a fairy as royalty incognito*, roll. *On any hit*, they must defer to you without acknowledging you in any way. *On a 7–9 hit*, they may gossip about it afterward, but *on a 10+ hit*, they may not even do that. *On a miss*, perhaps they defer to you as on a hit, or perhaps they swear incognito allegiance to you and become your most loyal incognito servant, and perhaps you'll never know which.

You can *pass yourself off to other mortals* as well. Since they aren't so innately bound by fairy laws, they may choose to behave as fairies, according to your roll, but they may also squint skeptically at you and wonder what and who you really are.

When you **touch a fairy with cold iron**, roll. **On any hit**, choose 1 of the following. If the fairy you touch is another player's character, they choose, not you.

- They will promise you anything you ask to be free of the iron's touch. What do you make them promise?
- They are so genuinely frightened of you that they immediately and truly abandon their interests and concerns, flee, and come near you never again.
- You press the iron to them cruelly and they die. Other fairies, not understanding that this is true death, might look for them to return someday, but they never will.

On a 10+ hit, you can keep them quiet while all this goes on. **On a 7–9 hit**, everyone nearby realizes that something's wrong, and can act to investigate or defend themselves. **On a miss**, ask the MC what goes wrong, or should a 7–9 hit go poorly for you, be prepared for the worst. You've stolen uninvited into fairyland, and threatened a fairy with true death, and the consequences might be severe.

Touching another mortal with iron has no consequence.

When you **pocket something**, name it and roll. **On any hit**, you have it, unnoticed. **On a 10+ hit**, you have it profoundly, and its erstwhile owner's erstwhile claim to it is already fading from everyone's minds. **On a 7–9 hit**, it's true that you're holding it in your pocket, but it's not true that you *own* it, and neither it nor anyone else will believe that it belongs to you. **On a miss**, it signals its owner somehow that it's been taken or misplaced, though it can't reveal itself or finger you.

Think metaphorically too, mortal kind.

When you **take to your heels**, roll. **On any hit**, you flee to safety. **On a 10+ hit**, you reach a place of genuine security where you can regroup, gather your thoughts, and decide on your next play. **On a 7–9 hit**, you're out of immediate danger, but not yet secure. Either way, ask the MC where you are. **On a miss**, ask the MC what goes wrong. Perhaps you'll flee straight into danger even worse than you left.



The Lantern Jack



You are the Lantern Jack. You're pisky kind:
enchanted, sprightly, full of fun and malice.

Your Name:

Choose a short name or a really long name.

Examples: *Erzabettina the Firefly Whisp*, *Lune*, *Master Revellest* of the *Wire High*, *Tip*, *Zoff*.

Your Summer & Winter Imagery:

- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Heat lightning, twinkling stars, ghost lights, the glowing wick after the candle's out, struck sparks, lightning bugs, mossy boles, fresh new shoots.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Long nose, lumpy nose, pert nose, no nose, four arms instead of two, beetle wings under your jacket, feelers, a crooked grin, a secret grin, wide eyes, kindly eyes, wild hair, upstanding hair, curly hair, bald as an egg.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Pale green, watery blue, beetle blue, iridescent black, iridescent purple, iridescent green, poison green, don't-eat-me yellow, back-off red.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Particolor clothing, counterchanged clothing, motley clothing, harlequin clothing, vagabonds' rags, mummers' rags, tatterdemalion rags, work clothes, fancy clothes, parody-fancy clothes, outlandishly fancy clothes.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for summer and for winter as well.

Your Place:

- ☞ Clown, juggler & tumbler;
- ☞ Novelties, trinkets, tickets & refreshments;
- ☞ Provisioner;
- ☞ Planner;
- ☞ Always there as a voice of reason.

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Dare them to follow you
- ☞ Greet them with honest pleasure
- ☞ Trip it gaily
- ☞ Vanish

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A wagon more spacious than seems likely, pulled by a truly gargantuan stag- or rhinoceros beetle.
- ☞ A minor infinity of silk scarves.
- ☞ A trunk overflowing with jugglers' balls, torches, knives, candles, jugs, bunnies, slapsticks, sparklers, squibs, fans, whirligigs, rattles, whistles, and some fat complacent old parakeets.
- ☞ A shillelagh to guard you, and who's laughing now?
- ☞ Crates and bottomless barrels of unsavory foodstuffs. Turnip mead, salt-brined cheese, lentil sausages spiced with pungents, Moxie.
- ☞ A dragon's egg.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ [x] practices and performs with me as a tumbler. We can *trip it gaily* together: I roll, and we take turns choosing. They can even *trip it gaily* without me: they roll, using their roll for *weathering the storm*. Anyway, who?
- ☞ I've led [x] into one misadventure too many. I can never again *open up to them* or *dare them to follow me*. Who?

Lantern Jack Plays

When you *greet someone with honest pleasure*, roll. *On a 10+ hit*, any grudge, grievance, or unfinished business between you vanishes, for real. *On a 7–9 hit*, they choose: let unfinished business vanish, as for a 10+ hit, or hold onto it. If they hold onto it, though, and bring it up again, they're insulting you. *On a miss*, you're insulting them by pretending there's no unfinished business between you.

When you **dare someone to follow you**, if they do, roll. **On any bit**, choose 1 of the following.

- Ask them where their (choose 1) greed, lust, or ambition would take them. You know a secret way there, and you take them there unchallenged.
- Ask them where their (choose 1) heart, dreams, or fate would take them. You know a secret way there, and you take them there unchallenged.
- You lead them to wonderful treasure. Ask the MC what and where.
- You lead them to a trackless place and abandon them up to their knees in cold muck-water.
- You lead them to the best seats in the circus, and later they'll find that they paid a premium to sit there.
- You lead them wherever you want to. Where?

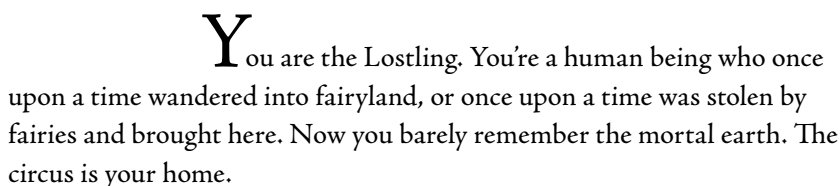
On a 10+ bit, in addition, they're beholden to you for serving so faithfully as their guide. **On a miss**, you and they get lost together. Ask the MC where you are now.

When you **trip it gaily**, roll. All present must stop to watch you. **On any bit**, choose as many of the following as you like, in any order, repeating freely, as quickly as you can. End with a finale.

- I leap to [x].
- I tumble to [x].
- I skip to [x].
- I roll to [x].
- I flutter daintily to [x].
- I seize hold of [x].
- I produce [x] from the air or my pockets or nowhere.
- I slip [x] into my pocket or under my hat.
- ... contorting myself fantastically all the while.
- ... juggling [y] all the while.
- I clamber up to [x].
- I fall to [x].
- I dive to [x].
- I strut up to [x].
- I swoop to [x].
- I make a show of [x].

On a 7–9 bit, after you've chosen at least 4 or 5, the MC can hold up a finger: come to your finale now, or you'll lose the crowd. **On a miss**, choose anyway. The MC counts out a 1-2-3 1-2-3 measure, and when you miss your beat, you misstep, and you end with a stumble instead of a finale.

When you **vanish**, roll. **On a 10+ bit**, you've gone. Tell the MC where you reappear. **On a 7–9 bit**, you're nearby, just invisible. Tell the MC what you do. **On a miss**, you're invisible except for your hat, your shoes, your ears, or the tip of your nose (the MC's choice which). You think you're all invisible. Tell the MC what you do.



I don't know whether you want to return to your old life, your old family and home. If you do, I don't know whether you ever can.

Your Name:

Choose a human name.

Free & Careful Imagery:

- ☞ Choose 1: Sky, field, cloud, sun, moon, wind.
- ☞ Choose 1: Jaw, eyes, hands, hair, face, lips.
- ☞ Choose 1: Blue, red, green, orange, brown, gray.
- ☞ Choose 1: Shoes, boots, coat, clothing, gown, hat, vest, cloak, hood, jacket, gloves, scarf.
- ☞ Choose 1: Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

For each that you've chosen, customize it. Characterize it differently for free and for careful.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for free and for careful as well.

Your Place:

- 🎭 Performer;
- 🎭 Crew;
- 🎭 Always there with encouragement and insight.
- 🎭 Creative collaborator;
- 🎭 Problem solver;

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ♪ See through them ♪ Appeal to fairy law
 ♪ Touch them with iron ♪ Sing of summer or winter



Emily McAllan

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A comfortable wagon, remarkable among fairy things for its human touches: its shaped wooden doorhandles, the warmth of its colors, the simple beauty of its trucks and wheels well cared for, the soft-brushed coats and well-fed contentment of its two oxen, the chicken that rides along on its ridge beam.
- ☞ Comfortable work clothing, a flashy costume, a subdued costume, and well kept and well mended dress-up clothing. Also, stilts.
- ☞ Something of iron that you wear around your neck, by right, token of who you are.
- ☞ Memories of the human world, not whole, snatches of song and incomplete vignettes, that come to you in dreams and unbidden.
- ☞ A book where you keep your sketches, your journal, your notes and memories.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ [x] has been traveling with me for a long time. We joined the circus together. I can never *put them off*. Who?
- ☞ Normally I'm the one who sees through people, but [x] has seen through me. I can never *waylay them* or *see through them*. Who?

Lostling Plays

When you *see through someone*, roll. *On any hit*, call a quick break in play and talk them over with the MC and your fellow players. See if you can collectively figure them out in symbolic or metaphoric terms: not only who are they really are, but what do they represent, what do they mean in the game. Take these insights back into play with you. *On a 7–9 hit*, they realize that you've seen through them, and can react accordingly. *On a 10+ hit*, they don't. *On a miss*, ask the MC what goes wrong. Perhaps they've drawn you in somehow instead.

When you **touch a fairy with cold iron**, roll. **On any hit**, choose 1 of the following. If the fairy you touch is another player's character, they choose, not you.

- *They will promise you anything you ask to be free of the iron's touch. What do you make them promise?*
- *They are so genuinely frightened of you that they immediately and truly abandon their interests and concerns, flee, and come near you never again.*
- *You press the iron to them cruelly and they die. Other fairies, not understanding that this is true death, might look for them to return someday, but they never will.*

On a 10+ hit, you can keep them quiet while all this goes on. **On a 7–9 hit**, everyone nearby realizes that something's wrong, and can act to investigate or defend themselves. **On a miss**, ask the MC what goes wrong, or should a 7–9 hit go poorly for you, be prepared for the worst. You've threatened a fairy with true death, and the consequences might be severe.

Touching another mortal with iron has no consequence.

When you **appeal to fairy law**, roll. **On any hit**, fairyland itself judges in your favor, and you choose 1 of the following.

- *Whatever or whoever is threatening you, it or they may not physically harm you, only affront, shock, startle, or dismay you.*
- *Whatever or whoever is constraining you, it or they must accept a gift or tribute from you, then release you and let you pass.*
- *Whatever or whoever is endangering you, must offer you a bargain, a test, or a trial to undertake, and may step only if you break or fail it.*

On a 7–9 hit, though, you're beholden to fairyland for its verdict. **On a miss**, ask the MC what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps fairyland not only judges against you, but takes your appeal as an insult in the first place.

Outside of fairyland, appealing to fairy law has no effect.

When you **sing of summer or winter**, roll. **On a 10+ hit**, the place where you are, and all the players' fairies in it, turn toward the season you sing of. Remind the MC to reflect the season's change in the NPCs here. **On a 7–9 hit**, the seasons don't turn, but any players' fairies who can hear your voice do, and any NPCs who hear you also feel the warmth or the chill. **On a miss**, some imperceptible warning shuts you up, you sing about something frivolous instead, and you step toward careful. You may make this play at most once per session.



The Nightmare Horse



You're no "kind" of fairy, you're the Nightmare Horse, unique and yourself: beguiler, bewitcher, dweller in night sky and deep water.

Your Name:

You don't have a name. You are the Nightmare Horse.

Choose a title that you've adopted for others' convenience.

Examples: *Lord Blue*, *Her Serene Majesty*, *Chef*, *Captain*.

Your Summer & Winter Imagery:

- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Still water, the drowned moon, the crescent moon, rushing falls, salt spray, a thunderstorm, a wild orchard, hyacinths, irises, a chill wind, a twisting horn.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Long hair, striking face, sharp teeth, shaggy hair, sleek hair, long legs, shapely legs, long neck, tossing head, mesmerizing eyes, beauty, poise, grace, control.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Glossy black, velvet black, iron black, salt-and-pepper, russet, spruce blue, midnight blue, twilight blue, sea green, moss green, bone pale, smoky gray.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Rich clothing, elegant clothing, rare jewels, silk mask, silk robes, understated clothing, tasteful clothing, high boots, brass-soled shoes, bare feet.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for summer and for winter as well.

Your Place:

- ☞ Star;
- ☞ Guide, opener & closer of doors;
- ☞ Problem solver;
- ☞ Cook;
- ☞ Always there as a dangerous friend.

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Change your form & seeming
- ☞ Disarm the situation
- ☞ Drag them under
- ☞ Take their breath away

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A glamorous wagon, pulled by dancing matched geldings.
- ☞ A magical cabinet: reach into it and it will deliver an outfit marvelously well-suited to the occasion at hand.
- ☞ A sharp sword of mortal bronze, stolen from some drowned warrior of ages past.
- ☞ A silver necklace, or bridle, but who dares place it around your neck?
- ☞ A traveling kitchen, tidy and spare, with labeled jars of delicate spices and many fresh, novel things.
- ☞ A polished lake stone, always icy cold, that remembers the secrets of past worlds.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ I've fallen in love with [x], though naturally I keep the fact from myself. I can never *put them off*. Who?
- ☞ I caught [x] opening a door they had no business opening. I can never again *draw them out*, nor *disarm any situation* they're a part of. Who?



Nightmare Horse Plays

When you **drag someone under**, roll. **On any hit**, choose 1 of the following.

- You seize physical hold of them and drown them. Choose this only if you're near water, and in a position to put your hands bodily on them. They can't stop you.
- They forget utterly who they are.
- Their thoughts fill with paranoid, undeniable, commanding nonsense, creating enemies and dangers from air.
- They fall into a deep sleep, troubled by nightmares, unable to force themselves awake again.
- They feel a terrible weight pressing on them, a terrible cold filling their mouth and nose, a terrible silence engulfing them and they can't seem to get free.

On a 10+ hit, you can choose to release and spare them at any time. **On a 7–9 hit**, though, you can't, and they must somehow find their own way back. **On a miss**, they realize the danger they're in and they're able to get away, if they flee right now.

When you **take someone's breath away**, roll. **On any hit**, your eyes meet and they catch their breath. They can't proceed with what they were doing until they've answered you. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 2 of the following to say, and you're telling them the truth. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 1.

- *At this moment, for me the moon rises and sets in your eyes. Will you close them against me?*
- *At this moment, at any other soul's approach but yours, I would flee. Will you come closer?*
- *At this moment, no one but you may touch me in safety. Will you?*
- *At this moment, I will bear no one on my back but you. Will you ride me?*
- *At this moment, I'm wearing my silver necklace, and if you place your hand on it, I'm yours. Will you?*
- *This moment is fleeting and there is no other like it. Another instant and I may never be yours. Will you come to my arms?*

On a miss, they take your breath away instead, and choose 1 against you, if they like, or else they may dismiss you, which you may take as a cruel insult.

When you *change your form & seeming*, roll. *On any hit*, you take the form of a beautiful person; a beautiful horse, with or without a horn; or your true form, the Nightmare Horse, terrible, bloody-fanged and -hooved, drenched in icy water. You remain in this form until you change it again.

On a 10+ hit, you can also change any one element of your summer & winter, if you want to. *On a miss*, choose: take your true form, the Nightmare Horse, or else take the form of your choice and step at once to full winter.

When you *disarm a situation*, first disarm yourself, and then roll. *On a 10+ hit*, everyone else present must disarm themselves as well. *On a 7–9 hit*, everyone else present must individually choose: disarm themselves, or else insult you and everyone else here and declare themselves enemy to all. *On a miss*, after a moment's hesitation you take your arms back up again.

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Declare your wrong to them ☞ Trust yourself to fate
- ☞ Touch them with iron ☞ Turn your hand to it

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A cart you inherited somehow from its previous owner, small, splintery, drafty in the wind, and the pissy little donkey that pulls it.
- ☞ Unmistakeable human clothing: fur and leather, which fairies rarely use; a big oilcloth coat, where fairies rarely mind the rain.
- ☞ A token of what the fairies stole from you. Examine it and it'll point the way forward. You followed it here to fairyland and to the circus, and now you're following it on.
- ☞ A knife of cold iron. No fairy can bear its touch.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ [x] met me first when I stepped into fairyland, and recognized the justice of my claim. I can never *put them off, waylay them, or touch them with iron*. Who?
- ☞ [x] is the most amazingly beautiful person I've ever seen, and they make me blush and babble. I can never *confront them* or *size them up*. Who?

Seeker Plays

When you *declare your wrong to someone*, roll. *On any hit*, they must stop and hear you out. *On a 7–9 hit*, they are moved by the injustice you've suffered, and may, if they choose, consider themselves to be insulted on your behalf. *On a 10+ hit*, they must. *On a miss*, perhaps they hear you out, but they don't have to, and they're indifferent: if fairies stole something from you, well, it's probably because they wanted it for some reason.

If you haven't already decided what the fairies stole from you, decide before you make this play.

When you **touch a fairy with cold iron**, roll. **On any hit**, choose 1 of the following. If the fairy you touch is another player's character, they choose, not you.

- *They will promise you anything you ask to be free of the iron's touch. What do you make them promise?*
- *They are so genuinely frightened of you that they immediately and truly abandon their interests and concerns, flee, and come near you never again.*
- *You press the iron to them cruelly and they die. Other fairies, not understanding that this is true death, might look for them to return someday, but they never will.*

On a 10+ hit, you can keep them quiet while all this goes on. **On a 7–9 hit**, everyone nearby realizes that something's wrong, and can act to investigate or defend themselves. **On a miss**, ask the MC what goes wrong, or should a 7–9 hit go poorly for you, be prepared for the worst. You've trespassed brashly into fairyland, and threatened a fairy with true death, and the consequences might be severe.

Touching another mortal with iron has no consequence.

When you **trust yourself to fate**, let go of your instincts and roll. **On any hit**, your fate, in good luck's disguise, will: lead you through, lead you on, lead you back, turn your enemy aside, reveal your enemy's weakness, put your enemy in your power, bring a friend to your side, open a door for you, or put a tool in your hand, in any combination. Ask the MC what happens and where you are now. **On a 7–9 hit**, though, your fate or luck includes some cost, some loss, some injury. Ask the MC what it is. **On a miss**, you should have trusted your own will, not chance. Ask the MC how far you fall, and where to, and it's up to you to recover yourself.

When you **turn your hand to a task or endeavor**, roll. **On any hit**, you accomplish it: you have a patience born of deep impatience, a cool and artful surety born of deep panic, and the true magic of the justice of your cause. **On a 10+ hit**, furthermore, you add to the accomplishment a distinct human quality, a liveliness, inventiveness, or passion that fairies cannot duplicate or ignore. **On a miss**, no one could deny your courage or willingness, but now you cannot accomplish it without help, and you cannot abandon it undone. You need a friend to draw you out or to help you finish.



The Stick Figure



You are the Stick Figure. You're a made thing given life and animation by magic: curious, naive, foolish and self-aware.

Your Name:

Choose a made up name that someone else once gave you.

Examples: *Cobbles*, *Grampy Pillbutton*, *The Teapot Girl*, *Moot*.

Your Summer & Winter Imagery:

- ☞ *Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter:* Water wheel, bellows, oil lamp, teakettle, grinding stone, sled runners, hinges, leaf spring, coil spring, pocketwatch, smoldering brazier, bone ribbing, stays, turnbuckles, clasps, cranks, wicker withes, paste, daub, marbles, mannikin, dressmaker's form, knotted string, ribbons.
- ☞ *Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter:* Broad smile, painted lips, mirror eyes, gemstone eyes, painted eyes, pearl eyes, glass lens eyes, mismatched limbs, visible construction, fake face, elegant mask, carefully painted mask, crude mask, doll-like face, porcelain hands, wicker hands, mitten hands, hewn body, lumpy body, powerful body, turnip head.
- ☞ *Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter:* Tin gray, bronze, copper, plaster white, inky black, oil black, garish tempera paint primaries, straw yellow, willow green, walnut black, oak tawny, canvas white, muslin brown.
- ☞ *Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter:* Mismatched clothing, castoff clothing, an old costume, one boot and one shoe, a ratty scarf, a pretty dress, a borrowed coat from you forget who, wooden shoes, felt mitts, a ragpatch cape, a battered top hat, a felt hood, eyeglasses with a broken lens, a straw hat with a hole chewed out of it.
- ☞ *Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter:* Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for summer and for winter as well.

Your Place:

- ☞ Clown;
- ☞ Fortune teller;
- ☞ Always there, trying to fit in.
- ☞ Worker;
- ☞ Problem solver;

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Blurt out to them what you think is going on
- ☞ Express yourself to them in capering antics
- ☞ Fall apart
- ☞ Get to work

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A comfortable place in someone else's wagon: a crate, a trunk, maybe just a hook on a post to hang yourself up on.
- ☞ A friendly yellow jacket who makes her nest in your elbow.
- ☞ A birch branch broom, bold and steadfast, an excellent listener and a fine dancer.
- ☞ An assortment of parts: spare, castoff, scavenged, kept. They're not as fine as your own but they'll serve in a pinch.
- ☞ A strong chestplate, a thick skull cap, and heavy solid fists that you can attach at need in place of your hands.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ [x] knows where I came from or who made me, but won't tell me. If I *blurt out to them what I think is going on, express myself to them in capering antics*, or choose an option that affects them when I get to work, they can freely ignore me, no matter what I roll or what I choose. Who?
- ☞ I've taken [x] to be my especial role model, following them around and trying to match their style and aplomb. I can never *confront them* or *waylay them*. [Note that you can change your role model whenever you step toward summer or winter.] Who?

Stick Figure Plays

When you *blurt out to someone what you think is going on*, roll. **On a 10+ hit**, if they know better, they have to reveal to you where you're right and where you're wrong, either by answering outright or else by revealing it in their body language, accidental gestures, and tells. **On a 7–9 hit**, they only have to reveal whether you're right or wrong, or broadly right or broadly wrong. **On a miss**, they can still choose to reveal whether you're right or wrong, but if they do, you're beholden to them. They can also decide that you've insulted them by being too blunt, too tacky, too indiscreet, too right, or too wrong.

When you *express yourself to someone in capering antics*, roll. You can do impossible things with your joints and other body parts and you command their attention. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 2 of the following. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 1. **On any hit**, briefly describe your antics, and...

- *It's surprisingly beautiful.*
- *It's surprisingly sad.*
- *It's surprisingly funny.*
- *It's surprisingly graceful.*
- *It reveals that I [x].*
- *It's surprisingly poignant.*
- *It's surprisingly dramatic.*
- *It's surprisingly frightening.*
- *It's surprisingly unpleasant.*
- *It reminds you of [x].*

Ask the MC and/or the other players how they respond. **On a miss**, choose 1, but ask the MC and/or the other players who notices, and who doesn't notice.

When you *fall apart*, roll. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 3 of the following. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 2.

- *You burst into tears.*
- *You lose your head.*
- *You lose your voice.*
- *You lose your senses.*
- *You shriek and bellow.*
- *Your arms fall off.*
- *You collapse into a heap.*
- *You lose your feet.*
- *You spill your guts.*
- *You break and run.*

On any hit, no enemy or circumstance can do any worse to you. Wait until it's over and then pull yourself together again. **On a miss**, choose 3, and some of the others happen as well, you can't tell and don't know which. You can't recover by yourself, you'll need a friend who can draw you out to help you pick up the pieces.

When you **get to work**, roll. **On a 10+ bit**, choose 2 of the following. **On a 7–9 bit**, choose 1.

- *No matter how long or how hard you work, you never tire.*
- *You make it into a dance and a song that gets stuck in everyone's head.*
- *You never complain, not even once, not even when [x] messes up the work you've done so far and you have to redo it.*
- *People can't help but joining in. Name a person or two who really can't help it, then ask if anyone else joins in too.*
- *Your work is so exacting and careful that, though it will be perfect, you'll never finish it, not if you work a hundred years.*
- *No matter who else joins in, you work faster, better, and more cheerfully than they do.*

On a miss, choose 1, and in addition, you can't stop working even after the work is done. To stop, you'll need a friend to draw you out.

The Troll

You are the Troll. You're stone troll kind: powerful, undignified, dangerous and patient.

Your Name:

Choose a common or old-fashioned name and a gruesome or comical image and connect them together.

Examples: *Bonestew Annie*, *Isabella the Toad*, *Boiled Bald Pol*, *Umbrella Richard*

Your Summer & Winter Imagery:

- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Tree stump, fallen tree, jutting stone, an icy run, a stinking underhang, porcupine, bear, walrus, boar.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Craggy face, smashed face, crooked face, bestial face, smoldering eyes, sunken eyes, wry smile, surprising grace, subtle beauty.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Smoke gray, pea green, brown, chestnut, copper green, gall green, iron black, golden brown.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Sturdy clothing, canvas apron, nailed boots, shawl, shaggy coat, unfortunate hat, impeccable clothing, stained clothing, mismatched clothing, garish clothing.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for summer and for winter as well.

Your Place:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| ☞ Performer; | ☞ Worker; |
| ☞ Spectacle; | ☞ Problem solver; |
| ☞ Always there to lend a hand. | |

Your Plays:

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ☞ Break them
- ☞ Hunker down
- ☞ Tower over them
- ☞ Pick through the leavings

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A jaunty, colorful roofed cart, pulled by a big old angry goat.
- ☞ A stone hammer as old as the living world.
- ☞ A helmet made for someone whose head was smaller than yours.
- ☞ Any number of little songbirds who perch on your shoulders and eat seeds from your fingers.
- ☞ A crooked bow and splintery arrows, with which you never miss.
- ☞ A glass bottle in which is caught the blowing winter gale.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ I once took hold of [x] in a rage, and threw them so high into the air that they like to cracked their head on the moon. I can never again *open up to them* or *draw them out*. Who?
- ☞ [x] once out-ate, out-drunk, out-sang, out-worked, or out-farted me. (They cheated, but I don't know it.) I can never *break them* or *tower over them*. Who?

Troll Plays

When you **break someone**, roll. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 1:

- *You break them bodily into pieces.*
- *You throw them bodily out of this world into another.*
- *You pound them bodily into the earth.*
- *You cow them so utterly that you change them bodily into something meek and retiring, perhaps yes a cow, perhaps a mole, a rabbit, a skittish little quail, a big-eyed frightened gasping fish.*

On a 7–9 hit, you merely wound, crush, and thoroughly dismay them. **On a miss**, ask the MC what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps you'll find that they have a core of unbreakable strength after all.

When you **tower over someone**, roll. **On any hit**, choose 1:

- No harm or danger can reach them, except through you.
- No friend or ally can come to their aid, except through you.

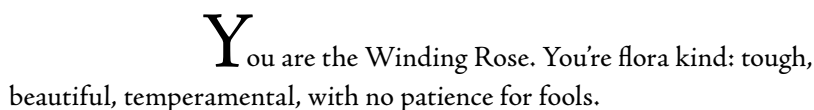
On a 10+ hit, you so tower over them that you are free to act without any risk of losing them or leaving them unguarded. **On a 7–9 hit**, you must keep one eye on them whatever you do, so take -1 to any rolls you make while you are towering over them. **On a miss**, ask the MC what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps you're missing something you should have caught.

When you **bunker down**, roll. **On any hit**, you can shrug off any blows that should land upon you. **On a 10+ hit**, shrug off as many as 3 solid blows before you suffer the consequences of the next. On a 7–9, shrug off as many as 2. **On a miss**, you become partly stone, and while you can shrug off as many blows as come, you'll need a friend to draw you out again.

When you **pick through the leavings**, roll. **On any hit**, you find something interesting. Ask the MC what it is. **On a 10+ hit**, it's treasure. **On a 7–9 hit**, it's a clue, a curiosity, or something that's still perfectly delicious, you don't know why they didn't finish this. **On a miss**, you lose something of your own here instead. Tell the MC to decide what, and to let you know when you notice that it's missing.



Michelle Ermolenko



Choose the name of a bird, a flower, a tree, and/or something in the sky, and combine them.

Examples: *Lilygull*, *Moonburr*, *Willowcloud*, *Chickadee Rose*

- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: The racing moon, a brier bramble, wildflowers in a field, a track through the woods, twilight, dawn.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Radiant beauty, crooked smile, parted lips, shining eyes, youthful beauty, ripe beauty, tangled hair, short hair.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Rose red, electric blue, spring green, yellow, copper, gold, nut brown, blush rose.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Sprightly clothing, cocked hat, short skirts, bare feet, kickass boots, whimsical clothing, feathers, flowers, a studded jacket or vest.
- ☞ Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Mannish, womanish, androgynish, boyish, girlish, childish, queerish, sexy, sexless, charming, forbidding, enticing, unapproachable, —.

You can choose 2 sometimes if you want to, why shouldn't you?

Choose your pronouns for summer and for winter as well.

- ☞ Performer;
- ☞ Worker;
- ☞ Barker & caller;
- ☞ Problem solver;
- ☞ Always there with a smile and a cutting line.

You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can:

- ✂ Cut them quick
- ✂ Twine danger around
- ✂ Lay your hand on them
- ✂ Withdraw behind thorns

Your Trappings:

- ☞ A bed in someone's wagon, soft, warm, and private.
- ☞ A sharp, useful, plain little knife.
- ☞ A fine sword, named, stashed thoughtlessly somewhere.
- ☞ Music and wildflower perfume wherever you walk.
- ☞ Tokens of love and memory, your own and others'.
- ☞ A sea shell in which speaks the voice of the moon.
- ☞ If you'd like to add any other prostheses, sensory aids, communication aids, or mobility aids, please do:

Your Bindings:

- ☞ [x] has fallen in love with me, for real. I can never **confront them** or **lay my hand on them**. Who?
- ☞ [x] has guessed the secret I keep so safe. (They didn't tell me, and even I don't know what it is.) But I can never again **confront them** or **waylay them**. Who?

Winding Rose Plays

When you **cut someone quick**, roll. **On any hit**, you cut them deep, wounding and dismaying them. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 1 of the following as well.

- *They don't realize until later that you've cut them so.*
- *They must suffer your cut in silence, without melodrama or display.*
- *Though you've cut them deep, they must suffer it as their due. If they offer any recrimination, grudge, or answer, you may consider it an insult.*

On a miss, they catch your hand or warn you off before your cut lands.

When you **lay your hand on someone**, roll. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 2 of the following. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 1.

- *They will go with you where you lead.*
- *They forget what they were thinking about before.*
- *Their heart races, their breath comes ragged, and their head swims.*
- *They cannot remove your hand themselves, but must wait for you to remove it.*
- *They trust you with what comes next, even after you've removed your hand, until you give them reason not to.*

On a miss, choose 1 anyway, but you are beholden to them.

When you *twine danger around*, roll. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 2 of the following. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 1.

- You arrest the danger here, with you. It can't get past you.
- You suffer no injury or misfortune from the danger yourself.
- You make yourself, in some measure, dangerous. Ask the MC what your next play might be, and if you choose to make that play, roll it at +3.

On a miss, ask the MC what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. You have taken the danger into your very arms, and perhaps it will not go well for you.

When you *withdraw behind thorns*, roll. **On any hit**, any enemy or danger who tries to reach you is torn, wounded, and dismayed by the deadly tangle of thorns protecting you. **On a 10+ hit**, only three or more enemies working together can overcome them, suffering the loss of two of their number. **On a 7–9 hit**, only two or more enemies can, suffering the loss of one. **On a miss**, you're safe from enemies, but you're trapped behind your thorns, and you'll need a friend who'll brave them to draw you out.

☼

An Example Character:
Harebrake, the Boondoggle Hob

☼

Im Harebrake the Goblin, the Boondoggle Hob. Being goblin kind I'm strong, wry, grand and uncouth.

"In summer you can see me hopping around on high-heeled berry-red boots, all knees and elbows, with my crooked nose sticking out from under shaggy pumpkin-brown hair. You can always hear me whistling and it sounds like peep-wit! Peep-wit! like spring peepers. When you look at me this way, I seem mannish, when you look at me that way, I seem womanish, and I never correct anybody about my pronouns.

"I'm the ringmaster of the circus; also a performer, the cook, and a heel-dragger. I'm always there to comment upon others' work. I might play a person by distracting them with tricks and visions, or by provoking them. I might play a situation by making myself something else, or by shrugging everything off.

"I live in my wagon, big and rumbling, painted berry-red like my boots, pulled by a pair of surly bull-pigs. You can smell me cooking in there, and it always smells great, I can somehow make delicious stew out of scraps and whatever we find. I also have 'books of children's stories, homey recipes, jovial songs, and accounts of murder,' and to read them I put on thick, thick glasses — even though you can't see my eyes through my hair.

"One of you finds yourself always on my bad side, and you never know why. Who?" (*Jill Cowdery: "How about me?"*) "Sure! I should try to confront you every session, so that's what I'll do.

"On the other hand, I've taken an absolutely unaccountable liking to someone else. Who'll volunteer?" (*"I will," Timothy Bones says.*) "Okay! I should try to draw you out every session too."



HARE BRAKE The Goblin

~ ● ~

Ringmaster
& Provocateur

☼

An Example Character:
Timothy Bones, the Crooked Wand

☼

“I’m Timothy Bones, the Crooked Wand. You can call me “Old Bones,” too. I’m witchy kind: practical, private, insightful, and calculating.

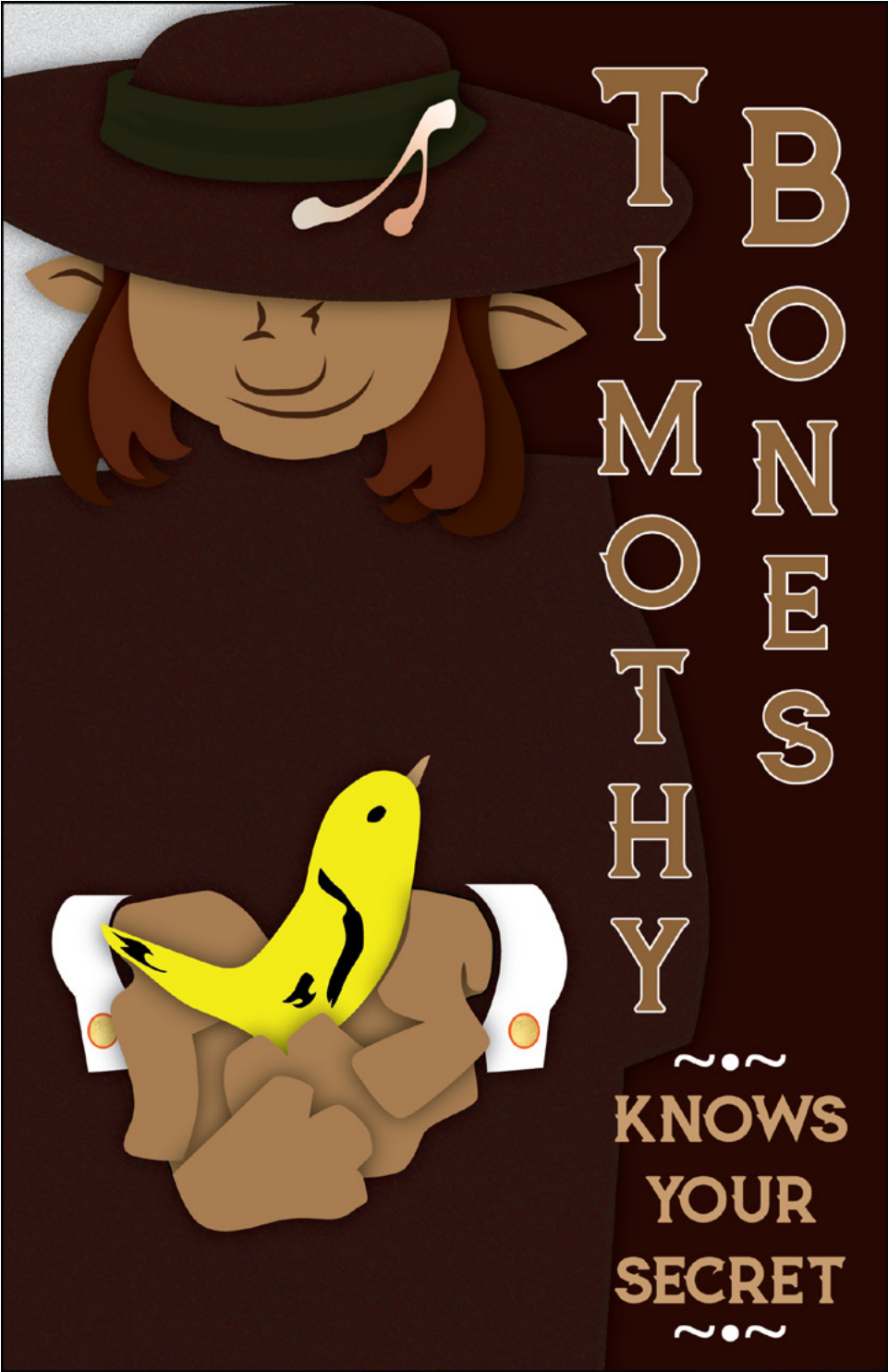
“In summer I’m vine-twisted wood, I’m shining eyes, I’m deep red and black, I’m a floppy hat, I’m mannish and queerish, I’m he / him.

“In the circus, my place is fortune teller, conjurer, planner, and problem solver. I’m always there with a secret to tell. I might play a person by blind-folding them or laying them bare. I might play a situation by sinking into the mud or throwing the bones, my namesake.

“My wagon is a creaking weather-warped cart, pulled by a cheerful old ox. I’ve got a number of other interesting things, let’s see: birch-bark books written with words stolen from the creating of the world, for instance. A glowing hot coal that will never cool. Also this magical golden thimble. Interesting things.

“For bindings: I once turned *blank* into a little bird, put you in a cage, and let my cat stare at you with its yellow eyes. Anybody?” (“*Oh it was me,*” says *Tip the Lantern Jack*, “*and you had good reasons.*”) “Aha. Well, I can never again waylay you or blindfold you.

“I also once confided my heart’s true love and longing to *blank*.” (*Jill Cowdery*: “*Me? How about me?*”) “I can see it. I can never put you off.”



❁

An Example Character: Jill Cowdrey, the Interloper

❁

“My character’s Jill Cowdrey, the Interloper. She’s a human being who’s intruding into fairyland in disguise to steal fairy treasure. She’s joined the circus because it will give her cover. She’s disguised as an elf princess traveling incognito.

“She’s free and careful instead of summer and winter. When she’s free, her imagery is a crescent moon, pretty eyes, a cool periwinkle blue, a bird’s mask, womanish. Her pronouns are she / her.

“Her place in the circus is novelties, trinkets, tickets and refreshments, so I guess she’s not really a performer, she does those other things. Crew too. Out of the spotlight. Also she’s a worker, a lookout, and always there, watching and listening quietly. Her playbook plays are to pass herself off as royalty incognito, to touch someone with iron, to pocket something, and to take to her heels.

“She doesn’t have her own wagon, she has a corner in a friendly wagon where she can ride and sleep. I guess she’s pretending to be a princess who’s roughing it.” (*Tip, with a wink: “You can live in my wagon if you want, your highness.”*) “Cool, she will, she’s pretty private though.

“She has some stuff that doesn’t really affect anyone else... Oh! She has an old iron nail hidden in her clothing, close to her skin. Taped to her skin. It’ll give her away because it’s iron and real fairies can’t bear the touch of it.

“One of you knows who Jill really is, but keeps confidence for your own reasons. Who?” (“Me!” says the Teapot Girl. “I can tell you’re faking because so am I!”) “Jill can never confront you or pass herself off to her.

“One of you is Jill’s honest friend, though you don’t know who she really is. Who?” (*Timothy Bones: “I am.”*) “That’s good, she needs you for a friend. She can never put him off, and if she ever touches him with her iron nail, he must choose to die.”



SHOW
YOUR
TICKET
TO
THE
MASKED
LADY
&
DON'T
WONDER
WHO
SHE
MAY
BE...

Vincent Baker

☼
An Example Character:
Tip, the Lantern Jack



Im Tip the Lantern Jack. I'm pisky kind: enchanting, sprightly, full of fun and malice.

"For me summer is heat lightning, a crooked grin, iridescent purple, harlequin clothing — absolutely skin-tight, iridescent purple and white diamonds. I'm androgynish and sexy, in summer my pronouns are she / her or they / them, I don't mind.

"I'm a clown, juggler and tumbler; novelties, trinkets, tickets and refreshments; provisioner; and planner. I'm always there as a voice of reason. I play people by daring them to follow me or by greeting them with honest pleasure. I play situations by tripping it gaily or by vanishing.

"My wagon is more spacious than seems likely, pulled by a truly gargantuan stag beetle. It's the size of a VW bug, ha ha. My wagon has like three or four rooms in it, maybe five, it's just a wagon on the outside but it's like a resort house on the inside. I have all kinds of juggler's things, sparklers, ribbons, razor-sharp knives, a 'minor infinity' of silk scarves. I also have crates and barrels of truly disgusting foods, so it's good that I'm the provisioner, isn't it!

"One of you practices and performs with me as a tumbler, who?" (*Harebrake the Goblin says, "I'm a very good tumbler, but I think our moods might be a little different..."*) ("*Oh me! Me!*" *says the Teapot Girl.*) "The Teapot Girl it is. We can trip it gaily together, and you can even trip it gaily without me.

I've led one of you into one misadventure too many, who?" ("*Now that's me for sure,*" *says Harebrake.*) "So I can never again open up to you or dare you to follow me. I'm sure you wouldn't listen to me if I tried."



~Tip the Lantern Jack~

❁

An Example Character: The Teapot Girl, the Stick Figure

❁

“My name is the Teapot Girl. My playbook is the Stick Figure. I’m a made thing given life and animation by magic. I’m curious, naive, foolish and self-aware.

“My summer imagery is a teakettle (that’s my head), painted eyes and mouth, it says ‘plaster white’ but I’m going with enamel white, a white enamel teapot with a painted face. Eyeglasses with a broken lens. My painted face is girlish, and people call me ‘the Teapot Girl,’ so in summer my pronouns are she / her.

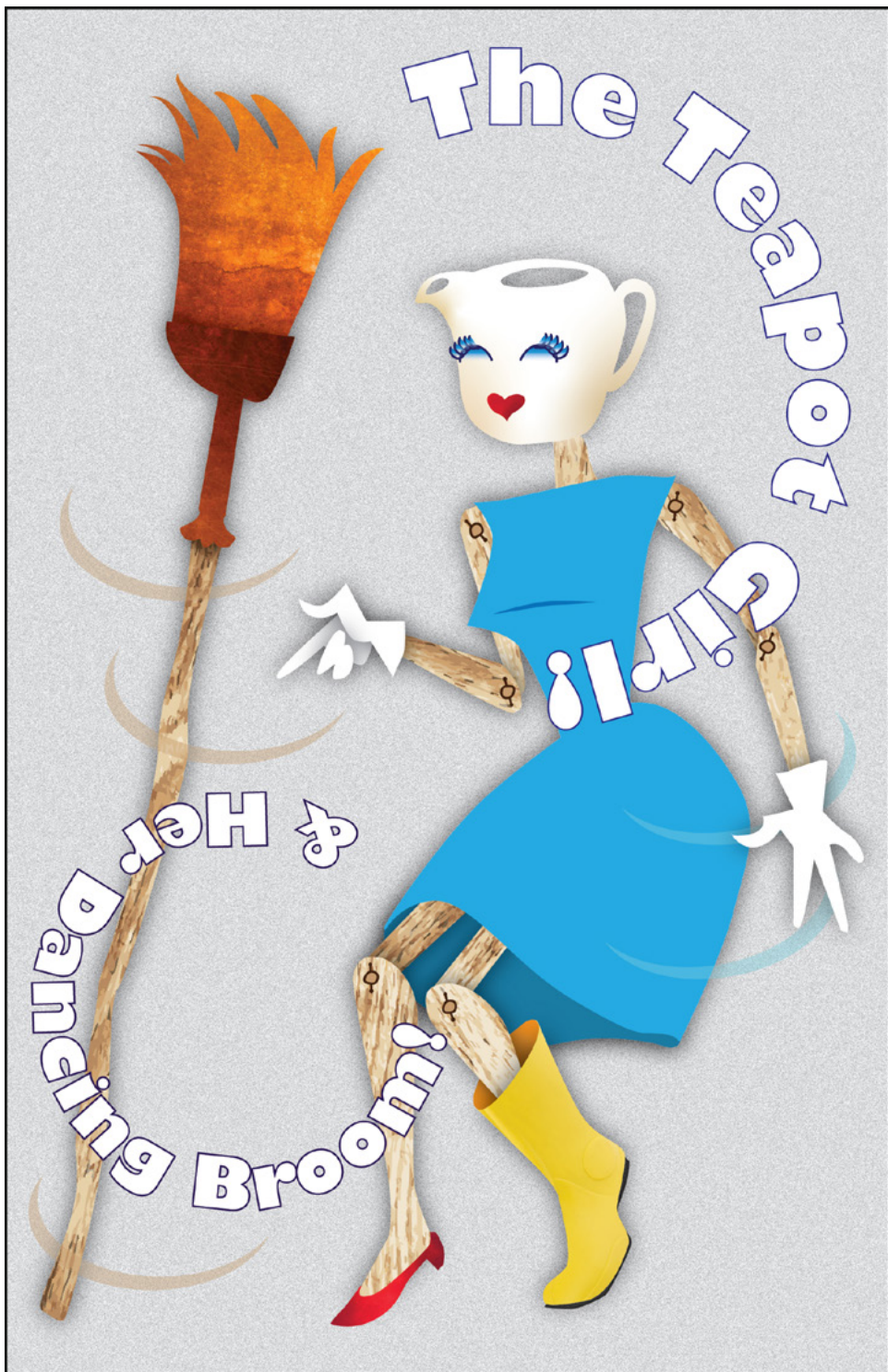
“My place is: clown, fortune teller, worker, problem solver, and always there, trying to fit in. My Stick Figure plays are: blurt out to them what I think is going on; express myself to them in capering antics; fall apart; and get to work.

“I don’t have a wagon, I have a comfortable place in someone else’s, an old steamer trunk I can fold myself up and sleep in. Timothy Bones, can I keep my trunk in your wagon?” (*Timothy Bones: “Of course!”*) “Thanks.

“My other trappings are a birch branch broom, bold and steadfast, an excellent listener and a fine dancer. It’s part of my act, dancing with a broom, but also I talk to it a lot when nobody’s around. Also I have spare parts and optional parts I can swap in and out. There’s a friendly yellow jacket who makes her nest in one of my spare elbows.

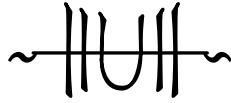
“My bindings are: One of you knows where I came from or who made me, but won’t tell me. Who?” (*“I do know those things, and no, I won’t tell you,” says Timothy Bones.*) “True! Several of my plays, when I make them, he can just ignore me if he wants to.

“I’ve taken one of you to be my especial role model, Jill, I hope you’ll volunteer?” (*“Of course I will,” Jill Cowdery says.*) “It’s because I know who she really is and she’s passing herself off so well. I follow her around and try to match her style. I can never confront her or waylay her, but I might put her in danger or accidentally give her away!”





Justin Lanjil



Chapter 2: *Plays & Consequences* Rules

- ☞ Generally, you say what your character says, does, thinks, and intends, and the Mistress of Ceremonies says where you are and what's happening there. When you want to get to the bottom of something, change what's happening, or take control for a moment, you do it by making a play.
- ☞ You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can make your own playbook's plays.
- ☞ Always choose a play that makes sense to you, given the circumstances and your own goals and interests.
- ☞ Announce your play by name.
- ☞ Follow the procedure in the play precisely. When you roll, add or subtract your modifier for that play in your playbook. A sum of 10+ is the strongest play; a sum of 7–9 is a strong play; and a sum of 6 or less means you've missed your play.
- ☞ You choose your play and make your roll. The play tells you what the outcome and consequences are.
- ☞ In addition to the direct consequences listed in your plays, there are both short-term consequences that the Mistress of Ceremonies can add to your play, at their option, and long-term consequences that your play might invoke: stepping toward summer or winter, violence, insults, favors, and love.



Making Your Plays



Instead of playing out on a playing field, on a board, or in hands of cards, Under Hollow Hills plays out in the conversation you have with your fellow players and MC.

Generally:

You freely say what your character says, does, thinks, and intends. You answer anybody's questions on your character's behalf. You freely ask questions about anything that catches your curiosity.

The Mistress of Ceremonies says where you are, who else is there, and what they're doing. They answer your questions about what it's like and what's happening.

You take casual turns with each other, the way you would in any conversation: sometimes interrupting, sometimes going around the circle, sometimes talking over each other then backing up to make right, always trying to be thoughtful with each other but sometimes getting carried away with your own enthusiasm.

Your plays introduce limits and structure into the casual conversation of play. They're rules you can introduce and follow whenever you want that let you change how the conversation's going.

The vocabulary is:

What's your best play here?

How are you going to play this?

Are you going to play it safe or go for it?

How do you want to play them?

Are you just talking, or are you going to make a play for it?

You should expect the Mistress of Ceremonies to ask you questions like these often.

There are two ways you can think about your plays, equally true:

When you want to expand the conversation, change its direction or focus, or take control of it for a moment, you do it by making a play.

When you want to take action to figure out what's going on, react forcefully to something, affect what's happening, find out what someone else is thinking or planning, change what they're doing, or take control of a situation, you do it by making a play.

You can make obvious plays, and you can make your own playbook's plays. Each playbook has its own set of four unique plays. You usually can't make anybody else's playbook plays, only your own.

Always choose a play that makes sense to you, given the circumstances and your own goals and interests. Sometimes it'll be obvious, and sometimes it'll be a stretch, but as long as it makes sense to you, everybody else should go along with it. They might ask you how your play makes sense, and you should answer as best you can, but ultimately you don't have to justify it or convince them.

To make a play, announce it by name and pick up two dice. Follow the procedure in the play precisely. It'll call for you to roll the dice, make decisions and judgments, and/or ask the Mistress of Ceremonies or another player to make decisions and judgments too. Everyone can read along with you, or you can step through the play yourself.

Add your two dice together, then add or subtract your roll for that play in your playbook. The play's outcome always depends on your total roll. Rolling 10 or higher gives you the strongest play: the best possible outcome or the best possible choices. Rolling 7–9 gives you a strong play: good outcome or good choices. Rolling 6 or less means that you've misplayed or you've missed your play. The play might tell you precisely what happens on a miss, or it might just tell you to ask the Mistress of Ceremonies what goes wrong.

MC, make sure to bring a couple of copies of the Obvious Plays sheet to the game with you. Put them out on the table so that everyone can refer to them when they need to.



The Obvious Plays



They're called "obvious" plays because they're plays that anyone can make. No one needs unique skills to confront someone else, no one needs an uncanny nature to open up to someone, no one needs magical powers to weather a storm. They might also be called "standard" plays, "basic" plays, or "universal" plays.

There are obvious ways to play a person, and obvious ways to play a situation that you don't understand or that is getting out of your control.

The obvious ways you can play a person are to:

- ☞ [Confront them](#);
- ☞ [Draw them out](#);
- ☞ [Open up to them](#);
- ☞ [Put them off](#);
- ☞ [Size them up](#); or
- ☞ [Waylay them](#).

The obvious ways you can play a situation are to:

- ☞ [Call for a line](#);
- ☞ [Sniff the wind](#);
- ☞ [Use your trappings](#); or
- ☞ [Weather the storm](#).

If you don't like the way things are going, remember that you can always play it by *calling for a line* or *weathering the storm*.

Confront Someone

When you confront someone, roll. *On any hit*, you interrupt them and they can't proceed without dealing with you. *On a 10+ hit*, they have to choose whether to back down and give you your way, or defy you and force your hand. *On a 7–9 hit*, if they don't want to back down or force your hand, they can try to prevaricate, mollify you, explain, bargain, or justify themselves instead. *On a miss*, ask the MC or the other player what goes wrong. Perhaps you've tipped your hand.

Examples:

☞ Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob seeks out Jill Cowdery the Interloper, for no reason but to pick a fight with her. Let's say that she's at work, tending the circus animals. ("My gargantuan stag beetle," says Tip the Lantern Jack.)

"I'm confronting you," Harebrake says, "but I'm just making up some complaint. 'You spoil that beetle, don't feed it so much.'" Harebrake rolls: a 9, plus their +1 to the roll, for a total of 10. "You have to choose whether to back down and give me my way, or defy me. Which do you choose?"

Jill laughs. "Oh, she'll defy you for sure. She just stares you down, as though she really were fairy royalty and you don't intimidate her at all. She's forcing your hand. What have you got?"

☞ The circus is performing at the River Queen's winter palace, here to celebrate the Breaking of the Ice and the end of winter. The Wolf King of Winter is also here as the River Queen's guest, with his personal guard of menacing young friends. One of these has been stalking and watching the circus, putting them all on edge, and now she's cornered the Teapot Girl.

"How do you want to play it?" says the MC.

"I'm tired of this!" she says. "I'm just going to snap. My play is to confront her. 'Bad! Dog!'" But she rolls a miss, a 6 on the dice, minus her -1 to the roll, for a total of 5. "Oh no. What goes wrong?"

"Well, you tell me. How do you tip your hand?"

"That's easy. I'm afraid of her! My voice is shaking, my hands too. I tried to shout 'bad dog,' but it came out as a little squeak. I can't muster anything but terror! What's she going to do?"

Draw Someone Out

When you draw someone out, roll. **On any hit**, you seize their attention and they open up to you. **On a 10+ hit**, ask them 2 of the following; they must answer honestly. **On a 7–9 hit**, ask 1.

- *What are you considering?*
- *Where are you open to me, where are you vulnerable, and where are you guarded?*
- *What are you forgetting, ignoring, or keeping from yourself?*
- *What do you hope I'll do?*
- *What are you afraid I'll do?*
- *What do you expect, and how do you feel about it?*

On a miss, ask the MC or the other player what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps you've revealed yourself to them instead.

Examples:

☞ Jill Cowdery the Interloper is sharing a quiet moment with her friend Timothy Bones the Crooked Wand, and Jill decides on a whim to draw him out. She rolls a 6, but with her +2 to the roll it's an 8, so she gets to ask 1 question.

"So Timothy, as far as this situation with the Wolf King of Winter goes, what are you forgetting, ignoring, or keeping from yourself?"

Timothy Bones sits bolt upright. "Jill! You're amazing! I'm forgetting that while he's a fairy king, I'm the Crooked Wand. I don't bow to him!"

☞ Meanwhile, Tip the Lantern Jack has sought out a private audience with the River Queen. In the River Queen's winter palace's frosty reception chamber, over chilled champagne, Tip draws her out. She rolls a 4 on the dice, which is a miss even with her +2 to the roll. "What goes wrong?"

"We'll see. Go ahead and choose 1 anyway," the MC says.

"Okay. Where is she open to me, where is she vulnerable, and where is she guarded?"

"Good question. She's guarded against you because of your respective places: she's a queen, you're just a performer and a common jack to boot."

"Fair."

"She's vulnerable to you if you take a servant's posture, she'll forget that she doesn't, in fact, command you."

"She'll think I'm loyal."

“Exactly.”

“I don’t want to act the servant. It’s not my style.”

The MC shrugs. “You asked, what you do with it is up to you. Oh also, what goes wrong is, you reveal yourself to her as well, so I’m going to ask you a question too. What are you afraid she’ll do?”

“I’m afraid I’ll fall in love with her. Does that count?”

“Almost! What would make you fall in love with her? That maybe she might do?”

“Honestly all she’d have to do is smile at me, if she means it,” Tip says.

“Interesting.”

In circumstances where you can help someone, endanger them, entice them, or strike them by drawing them out, add this question:

- *I do indeed draw you out, by doing [x]. What’s the effect?*

Example:

☞ There will come a time, later on, when Timothy Bones and the Wolf King of Winter are together on stage. The Wolf King has been dared and goaded into volunteering to participate in Timothy Bones’ performance. He doesn’t know what’s coming and he’s on vigilant guard against it.

“He’s putting the audience on edge, isn’t he. Well. I’ll draw him out.” He rolls a total of 8, for a 7–9 hit. “Good enough. “I do indeed draw him out, by using subtly submissive body language, putting him at the center of attention, casually showing him my empty hands — you know, trying to put him at ease and get him to open up just a little. What’s the effect?”

“He can’t resist an audience, ultimately. He keeps an eye on you but if you set him up to look good—”

“Oh I do.”

“—then pretty soon he’s strutting and projecting his voice, thinking of you as *his* supporting cast, *his* volunteer.”

“Perfect,” says Timothy Bones.

Open Up to Someone

When you open up to someone, roll. **On any hit**, you capture their attention and they must hear you out. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 2 of the following. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 1.

- *Reveal to them what you'd like them to do. If they accede, offer them a reward or a favor, but if they refuse, you may consider it an insult.*
- *Reveal to them something you're considering, and judge their reaction to it. Ask their player what they think; they have to tell you. This can be implicit or explicit, and they may or may not realize what they've revealed.*
- *Offer them something, explicitly or implicitly. If they accept it, they're beholden to you, in proportion, as you judge it, but if they refuse, you may consider it an insult.*
- *Confide in them or explain something to them. Tell them what you reveal and ask them how they take it. They must answer honestly.*

On a miss, ask the MC or the other player what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps you've made yourself beholden to them.

Examples:

☞ Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob is announcing the circus.

"Come great, come small!" they say. "We have prepared for you a show like no other! I'm opening up to the audience." They roll a 10 and add their +1 to the roll, for an 11. They get to choose 2 of the options.

"First: I'm revealing what I'd like them to do. I'd like them to gather around and pay attention, and if they do, I'm offering them a show like no other. If they don't, they better look out."

"Of course they do," the MC says. "They're excited, some are clapping, you have their absolute attention."

"Good. Second: 'We're hear to celebrate the coming spring, the Breaking of the Ice, and we don't care what the Wolf King of Winter has to say about it, do we!' I'm revealing the circus' intention to stand up to the Wolf King. How do they take it?"

"Oh, oh I see," says the MC. "*They* take it great, there's a crackle of building energy, a mix of thrill, relief, hope, fear. They're with you. But hanging back in the crowd, you see one of the Wolf King's menacing young retainers, and *she* doesn't take it well at all..."

☞ The Teapot Girl seeks out her role model, Jill Cowdery the Interloper.

"I run up to you and open up to you, no preamble, I just start blurting things out. Where are you, by the way?"

"She's getting the refreshments and novelties for the show in order. Is there someone else helping her?"

"Hattercob the Bootless," the MC says.

"Hi Hattercob," says the Teapot Girl. "Anyway Jill the Wolf King's awful friend cornered me and she didn't do anything but stare at me and I got so scared I squeaked and I lost my head and when I tried to find it I lost my feet and I fell all to pieces and— and— And I know you would have stood up to her, so I want to go find her and confront her, and will you come with me? That's what I'm considering, I'm judging your reaction to it."

"If you're making the play, do you want to roll it?" says the MC.

"Oh right." She rolls a 2. Even her +2 to the roll can't make it a hit.

"Choose 1 anyway," says the MC. "Since you already have. Jill?"

"I think that's really dangerous, Teapot Girl. Let's not do it."

"Oh." Crestfallen.

"Want to step toward winter?" says the MC. "For the miss?"

"Yeah. That feels right," says the Teapot Girl.

When you perform for an audience, opening up to them is often a good and obvious way to play it.

Example:

☞ Tip the Lantern Jack is juggling for the assembling audience.

"Are you *tripping it gaily*?" the MC asks; it's one of Tip's playbook plays.

"Nope! Not yet, I'm saving that for the actual show. For now I'm just opening up to the crowd." She rolls a 6, plus her +1 to the roll, for a total of 7. "Good enough! Here's what I'm doing: I'm juggling along, and every once in a while, I slip in a really dazzling move. Suddenly for an instant there are 6 balls instead of 3, or they're sparklers and fireworks instead of balls. Or I pretend to trip and do a quick handspring, still juggling. Anyway, I'm choosing to offer them something. I'm offering to give them a real show, later, where they'll get to see what I'm really capable of. Do they accept?"

"Do they just! You hear them whispering, 'did you see that? Did you see that? What's she going to DO?'"

"Good. They're beholden to me, so they'd better make good."

Put Someone Off

When you put someone off, roll. *On any hit*, they must back off and give you time and space. *On a 10+ hit*, they have to physically leave or let you leave yourself. *On a 7–9 hit*, they can remain nearby, if they choose, and follow along behind you if you leave. *On a miss*, ask the MC or the other player what goes wrong. Perhaps you’ve insulted them.

Examples:

☞ Now one of the Wolf King of Winter’s menacing young retainers tries to corner Tip, the Lantern Jack.

“Nah. ‘Go pick on someone else, I’m not in the mood for games,’” Tip says. She rolls a 9 and adds her +2 to the roll, for a total of 11.

“She slinks off,” the MC says. “If she had a tail, it’d be between her legs.”

“Good, who cares,” says Tip.

☞ Instead the Wolf King’s retainer stalks off after Jill Cowdery and the Teapot Girl.

“Jill’s going to put her off too,” Jill Cowdery says. “I like how it worked for Tip.” She, however, rolls a miss: a 5, minus her -1 to the roll. “Oops. What goes wrong?”

“I think you insult her. What do you do to put her off?”

“Oh, yeah, I just wave her away, dismissing her, like a princess would. I can see where she’d be insulted.”

“She is. Instead of leaving you alone, she stalks closer, kind of grinning, and now it looks like she’s not in the mood for games either. How do you two want to play her now?”

Size Someone Up

When you size someone up, roll. **On any hit**, ask them questions; they must answer honestly. These are things that you realize about them from just a quick look; you need not speak or interact in any way. **On a 10+ hit**, ask them 2 questions. **On a 7–9 hit**, ask them 1.

- *What do you intend to do?*
- *How far are you prepared to go?*
- *Where are you confident, and where are you uncertain?*
- *What do you hope will happen, what do you fear, and how prepared are you for each?*

On a miss, ask the MC or the other player what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps you've revealed your attention or your intentions to them.

Examples:

☞ "I want to size her up. Jill, I mean," the Teapot Girl says.

"Not the Wolf King's retainer?" the MC says.

"Nope." She rolls a 7 and adds her +1 to the roll, for an 8. "Okay, so Jill, how far are you prepared to go?"

Jill Cowdery says, "you mean, am I prepared to slip the iron nail out from where it's taped to my skin, reveal myself as no fairy at all, and kill the Wolf King of Winter's friend for with it, kill her for real?"

"That's what I mean. Are you?"

"I'm really not."

☞ Meanwhile, Timothy Bones the Crooked Wand has gone directly to the Wolf King of Winter, in his pavilion tent outside the River Queen's winter palace. "I bow for politeness sake, but I don't lower my eyes. I size him up." Timothy rolls a 5, which his +1 to the roll brings only to a 6. "What goes wrong?"

"We'll see. Ask 1 anyway," says the MC.

"Okay. Where is he confident, and where is he uncertain?"

"Well, he's uncertain what will happen, but he doesn't care, he doesn't think it's important. He's confident that you can't actually touch him. You might bring spring *here*, but you can't bring spring to *him*. Also, what goes wrong is, I'm going to ask you 1 in return. What do you intend to do?"

"I haven't figured out how, but I intend to bring spring to *him*."

"That's rich! His smile widens like, good luck, you'll need it."

Waylay Someone

When you waylay someone, roll. **On any hit**, they must drop everything and deal with your attack. **On a 10+ hit**, choose 2 of the following. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 1.

- *You drive them scrambling back.*
- *You strike them violently, wounding and dismaying them.*
- *You seize bodily hold of them.*
- *You throw them off-balance and they stumble or fall.*
- *You shock and startle them and they panic or freeze.*

On a miss, ask the MC or the other player what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps you've overplayed your position and given them the upper hand.

Examples:

☞ Everyone agrees that the Wolf King of Winter's menacing young retainer is being a bully, and that it reflects poorly on the Wolf King.

"Well, nothing left for it," Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob says. "Next time I'm near my wagon, I take out my polished, knotted skull-club, and next time I see that wolf, I waylay her." The occasion arises eventually, and Harebrake rolls a 9, adds her +1 to the roll, and hits with a 10.

"I choose 2?" she says. "Great. I drive her scrambling back and I strike her violently, wounding and dismaying her."

"You sure do!" says the MC. They look up the rules for what happens when a fairy's wounded, and so they proceed.

☞ And that's what happened, but what if she'd rolled a miss instead? Let's say that she rolls a 5, adds her +1 to the roll, and misses with a 6.

"Oh no. What goes wrong?"

"Well, you haven't quite gotten the drop on her," the MC says. "Choose 1 anyway, but don't choose to strike and wound her."

"Fantastic, okay. I throw her off-balance. She stumbles and falls."

"Right on. She dives out of the way, but she can't keep her feet and she goes down. Even as she falls, she's drawing her knife. It's a bronze seax, about this long, gleaming sharp, quite a serious fighting knife."

"Makes sense."

"How do you want to play it now?"

Call for a Line

When you want a suggestion, a prompt, a setup, some backup, some crowd control, a safety wire, or to hand the action off to someone else, ***call for a line***. You can:

- *Ask for suggestions for your next play.*
- *Ask someone else to make a play, if they're willing.*
- *Ask for solidarity in holding a line.*
- *Ask for help in reaching an outcome.*
- *Ask for backup in taking a risk.*

The other players and the MC should offer the best help and suggestions they can. Take them up on it!

Example:

☞ “I’ve shot my mouth off,” Timothy Bones the Crooked Wand says. “I said that I intend to bring spring to the Wolf King of Winter and I mean it, but I have no idea how I’m going to do it. Any suggestions, anybody?”

It’s a challenging idea. Everybody reads their playbooks for an obvious answer, but none appear.

“If we can’t do it ourselves today, how do you feel about making a long-term project of it?” says Jill Cowdery the Interloper. “We could kidnap him and take him away with us. Surely somewhere along the line we’ll encounter a Goddess of Spring or a Cauldron of Rebirth or, I don’t know, the Summer Stone of Thawing the Wolf King’s Heart. Sooner or later there’ll be something.”

“You could call for a volunteer and I could ***dare him to follow me*** into the ring during your performance,” says Tip the Lantern Jack. “You could ***blindfold him***—”

“Or tap him with my thimble to turn him into a bird—”

“—And replace him with me!” says the Teapot Girl. “Turn me into a bird beforehand. He goes into your sleeve and I come out. It can be the intro to my performance. I have a plan for my performance, and by the time I’m done nobody will think to wonder where he’s gone to.”

“Wonderful!” says Timothy Bones. “And as a side benefit, until we find a way to thaw his heart, I’ll get to keep the Wolf King of Winter in a cage, a little like my hero, Mommy Fortuna. Thanks, friends! Let’s do it.”

Sniff the Wind

When you sniff the wind, roll. *On any hit*, ask the MC questions, which they must answer truthfully. *On a 10+ hit*, ask 2. *On a 7–9 hit*, ask 1.

- *What's coming this way?*
- *What's here that I haven't yet seen?*
- *Whose territory is this? Whose doing?*
- *If I trust my feet to carry me to safety, where will they take me?*
- *How could I make myself invisible here, how could I go unnoticed?*
- *If I trust my nose to lead me to the heart of this, where would it take me next?*

On a miss, ask the MC what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps you've disturbed something or someone without realizing.

Examples:

☞ Tip the Lantern Jack, instead of leaving the winter palace after her audience with the River Queen, has slipped through a side door into an internal hallway. "Now then," she says. "Let's find out what's beneath the surface around here. I sniff the wind." She hits the roll with a 7, plus her +1, for a total of 8. "If I trust my nose to lead me to the heart of this, where would it take me next?"

"The kitchen!" says the MC.

☞ Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob has given the Wolf King of Winter's menacing young retainer a substantial thrashing with her skull-club.

"Now then," she says. "It's one thing to ambush lone goblins on the heath. Breaking the bones of a fairy king's retainer is going to have consequences in a whole different category. I'm sniffing the wind." She rolls a 5, which is still a miss even with her +1 to the roll. "Well, what goes wrong?"

"Do you want to step toward winter? Maybe the smell of blood reminds you of bad times?"

"I sure do! It sure does."

"Cool. Also, choose 1 anyway," says the MC.

"Okay. So, what's coming this way? What have I let myself in for?"

"Yeah, that's the thing. The Wolf King and his retainers are here as the River Queen's guests, under the protection of her hospitality. This isn't just an offense against him, it's an offense against her too."

"Oh, so it is. I should have thought of that. Oof."

Use Your Trappings

Use *one of your trappings* whenever, however, and as often as you like. When you do, tell the MC and the other players what you're doing, answer their questions, and ask what happens.

Example:

☞ It's the circus' performance at last, and the Teapot Girl is on stage. Her performance has already had its full intro, and now she's going to *express herself to the audience in capering antics*, one of her playbook plays.

"I'm going to dance with my broom," she says. "It's the story of my encounters with the Wolf King of Winter's awful friend. I play the wolf, and my broom plays me, so it's this terrifying dance where I stalk, hunt, and menace the broom, who sometimes flees, sometimes stands up to me, and sometimes panics."

"Is your broom animate?" asks Tip the Lantern Jack. "Does it actually flee or stand up to you?"

"Oh, no. It says in my playbook that my broom is a fine dancer, but no, it's not animate. It's all in how I hold it, I spin it away from me and catch up with it, I move it with me while I dance."

Tip nods her respect.

The Teapot Girl hits the roll with a total of 10.

"I choose, 'it's surprisingly beautiful' and 'it's surprisingly frightening,'" she says.

"You could hear a pin drop," the MC says. "Even the River Queen is holding her breath."

Weather the Storm

When you weather the storm, whatever danger, disaster, or developing catastrophe it is, roll. **On any hit**, choose 1:

- *The storm rages around me but doesn't move me from my place.*
- *I ride the storm where it carries me, but don't lose my feet.*

On a 10+ hit, choose 2 or 3 of the following. **On a 7–9 hit**, choose 1 or 2:

- *I'm calm enough.*
- *I'm fearless enough.*
- *I'm patient enough.*
- *I'm quick enough.*
- *I'm strong enough.*
- *I can endure the pain.*
- *I can provide care and healing to those around me.*
- *I can provide calm and direction to those around me.*
- *I can provide strength and protection to those around me.*
- *I am [x], or I can [x].*

On a miss, choose 1 that you are or can, and 1 that you definitely aren't or can't.

In any case, ask the MC what happens and where you are now.

Example:

☞ Did the circus really think it could get away with kidnapping the Wolf King of Winter, the River Queen's honored guest, with nobody noticing?

"Pack the wagons, pack them quick," says Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob. "I'll hold everyone off here. Be ready to go, I'll be coming at a run."

She weathers the storm. She rolls a 10 and adds her +1 to the roll, for a total of 11.

"Excellent," she says. "The storm rages around me but doesn't move me from my place, which is, 'yes he's missing, but it has nothing to do with us. Where could he be?' I choose: I'm calm enough, I'm fearless enough, and I'm patient enough. I stall by taking charge of the effort to find him, I organize search parties, I keep everybody going around and around, 'have you checked his pavilion? Have you checked the attic? Have you checked his pavilion again?' ...What happens? Where am I now?"

"Ha!" the MC says. "Where are you now? The wagons are packed, the circus is ready to go, and you're coming at a run!"

Fighting

For a fight on equal footing between two ready opponents:

Presume that you both take defensive postures, looking to strike the other without exposing yourself to a strike instead. In order to win the fight, you need to draw your opponent out of their secure defensive posture.

Therefore, for both of you, your play is to **draw them out**. You both roll the play; for NPCs, the MC rolls.

In order to strike your opponent, choose “I do indeed draw you out [of your defensive posture], by doing [x]. What’s the effect?” Make your best bid to fill in the blank. If your opponent agrees that the effect is that you strike them, so you do.

The consequences of striking and injuring someone depend on their nature, fairy or mortal. See below, under [Violence](#).

However, all of the options of the play are still available to you, and there’s no particular reason to prioritize striking your opponent, if you prefer to draw them out in some other way instead.

Examples:

☞ There may have been some occasion where Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob squared off with the Wolf King of Winter’s menacing young retainer. The former with her polished, knotted skull-club; the latter with her sharp, serious bronze fighting-knife, and neither in the mood for games.

Both **draw the other out**. Harebrake rolls a total of 10, so asks 2 questions. The MC rolls a total of 7 for the Wolf King’s retainer, so asks 1.

“Can I go first?” says Harebrake. “So: this isn’t the first fight I’ve ever been in. I’m fully aware of her body language, her footing, the way she’s holding her knife. What are you considering, meaning, where and how are you going to strike?”

“Oh, she’s just coming straight in, no nonsense. Knife to your gut, teeth to your throat. My question: she does indeed draw you out, or drive you out, of your defensive posture, like I say, by moving suddenly, directly, and with her full weight behind her knife. What’s the effect?”

“I’m ready for it! I give way instead of standing up to her, so her knife doesn’t connect and her momentum carries her past me. That’s how I draw her out, and I smash her in the head as she goes by. What’s the effect?”

The effect, all told, is that Harebrake wins the fight.

☞ Or let's suppose that the rolls go the other way. Harebrake rolls a total of 5, a miss, and the MC rolls a total of 11, so asks 2 questions.

"What goes wrong?" Harebrake asks.

"Pretty much everything," the MC says. "But let's start with, where are you open to her, where are you vulnerable, and where are you guarded?"

"Does she know that whatever she does to me, I can *shrug it off*? That's why I'm the one fighting with her, she can do her worst to me and I don't mind."

"She didn't know that, but now she does. So you're not vulnerable to her at all, really. That's interesting, she's actually pretty curious about that. So: she does indeed draw you out of your defensive posture, by making an expert feint, and when you follow it she cuts you open with her knife. She's so good at this it's almost like you choreographed it between you. What's the effect?"

"The effect is, I shrug it off, of course." She rolls an 8, and you can look up *shrug it off* in her playbook if you like. "She'll be disappointed though, it's not interesting, she just cuts me and I shrug it off. I could take it as an insult if I wanted but I don't even do that."

"Excellent. While that's going on, because you rolled a miss, I'm going to ask 1 more question. She can't hurt you, so what *are* you afraid she'll do?"

"Oh no. I'm afraid she'll get past me and go hurt my friends instead."

"You don't say! She finds that pretty interesting too."

"Oh no."

For other fights:

If you're looking to threaten or attack someone without necessarily going toe-to-toe with them, your obvious play is to *confront them* or to *waylay them* instead.

Should an NPC waylay you, the MC doesn't roll for them. Instead, you should choose how to play it. One obvious answer is to *weather the storm*. You might choose to play it differently — if you're the Boondoggle Hob, for instance, you might *shrug it off* instead; if you're the Winding Rose, you might decide to *twine danger around* — but weathering the storm is a good and obvious choice.

Helping Each Other Out

Several of the playbooks have plays that can result in the character becoming trapped in some way, and needing someone else's help to get out of it.

To help someone in this way, *draw them out*, and choose "I do indeed draw you out [of your predicament], by doing [x]. What's the effect?" Make your best bid to fill in the blank. If they agree that the effect is that you help them, then so you do.

However, the other options of the play are still available to you. Don't neglect them, especially on a 10+ hit.

Example:

☞ Ultimately, the Teapot Girl played her encounter with the Wolf King of Winter's menacing young retainer by *falling apart*, one of her playbook plays. When that play goes poorly, she needs someone else's help to pick up the pieces. As it happens, Timothy Bones has come looking for her, and finds her in a terrible state. She's lost her head, lost her feet, collapsed in a heap, and bust into tears.

"Oh, my dear," says Timothy Bones. "Let me help you."

He rolls an 11, plus his +2 to the roll, for a total of 13, a 10+ hit.

"Well first of all, I do indeed draw you out, by picking you up, dusting you off —"

"Help me find my feet? I lost them. Also I think my teapot rolled under a bush?"

"Oh my dear. Here they are."

"That's MUCH better. Can I give you a big hug?"

"Of course!"

Everyone agrees that Timothy Bones has helped her recover.

"But I rolled a 10+, so I get to choose 2," Timothy Bones says. "I have a question for you: what do you hope I'll do now?"

"Hm. You know magic, right? I hope you take that wolf and turn her hopes inside out, so that she longs for her worst fears to come true and dreads the things that make her happiest."

"That's very poetic. I'll have it in mind. We'll see."



Matthew Spencer



Playbook Plays



Your playbook has four plays that are unique to you. Two of them are ways to play a person, and two are ways to play a situation that you don't understand or that is getting out of your control.

Make your playbook plays just as you would the obvious plays: choose one that makes sense to you and that you want to do. Announce your play by name and pick up two dice. Read the play carefully and follow its procedure precisely. Roll your dice and add your bonus or subtract your penalty. A total of 10+ is the strongest play, 7–9 is a good play, and 6 or less is a miss.

A Few Examples

Harebrake, the Boondoggle Hob:

☞ Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob has stalled and misled her enemies for as long as she can, and now it's time for her to make her escape. "I'm going to *make myself something else*," she says. Here's the play:

*When you **make yourself something else**, roll. On any hit, you become your choice of:*

- *A big old croaking raven.*
- *A flight of a dozen starlings.*
- *Thousands of centipedes, millipedes, beetles, and worms.*
- *A single black wasp.*
- *A beautiful young deer, russet red, with a first year's antlers.*
- *A quizzical and stubborn old mutt dog.*
- *A burning firebrand, pine-pitch smoky and scattering sparks.*

*You remain so transformed for as long as you choose. **On a 10+ hit**, afterward, you can vanish into nothing and reappear later. **On a 7–9 hit**, at the end of your transformation, you must return to your own naked self. **On a miss**, instead of transforming yourself, you simply step to full winter.*

Harebrake rolls a 6 and adds her +1 to the roll, for a total of 7. She chooses 1, and says, “I become a flight of a dozen starlings and fly off in various directions. They’re bound to lose me.”

“So they are. How long are you starlings?”

“As long as I want, it says. I regather myself once I’ve found the rest of the circus.”

“Sure thing!” And turning to the rest of the circus, “where are you all when Harebrake finds you?”

Timothy Bones, the Crooked Wand:

☞ Timothy Bones the Crooked Wand is telling the fortune of the River Queen in winter. “My fortune-telling play is to *lay her bare*,” he says. Here’s the play:

*When you **lay someone bare**, roll. On any hit, you reveal something to them, about them. On a 10+ hit, choose 2. On a 7–9 hit, choose 1.*

- *You reveal to them their secret heart.*
- *You reveal to them the hearts and natures of those nearest to them.*
- *You reveal to them their best way forward.*
- *You reveal to them their lost past.*

Whichever you choose, you don’t know what they learn, but ask them how they react to the revelation. However, if you have a glass, a basin, or an oracle to read, you can catch a shadow or a mirror image of their revelation. Ask them what you see.

On a miss, choose 1 anyway, but in the act, you lay yourself bare as well. The MC chooses 1 against you, and asks you how you react in turn.

Timothy Bones rolls an 11 and adds his +1 to the roll, for a total of 12.

“Interesting,” he says. “It says that I reveal something to them, but I don’t know what they learn. I get to choose 2. So don’t tell me, but: I reveal to the River Queen the hearts and natures of those nearest to her, and I reveal her own secret heart to her.”

“Okay,” says the MC. “She doesn’t like the news about the people near her. Let me think about her own secret heart.”

“Sure. Now, I do have an oracle to read — the bones — so actually I catch a shadow or a mirror image of their revelation. What do I see?”

“Oh that’s easy. You see hunting wolves, and a deer — no, a swan, caught in thorns.”

Jill Cowdery, the Interloper:

☞ Jill Cowdery the Interloper, along with the rest of the circus, is meeting the River Queen for the first time, in an informal audience chamber in her Winter Palace. Later there will be a formal reception, but for now, the River Queen wanted to meet them more casually.

“Wait a second,” says Jill Cowdery. “I have this note in my playbook about **pocketing something**: *think metaphorically too*, it says. Can I pocket, like, her awareness of me? Steal it from her so that she doesn’t look too closely at me or wonder about me?”

“I don’t see why not,” says the MC. Here’s the play:

*When you **pocket something**, name it and roll. On any hit, you have it, unnoticed. On a 10+ hit, you have it profoundly, and its erstwhile owner’s erstwhile claim to it is already fading from everyone’s minds. On a 7–9 hit, it’s true that you’re holding it in your pocket, but it’s not true that you have it, and neither it nor anyone else will believe that it belongs to you. On a miss, it signals its owner somehow that it’s been taken or misplaced, though it can’t reveal itself or finger you.*

Think metaphorically too, mortal kind.

Jill rolls a miss: a 5, which her +1 to the roll brings only up to a 6. “Okay...” she says. “Okay. On a miss, it signals its owner that it’s been taken or misplaced, but it can’t reveal itself or finger me. What happens? What does she do?”

“That’s funny,” the MC says. “Yeah, so, something’s bothering her, and she can’t put her finger on it. She keeps gazing thoughtfully at everyone but you, and she can’t figure out why something seems out-of-place about any of them. Finally she shakes it off, but you get the feeling that if she thinks about it later, which she will, she’ll wonder about you then.”

“I hope she’ll take it for fairy glamour, then! Just a fairy princess here using magic to stay incognito.”

“Could be. We’ll see!”

Tip, the Lantern Jack:

☞ The circus is performing for the River Queen in her Winter Palace. At her side sits the Wolf King of Winter, her honored guest.

The circus has a plan. Timothy Bones is calling for a volunteer to help him with his next trick, and their plan will work out only if the Wolf King volunteers.

Tip the Lantern Jack has finished her act and has presumed to linger near the River Queen's dias, to watch Timothy Bones perform.

It's the moment. "I call for a volunteer," Timothy Bones says. "You've seen the least of my art. Who will come forward to see greater?"

"I leap to my feet to lead the volunteer forward," Tip says. "But I pitch my voice so that only the Wolf King hears me: *I dare you.*" Here's the play:

When you dare someone to follow you, if they do, roll. On any hit, choose 1 of the following.

- *Ask them where their (choose 1) greed, lust, or ambition would take them. You know a secret way there, and you take them there unchallenged.*
- *Ask them where their (choose 1) heart, dreams, or fate would take them. You know a secret way there, and you take them there unchallenged.*
- *You lead them to wonderful treasure. Ask the MC what and where.*
- *You lead them to a trackless place and abandon them up to their knees in cold muck-water.*
- *You lead them to the best seats in the circus, and later they'll find that they paid a premium to sit there.*
- *You lead them wherever you want to. Where?*

On a 10+ hit, in addition, they're beholden to you for serving so faithfully as their guide. **On a miss**, you and they get lost together. Ask the MC where you are now.

"So," Tip says. "I dare him to follow me. Does he?"

The MC considers. He suspects a trap, rightly, but when did the Wolf King of Winter ever back down from a dare?

Tip rolls a 9 and adds her +2 to the roll for a total of 11. "I lead him right up to Timothy Bones and deliver him over with a flourish. Wait. On a 10+, he's also beholden to me? I lead him into a trap and now he's beholden to me too? Oh, this really is the best."

The Teapot Girl, the Stick Figure:

☞ The circus' performance is done, its plan carried off, and its escape accomplished.

The Teapot Girl is riding in Timothy Bones' wagon, where she often does. "I think it's my job to take care of your new bird," she says. "I better *get to work*." Here's the play:

When you get to work, roll. On a 10+ hit, choose 2 of the following. On a 7–9 hit, choose 1.

- *No matter how long or how hard you work, you never tire.*
- *You make it into a dance and a song that gets stuck in everyone's head.*
- *You never complain, not even once, not even when [x] messes up the work you've done so far and you have to redo it.*
- *People can't help but joining in. Name a person or two who really can't help it, then ask if anyone else joins in too.*
- *Your work is so exacting and careful that, though it will be perfect, you'll never finish it, not if you work a hundred years.*
- *No matter who else joins in, you work faster, better, and more cheerfully than they do.*


On a miss, choose 1, and in addition, you can't stop working even after the work is done. To stop, you'll need a friend to draw you out.

The Teapot Girl rolls a 7 and adds her +2 to the roll, for a total of 9.


"I make it into a dance and a song that gets stuck in everyone's head," she says. "The name of the song is 'Let's Everybody Feed Timothy's New Bird' and it's a list of everything the bird's allowed to eat. It's 25 minutes long if you sing the whole thing, which I do. It's like "The Name Game": *millet fillet bo-billet banany fanny mo-millet beetles feetles bo-beetles banany fanny mo-meetles sunflower seeds funflower feeds bo-bunflower beeds—*"

"Oh no," saith the Hob.





Consequences



Fleeting Consequences & Momentum

At need or at whim, and especially when you miss a play, the MC may choose to do any of the following to you:

- Have an NPC act against you, or have fairyland itself act against you.
- Wound, shock, affront, or dismay you.
- Tell you to step toward winter, toward summer, or toward your choice.
- Throw you between worlds, or all the way into the other world.
- Turn your play back on you, or have your counterpart make a play against you instead, the same play or a different one.
- Give you +1 or -1 to your next play, or to the next time you make a certain play of their choice.
- Change your form, your seeming, or both.
- Have you take the 7–9 result, though you rolled a miss, and step toward winter as well.
- Have an NPC make an obvious play of their own, rolling dice and everything.

Don't be startled!

Examples:

☞ **Have an NPC act against you:** Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob has attacked one of the River Queen's guests, defying her hospitality. The MC chooses to have her act against them. She sends the captain of her guard, a willowy nymph armed with a sword of glittering ice, to force Harebrake to appear before her.

☞ **Wound, shock, affront, or dismay you:** Tip the Lantern Jack stands up to some enemy, *confronting them*, but misses the play. She asks the MC what goes wrong. The MC decides that the details of the situation and the enemy call for a sudden and severe outcome: "What goes wrong is he strikes you through with his sword, without warning. You're wounded, shocked, affronted or dismayed."

☞ **Tell you to step toward winter:** Jill Cowdery the Interloper *draws out* Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob, and asks what Harebrake hopes she'll do. She's looking for resolution with Harebrake over a dispute between them, but Harebrake isn't looking for resolution at all. "I hope you'll leave the circus and we can be rid of you," they say.

"Ouch," says Jill. "I don't know what to say or do. Ouch."

"Want to *step toward winter*?" the MC says.

"I mean I don't want to, but that makes sense. Yeah."

☞ **Throw you between world, or all the way into the other world:** Tip the Lantern Jack *dares someone to follow her*, a willow nymph, a deadly waterside creature who drowns what it loves. The nymph dares, but Tip rolls a miss: "*On a miss, you and they get lost together. Ask the MC where you are now.*"

"You're lost together between the worlds," the MC says. "You're in an endless, misty gray wood. Literally endless; you'll need to find your way back to fairyland, you can't pick a direction and walk your way out..."

There are, by the way, several no-places between the worlds: the gray woods, the city of all cities, the palace wings, the impossible tower, others.

☞ **Turn your play back on you:** The Teapot Girl, hoping to get some perspective, *opens up* to Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob, but rolls a miss on the play. She asks the MC what goes wrong, and the MC decides to turn the play back on her. "What goes wrong is, you just can't seem to come to the point. Harebrake, the Teapot Girl is talking to you but you can't make heads or tails of it. Why don't you go ahead and *open up* to her instead. Don't roll, she already did, just choose one of the options."

"Okay," says Harebrake. "I'll reveal what I'd like her to do. Teapot Girl, I'm pretty busy here, why don't you go talk to Jill or Timothy or someone. If you do, I'll check in with you later, I promise, but if you don't, I can consider it an insult."

☞ **Give you +1 to a certain play.** Tip the Lantern Jack *puts off* Timothy Bones the Crooked Wand, rolling a 7–9. “Timothy, you can hang around if you want, waiting for her to have time for you,” the MC says.

“I don’t want to do that,” Timothy Bones says. “But I’m pretty annoyed, I don’t want to just walk away and forget about it either.”

“Sure,” says the MC. “How about you walk away, but next time you see her, if you *confront her*, you get +1 to the roll?”

“Sounds good.”

☞ **Change your form:** Jill Cowdery the Interloper inadvertently annoys a goblin in a hollow tree. “He stamps his foot, screeches some nonsense, and throws his hat at you,” the MC says. “His hat transforms you into a chipmunk. You’re a chipmunk now. He’s stalking toward you with his hands like this, to try to catch you. How do you want to play it?”

☞ **Have you take the 7–9 result and step toward winter:** The Teapot Girl *opens up*, not to any person, but to the place, the River Queen’s Winter Palace. She rolls a miss. “That’s okay,” the MC says. “Take the 7–9 anyway, the Winter Palace is totally receptive to you. It’s pretty cold, though, so also take a step toward winter.”

☞ **Have an NPC make an obvious play:** The circus is meeting the Wolf King of Winter for the first time. The MC describes him entering casually, looking them each up and down. “In fact,” the MC says, “he’s *sizing each of you up*. I’m going to go ahead and have him make the play...”

Summer & Winter (&c)

As you travel and perform with the circus, step from summer to winter and back. Change both your imagery and your plays to reflect the good times and the bad times you've had.

For fairies:

When you step toward summer, erase one of the marks in the winter column and mark the same line in the summer column.

When you step toward winter, erase one of the marks in the summer column and mark the same line in the winter column.

Whenever you step toward summer or toward winter, take 1 from one of your plays' rolls and add 1 to a different play's roll. Choose intentionally, to match your feeling about the change. Keep to a minimum of -2 and a maximum of +3.

Example:

☞ Here's Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob, in full summer:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| ● Spring peepers | ○ Beetles |
| ● Crooked nose, shaggy hair | ○ Pointed face, bristly hair |
| ● Berry red, pumpkin brown | ○ Berry black |
| ● Heeled boots | ○ Shapeless felt hat |
| ● Mannish, womanish | ○ Sexless |

As a result of missing a play, the MC has them step toward winter. They erase the mark next to "crooked nose, shaggy hair," and mark the corresponding "pointed face, bristly hair":

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| ● Spring peepers | ○ Beetles |
| ○ Crooked nose, shaggy hair | ● Pointed face, bristly hair |
| ● Berry red, pumpkin brown | ○ Berry black |
| ● Heeled boots | ○ Shapeless felt hat |
| ● Mannish, womanish | ○ Sexless |

They also take one from their play *distract them with tricks and visions*, bringing it down from +2 to +1, and add 1 to their play *provoke them*, bringing it up from -1 to 0.

Later on, some other circumstance has them step toward winter again. They erase the mark next to “mannish, womanish,” and mark “sexless”:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| ● Spring peepers | ○ Beetles |
| ○ Crooked nose, shaggy hair | ● Pointed face, bristly hair |
| ● Berry red, pumpkin brown | ○ Berry black |
| ● Heeled boots | ○ Shapeless felt hat |
| ○ Mannish, womanish | ● Sexless |

This time they take one from *draw them out*, bringing it down from +1 to +0, and add 1 again to *provoke them*, bringing it up from 0 to +1.

For human beings:

Instead of stepping toward summer, you step toward bold, cheerful, free, or open. Instead of stepping toward winter, you step toward careful, downcast, or wary. In all other ways, follow the rules for summer & winter.

Example:

☞ Here's Jill Cowdery the Interloper, fully free:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| ● Crescent moon | ○ Moonless sky |
| ● Pretty eyes | ○ Wary eyes |
| ● Cool periwinkle blue | ○ Slate blue |
| ● A bird's mask | ○ A cat's mask |
| ● Womanish | ○ Womanish |

As a result of missing a play, the MC has her step toward careful. She erases the mark next to “pretty eyes,” and marks “wary eyes”:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| ● Crescent moon | ○ Moonless sky |
| ○ Pretty eyes | ● Wary eyes |
| ● Cool periwinkle blue | ○ Slate blue |
| ● A bird's mask | ○ A cat's mask |
| ● Womanish | ○ Womanish |

She also takes one from *confront them*, bringing it down from 0 to -1, and adds 1 to her play *pass yourself off as royalty incognito*, bringing it up from +1 to +2.

Insults

Giving and taking offense is a major fairy pastime.

For fairies:

When someone insults you, you're allowed by fairy law and your fairy nature to answer it. It's considered to be your own unimpeachable right to weigh the insult and respond in due measure, so only you can choose what form your answer should take and how extreme it should be. Other fairies may gossip, but no fairy would rightly stand before you and assert that you've overstepped.

Example:

☞ Tip the Lantern Jack *puts off* the Wolf King of Winter, and rolls a miss, snubbing him without much courtesy. "He accepts it graciously enough and walks away," the MC says, "but you saw how his smile changed. You've insulted him."

The Wolf King of Winter now has a measure of power over Tip. Before they insulted him, he was bound to treat them courteously himself, and within the bounds of the River Queen's hospitality. Now he can act against them more freely, justified by their insult.

For human beings:

When someone insults you, you're allowed by fairy law to answer it. It's considered to be your own unimpeachable right to weigh the insult and respond in due measure, so only you can choose what form your answer should take and how extreme it should be. Lenience is a human trait, not a fairy trait, so if you're moderate in your response, you can set fairy tongues wagging.

Example:

☞ Tip the Lantern Jack, who is prone to putting people off and not artful at it, *puts off* Jill Cowdery the Interloper as well, and again rolls a miss.

"Of course I'm insulted," Jill says. "I depart in an obvious huff."

If Jill really were fairy nobility incognito, Tip could expect her to repay the insult with some future vindictive act at the worst possible time. But for Jill, being a mortal human being, the sting of the insult will fade soon enough and she won't long hold a grudge.

Favors

When someone does a favor for you, you're beholden to them. Beware, beware of this: your debtor is the one who weighs the value of their favor versus the value of your repayment, so putting yourself in debt to someone is always dangerous.

For fairies:

When you are beholden to someone, fairy law and your fairy nature demand that you make good and deliver the balance. If you're recalcitrant or uneager to do repay your debt, your debtor may consider it an insult or a worse offense.

Example:

☞ Timothy Bones the Crooked Wand *opens up* to the River Queen, and offers to read her bones. If she accepts, she's beholden to him; if she refuses, she insults him. She accepts.

Now Timothy Bones has a measure of power over her. She'll owe him a favor in return, until the day that he considers her debt paid.

For human beings:

When you are beholden to someone, fairy law demands that you make good and deliver the balance. Human honor might compel you too, but it's a lax taskmaster compared to fairy nature. Regardless, if you're recalcitrant or uneager to do repay your debt, your debtor may consider it an insult or a worse offense.

Example:

☞ The Wolf King of Winter offers a favor to Jill Cowdery the Interloper, who is struggling with some difficulty that he can help her with. She agrees, and so makes herself beholden to him.

For Jill, a mortal human being, the debt won't weigh on her the way that it would on a true fairy. When the Wolf King calls upon her to make good, a year or a century from now, she may even have forgotten it entirely. No fairy could forget.

Violence

Violence in fairyland is considered visceral, irrevocable, and horrifying.

For fairies:

When you're wounded, shocked, affronted, or dismayed, you must immediately choose 1:

- *You die.*
- *You withdraw at once in a cold, dignified fury.*
- *You writhe, moan, and curse in a display of melodramatic agony.*
- *You step immediately and fully to winter.*
- *You consider yourself cruelly mistreated and maimed, and will long nurse your injuries and your grudge.*

Fairy death:

"Dying" is a metaphor, even when someone really does it.

Fairies can return from death more or less readily. If you die, here's what to do next:

- ☞ When the circus next performs, remind someone to ***acknowledge or celebrate a change in the circus' roster***. This lets the circus invite you to return, or bid you goodbye.
- ☞ If any of them ***bid you goodbye***, you can choose to remain dead. In that case, you have three options:
 - *Leave the game.*
 - *Create a new character to play, either a hitherto NPC or else a newcomer to the circus.*
 - *With everyone's agreement, take over as Mistress of Ceremonies, and let the Mistress of Ceremonies now join the game as a player.*
- ☞ If any of them ***invite you to return***, you can choose to return from death. You can take the opportunity to change up your summer & winter imagery and your plays' rolls, if you like.
- ☞ If they don't ***celebrate the change in the roster*** at all, or if you think that they've chosen poorly and you want to defy them, you can choose to remain dead, or return, as you like. If you return from death uninvited, though, it's certain then that they've insulted you, or you've insulted them, or both.

Examples:

☞ Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob gives one of the Wolf King of Winter's retainers a violent thrashing, and so wounds and dismays her. It's the MC's choice whether to have her die, withdraw, writhe and moan, or which, but she decides to get Harebrake's input.

"She wants to withdraw in a cold fury," the MC says, "but you've got her cornered. Do you let her go, or do you kill her?"

☞ Things take a terrible turn and the Wolf King of Winter lashes out in fury in the middle of the circus' performance.

His nearest and first victim is Timothy Bones the Crooked Wand. "I withdraw at once in a cold, dignified fury," Timothy Bones says.

Next is Tip the Lantern Jack. "I writhe, moan, and curse, in a display of melodramatic agony," she says.

Finally, the Teapot Girl, who's been transformed into a little yellow bird for the show. "He catches you in one hand," the MC says, "and tears you in half with his teeth."

"Oh no!" says the Teapot Girl. "I die!"

"Oh no!" says everyone.

Later on, Harebrake will *acknowledge or celebrate the change to the circus' roster*, and invite her back. She'll return to the circus then, but for now, she's dead.

True death:

There are only a few things that can truly kill a fairy. Cold iron is one; there are others. If you suffer true death, you can't come back, no matter how unanimously the circus should invite you.

Example:

☞ Jill Cowdery the Interloper, to get revenge on the goblin of a hollow tree, *touches it with cold iron*. She rolls well, and chooses to press the iron cruelly to the goblin and thus truly kill it. Unlike most killed fairies most of the time, it's truly killed and can never return.

For human beings:

For human beings in fairyland, like you, violence is no game.

You can shrug off a verbal assault that would murder any fairy dead, but a sword thrust through you, however playfully, will end your life forever.

Most fairies won't kill you on purpose — it wouldn't occur to them — but they might kill you at any moment by pure whimsical mischance.

Consequently, you must play violence in 2 different ways.

☞ When you're verbally assaulted, shocked, affronted, or dismayed, choose 1:

- *You withdraw in as much fury, and with as much dignity, as your human nature allows.*
- *You lash out in return, with that distinctive impulsive human passion.*
- *You consider yourself offended, and will nurse your fleeting human grudge as long as you're able.*

☞ When you're physically assaulted or wounded, roll a single die:

- **On a 4, 5, or 6**, you're wounded and must nurse your injury until it heals.
- **On a 2 or 3**, you're wounded dangerously, and you need to get skilled help quickly or the wound will kill you. (Any problem solver in the circus will know what to do.)
- **On a 1**, you're fatally wounded. Die now or die in a few painful minutes.

As a matter of curiosity, not of consequence, when you die, one of two things will happen, entirely outside of your control. The first possibility is that you will plainly and simply die. The second is that you will die, but not plainly: something of your nature will remain in fairyland forever, not alive but animate, some fairy's truly kept thing.

Example:

☞ Jill Cowdery the Interloper has fallen under the power of a willow nymph, a deadly waterside creature who drowns what it loves. Ultimately the willow nymph catches hold of her wrist and pulls her into deep water. "She drowns you," the MC says.

The willow nymph is physically assaulting her, so she must roll a die. It comes up a 4. "So: she lets you go when she thinks you're dead," the MC says, "and you're able to drag yourself out onto the bank. I think healing your injury in this case just means coughing and vomiting all the water out. You can hear her laughing at you the whole time. What's your play now?"

Love

For fairies:

A few playbook plays say that you charm someone or, maybe, that someone falls in love with you. Take this to be the fleeting love of fairy glamourie, intense but not profound.

True love must be given freely. It must be held loosely, and it can be revoked as freely as it was given.

When a fairy gives their heart, it's forever, until it's over. When it's over, it's over forever, until it's not. Fairy love is swift as a shadow, short as a dream, brief as lightning. It's devoted and inconstant, jealous and forgiving, heavy in its lightness and serious in its vanity. Its course, famously, never did run smooth.

Fairy law considers the heart to be the least reliable of organs. Promises made by the heart are the least binding of promises; favors done by the heart are the most like gifts; gifts given by the heart are the most like loans.

For human beings:

Same.

Example:

☞ Everyone knows that Tip the Lantern Jack will fall in love with the River Queen, if only the River Queen will smile at her once and mean it. This, ultimately, happens.

It happens at a time when there's a strain between the circus and the River Queen, as the circus hasn't respected her hospitality as fully as she'd hope and demand. "Her smile's genuine," the MC says, "it really is, but of course you already revealed to her that you'd fall in love with her if she smiled at you. If you think it's calculated, that's your call."

"No," Tip says. "Or maybe. But even if it is calculated, if she wants me to fall in love with her, I want it too. I was right, she smiles at me and I fall in love with her."

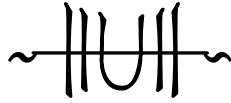
There are no rules for what this means or how it changes what happens next. What will come of it? Who knows!



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Chapter 3: Sessions & Shows Rules

- ☞ Play the game in sessions, with each session being an occasion for the circus to perform.
- ☞ Begin the session by talking briefly with the MC about this show's place in the circus' tour, and how the tour's going so far.
- ☞ It's the MC's job to tell you where the circus arrives, who's there, and what's going on. You can help by asking questions.
- ☞ Before you plan your show, get the lay of the land. Figure out what this audience wants from you, and what you want from them.
- ☞ When you're ready, plan your show. Give each character a role to play. Include NPC performers if you choose.
- ☞ Put on your show, using obvious plays and your playbook plays.
- ☞ During your show, you have the power to change things here. Use your power to make your show impactful and consequential.
- ☞ After your show, wrap up any loose ends.
- ☞ End the session by choosing to step toward winter or toward summer, and telling the MC where you're going to perform next.



Sessions & Shows



Each session of play is an occasion for the circus to perform. A new place, a new audience to perform for.

The Outline of a Session

1. Begin the session.
2. Arrive.
3. Before you plan your show, get the lay of the land.
4. Plan your show.
5. Put on your show.
6. After your show, wrap up loose ends.
7. End the session.

Note that while this text assumes that you'll play exactly one session each time you get together to play, it's perfectly fine to spread a single session's play out over two or more get-togethers if you need to, or to play two sessions in one get-together if you have time. Just take a break between them to let the MC create the next place for you to perform.

☞ **Begin the session:** At the beginning of the session, the MC has some things to tell you about this upcoming show, and some questions for you about it and its place in your tour. Questions like:

- *How did you come to be here?*
- *What was your last show? How would you characterize it?*
- *What's the next show you're planning after this one?*

Put your heads together as the circus and answer the MC's questions however seems best to you. If you don't already know the answers, make them up together.

☞ **Second, arrive:** It's the MC's job to tell you where you are now, who else is here, and what's going on. You can help by asking the MC any questions you have, by *sniffing the wind*, and by *sizing up* the people you meet.

☞ **Third, before you plan your show:** Before you go straight to planning and putting on your performance, you might want to...

- + Find out what your audience expects.
- + Let your audience know what to expect.
- + Drum up enthusiasm for your show.
- + Place skills in your audience.
- + Look over the spot where you're supposed to perform.
- + Arrange your preferred spot to perform.
- + Meet your host and establish the terms of your performance.
- + Snub your host.
- + Find out who likes things the way they are now.
- + Find out who wants things to change.
- + Find out the laws you'll be performing under.
- + Find out what your audience has in abundance and what they hold dear.
- + Get a look at your competitors.
- + Winkle out the secrets that people here keep.
- + Figure out who's important in your audience, and who isn't.

Once you're satisfied, move on to planning your show.

☞ **Fourth, plan your show:** Once you know where you are, what's going on, what your audience wants, and what you want from them, it's time to plan your show.

Use a playbill sheet. Put your heads together again. List the circus' performers and their acts and duties, and put them in order to plan your show.

If you don't already have an idea for your own act or duty, look at your place in the circus, as listed in your playbook, for inspiration.

Examples of acts & duties:

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| + Acrobats | + Guide & host |
| + Animal acts | + Magic |
| + Barker & caller | + Music |
| + Bouts against all comers | + Novelties |
| + Clowns | + Refreshments |
| + Feats of grace & beauty | + Ringmaster |
| + Feats of grotesquery | + Tickets |
| + Feats of valor | |

Planning your own act:

Think ahead about how your act will work, in terms of your plays. You might find it obvious: if you're the Boondoggle Hob, and you're planning your ringmaster routine, you might plan to *draw your audience out* and then *open up to them*, to prime them for the other performers' acts. Or, if you're planning a magic act, you'll obviously plan to *distract your audience with tricks and visions*, and maybe *make yourself something else* as your finale.

When it's not so obvious, you can always fall back on *the standard two-part act*: In the first part of your act, *draw your audience out* to find out what they need, what they expect, or where they're vulnerable to you. Only then, once you've taken your audience's measure, choose your play for the second part of your act.

NPC performers:

To fill out the playbill, you can include NPC performers, if you choose.

- ✦ Annie Buckeyes
- ✦ Ballybellow Bess
- ✦ Bumbleburr & Bitterbalm, twins
- ✦ Cobweb (of fame)
- ✦ The Dandyseed Players
- ✦ Fallsop the Goblin
- ✦ Hattercob the Bootless
- ✦ The Hazelbrake Wind Ensemble
- ✦ The Lady Rosemarie
- ✦ Mommy Sorrel
- ✦ Much the Tomtom
- ✦ Ochiran the Stoneswallower
- ✦ Sweet Pea-bloom
- ✦ Timble the Plum
- ✦ Varrus & the Family Oxbow

You can suppose that they've been traveling with you all along, or else that you've sent word for them and they've arrived just in time.

☞ **Fifth, put on your show:** At showtime, have the MC lead you through your performance. For your acts you can use any mix of obvious plays and playbook plays.

Your show has the power to change things for the place and the people here. Once per show, each of you gets a chance to direct the circus' power, following the rules below. Take your turn!

As well, the MC might introduce a "problem person" into your show. If you don't win them over, they can blunt the power of your show. The rules for problem people follow as well.

☞ **Sixth, after your show:** If you have loose ends to tie up, consequences to see through, or relationships to revisit, now's your last chance. Make sure the MC knows and doesn't pass them over.

☞ **Finally, end the session:** At the end of the session, the MC again has a few questions for you:

- *How do the events of this show affect you? Who's stepping toward winter, and who's stepping toward summer?*
- *At the beginning of play, you said you were planning your next show to be [x]. Is that still your plan, or where are you going to perform next instead?*
- *Shall we schedule a time to play again?*



Eric Orchard



Loren Ponder



The Power of Your Performance



Your show has the power to change things for the place and the people here. Once per show — usually while you're performing yourself, but it can be during another's act or at any time — each of you gets a chance to direct the circus' power by using one of the *circus powers* below. Take your turn!

Circus Powers:

- ☞ *Acknowledge or celebrate a change in the circus' roster.*
- ☞ *Captivate someone in the audience, by name.*
- ☞ *Captivate the audience as a whole, inspiring them to largesse.*
- ☞ *Change someone's fortune, by name.*
- ☞ *Give this place its voice.*
- ☞ *Hold, advance, or turn back the season of this place.*
- ☞ *Make the audience dance to your tune.*
- ☞ *Turn the circus' course toward the other world.*
- ☞ *Turn the circus itself toward summer or toward winter.*
- ☞ *Perform your own act of power.*

Call for a show of hands. If the other players are unanimous in support, it's the strongest possible act of power, with the full intent of the circus behind it. If it's a tie or majority support, then it's a strong act of power. If it's a majority or unanimous against, it's still an act of power, but it's weak or, from the circus' point of view, misdirected.

Don't vote for your own. Just count the other players' votes.

When another player chooses to use a circus power, you vote. You can cast at most 2 supporting votes per show, so weigh your votes accordingly.

The bounds of circus powers:

- ☞ Don't use a circus power outside of a performance. The power doesn't come from the circus, it comes from your audience.
- ☞ Don't ask someone else how you should vote, and don't tell someone else how they should vote. Choose your own powers and cast your own votes.

- ☞ The Mistress of Ceremonies can have an NPC use a circus power, especially a problem person or an NPC performer. Go ahead and vote, same as if a player's character had chosen it.
- ☞ The Mistress of Ceremonies can even have an NPC vote on your circus powers. Don't be startled.
- ☞ In fairyland and in the mortal world, audiences have more power than they do in the doldrums between worlds. Between worlds, you each get only 1 single supporting vote, not 2.

Circus Powers

☞ *When you acknowledge or celebrate a change in the circus' roster*, welcoming someone new, bidding them goodbye, or inviting them to return, **a split or majority** means that you've truly done so: you've bid them truly welcome, bid them truly goodbye, or truly invited them back. **A unanimity** means that the audience joins in as well, with unstinting acclaim. **A minority** means that you've still done it, but the MC has to consider and judge: the ones who chose it are beholden to the ones who didn't; or else the ones who didn't choose it have insulted the ones who did. If there haven't been any changes to the circus' roster, don't choose this.

☞ *When you captivate someone by name*, it must be someone present for the performance. **A unanimity** means that you draw them into the performance at its finale, overcome, unthinking, in wonder. **A split or majority** means that they try to meet the performers after the performance, to offer them praise, opportunity, and/or largesse. **A minority** means that they care to meet only you and the other performers who voted their support.

☞ *When you captivate the audience as a whole*, inspiring them to largesse, **a unanimity** means that they share freely what they have in plenty, and also impoverish themselves of what they hold dear. **A split or majority** means that they only share freely what they have in plenty. **A minority** means that they applaud politely and tip well enough.

☞ *When you change someone's fortune*, first name them, then name the way you want their fortune to change. You can change anything about them except their nature and their past: their form, their seeming, their luck, their health, their circumstances, the privileges they enjoy or the

limitations imposed upon them. A **unanimity** means that the change you describe comes true in the absolute, and that your subject, this place, and the people here, if appropriate, are already beginning to forget that it used to be otherwise. A **split or majority** means that the change you describe comes true as you described it, but that the change is not absolute, and the habits and memories of your subject, this place, and the people here might, over time or without care, reassert the old fortunes. A **minority** means that the change you describe comes true in broad, but those who voted in opposition can, if they like, put their heads together and choose one way in which it does not come true.

If you choose to name another player's character, they can accept, or else they can demur and have you make a different choice instead.

☞ *When you give this place its voice*, a **split or majority** means that the place can speak freely in its own voice. Ask the MC what it says. A **unanimity** means that, furthermore, it can act, for the moment, on its own behalf. Ask the MC what it does. A **minority** means that it can't speak in its own voice, but you can speak for it. Ask the MC what it whispers to you, and decide for yourself whether to speak for it.

☞ *When you hold, advance, or turn back the season of this place*, first name the course you want the seasons to take. A **split or majority** means that the season advances, turns back, or holds, according to your chosen course, and furthermore, that no one else can use their turn to change it again. A **unanimity** means that it's already begun happening by the end of the performance. A **split or majority** means that it'll begin happening by the end of the session. A **minority** means that the season's advance remains outside of the circus' direction: it advances, or does not, just as it would have if the circus hadn't come.

When the season of a place changes, it's up to the MC to reflect the change in the people and circumstances here.

☞ *When you make the audience dance to your tune*, don't call for a vote. Instead, describe what you want the audience to do and **draw them out**. Choose *I do indeed draw you out, by doing [x]. What's the effect?*

☞ *When you turn the circus' course toward the other world, a unanimity* means that when you leave this place after your show, you'll arrive in the other world. *A split or majority* means that you'll arrive between worlds, or into your chosen world if you were between worlds already. *A minority* means that you remain in the world you're in.

If you're already between worlds, be sure to choose which world you're stepping toward.

☞ *When you turn the circus itself toward summer or toward winter,* first choose "toward summer" or "toward winter." *A unanimity* means that everyone in the circus steps twice toward the chosen season. *A split or majority* means that everyone in the circus steps once toward it. *A minority* means that you and those who voted their support step toward it, and those who didn't, don't.


☞ *When you perform your own act of power,* describe it and its effects carefully. Make sure the MC understands it and that all the players consider it reasonable, then call for a show of support. *A unanimity* means that it has just the effect that you intended. *A split or majority* means that it has much the effect that you intended, but you and those who voted in support should put your heads together with the MC and decide where and how far it falls short. *A minority* means that, in the moment, you can feel that you do not have the power of the circus at your command. You may use a different circus power instead, if you choose, or else ask the MC and the other players what goes wrong.

NPC performers & problem people:


Any time before or during the first half of a performance, the Mistress of Ceremonies can establish that there's an NPC in the audience, or even an NPC in the circus, who is a "problem person." This is someone who has a demand or expectation for the circus' show, reasonable or unreasonable, and is meanwhile skeptical, bored, hostile, or disruptive.

If the show doesn't meet their demand, or the circus fails to win them over, they withhold a measure of the audience's power for themselves. The MC's judges whether this happens. If it does, the effect is that the problem person can *vote against* some or all of your circus powers, turning a unanimity into a majority, or (if it's close) a majority into a split or minority.

The MC can also have a problem person or NPC performer choose a circus power themselves. Vote your support or opposition as usual.



An Example Show



On a subsequent occasion, the circus rolls into the Goblin Market to perform. They expect it to be an easy show, and indeed, setting aside a little drama, when it comes time to perform, the audience is eager, and the overseer of entertainment and games, a goblin called Liza Halfbat, is satisfied with her bribes and content to let the show proceed.

Recall, the players' characters are Harebrake the Boondoggle Hob, Timothy Bones the Crooked Wand, Jill Cowdrey the Interloper, Tip the Lantern Jack, and the Teapot Girl, a Stick Figure.

During the session, the circus has pieced together that the crowd, mostly goblins, wants and craves four things from them: music, romance, real danger, and pretend violence.

Planning their show:

They take a playbill sheet and put their heads together to plan.

"I'll be the ringmaster," says Harebrake.

Timothy Bones notes it down. "Harebrake — ringmaster," he says. "Who else? Jill?"

"My playbook says that my place in the circus is tickets, refreshments, and crew," she says. "So I'll sell and take tickets, and if any of you need me for props or lights or anything, I'll step in. I don't think we need to compete with our neighbors in the market to sell refreshments or trinkets, do you?"

All agree that they don't.

"Good," says Timothy Bones. Tip and Teapot Girl, you have an act you do together, don't you?"

"We do," says the Teapot Girl.

"We do, but I have a new act I'd like to try out here. Teapot Girl, do you mind going it alone this time?"

"Of course not! I'm not in the mood for my usual solo act, though. I'll think of something. What's your new act?"

"It's a bout against all comers. It's called "Ten Against One."

"You're going to fight ten goblins?" Harebrake the Goblin says. "At once?"

"Sure," Tip says. "Why wouldn't I?"

Harebrake puts his eyebrows up but doesn't say more.

"I'll do my hypnotism act," Timothy Bones says. "This time let's call it 'Eating Hot Coals.' I have a volunteer in mind. I should say, Jill and I will do it. Jill?"

"I have a 'volunteer' in mind too," says Jill.

"That's good," says Harebrake.

"Oh, I know," says the Teapot Girl. "Put me down as 'The Teapot Girl in Apples, Plums, and Cherries.' Harebrake, can you help me with the act?"

Harebrake puts his eyebrows up even further. "You're going to do a fruit-themed act? At, you know, the Goblin Market?"

She smiles and winks.

"I think we need another act," says Timothy Bones. "Right now it's just the ringmaster plus three."

"You can use any of the NPC performers you want," says the MC.

"A musical interlude?" says Jill. "The Hazelbrake Wind Ensemble?"

"They have a nice piece they do called 'Quarreling Birds,'" the MC says. (The MC's improvising this, it's never been established in play.) "It'd suit this crowd nicely."

"Sounds good," says Timothy Bones. "I'll put them in after me, before 'Ten Against One.'"

"Actually, Jill," says Tip, "Can I also help you sell advance tickets? I want to start setting my act up from the beginning."

"Of course! Please do."

Here's their final playbill, in order:

- ☞ 1. Jill & Tip: Tickets.
- ☞ 2. Harebrake: Ringmaster.
- ☞ 3. The Teapot Girl (with Harebrake): Apples, Plums, and Cherries.
- ☞ 4. Timothy Bones: Eating Live Coals.
- ☞ 5. The Hazelbrake Wind Ensemble: Quarreling Birds.
- ☞ 6. Tip: Ten Against One.
- ☞ 7. Throughout, Jill: Crew.

1: Tickets

Jill Cowdrey & Tip the Lantern Jack

Well-bribed, Liza Halfbat, the Goblin Market's overseer of games and entertainment, has scheduled the circus to perform during the dinner rush on the last full market day: the prime hour.

"We start selling tickets in the morning before the show," says Jill. "I'm just taking money and giving tickets, masked and businesslike, making myself forgettable. Tip's doing the actual selling."

"I'm sure I can sell plenty of tickets just by trying, right?" Says Tip. All agree that they can. "So here's the thing. I have a number of free tickets, and whenever I see a big, mean-looking goblin, a real bruiser, I give them a free ticket and *dare them to follow me*. I'm looking for ten — no, make it fifteen or twenty of them, the toughest customers. Like I say I'm daring them to follow me. Will they?"

"Who wouldn't? I guess one or two are suspicious, but not suspicious enough to turn down a free ticket. You can have as many hard-bitten gut-gouger goblins as you want."

Tip hits the roll with a 7. "I choose *I lead them to the best seats in the circus, and later they'll find that they paid a premium to sit there*. By 'best seats' I mean aisle seats, and the premium is, when I call for volunteers, they'll look poorly if they don't. Make sense?"

"Makes sense to me," says the MC.

"Makes no sense to me," says Harebrake. "No kind of sense at all."

2: Ringmaster

Harebrake the Goblin

"Take your seats, take your seats!" says Harebrake. The circus is to perform on an open stage in the market square, not large, with bleachers all around it. Every seat's full, the audience is crowded in and packed tight, with a further crowd outside the ropes trying to get a look. The MC's said that half the food stalls around the square have already sold through their supplies and shut down for the night. Some, the sturdier, have sold seats to people who couldn't get tickets, to watch the circus from their roofs.

"Tonight, my friends, We have for you an act like no other. Listen and attend! Something sweet, something mysterious, and a shocking finale,

a finale that has me, personally, your own honest Harebrake the Goblin, rocked honestly back on my heels. I'm *opening up to them*."

Harebrake misses the roll.

"I think it's clear what you're offering them," the MC says. "But I'll tell you *what goes wrong*: this is a jaded audience. They don't believe you. You, Harebrake the Goblin, knocked back on your heels? They think you're blowing smoke. They're willing to go along with you for now, but if you don't make good, you'll be beholden to them."

"Fine," says Harebrake. "They'll see. Do you hear that, Tip? This 'Ten Against One' of yours better slay."

"I hear," says Tip.

"Friends, friends!" Harebrake says, now addressing the crowd again. "I give you: The Teapot Girl in Apples, Plums, and Cherries!"

3. Apples, Plums, and Cherries

The Teapot Girl (with Harebrake the Goblin)

"Harebrake, at the edge of the stage there's a bowl of fruit," the Teapot Girl says. "Got it? Jill, you're ready with the lights? I come in between the bleachers, dancing with my broom. Single spotlight on me."

"Single spotlight," says Jill.

"I'm costumed as the ingénue clown, in a pretty summer dress, with pink circles on my cheeks. My broom is costumed as a goblin clown, in a rakish cap and red vest. We make our way up onto the stage, and by the time we get there, we're fully realized characters, especially my broom: bold, sly, and comical."

"The crowd loves it," the MC says. "They think the broom's fantastic. You can't over-caricature them, the more goblin it is, the more they like it."

"Great! It's a juggling act. When I signal, Harebrake, throw me a piece of fruit. I catch it, keep dancing, juggle it, ask for another, take a bite, keep dancing, share a bite with my broom, more fruit, more juggling, sharing the fruit with my goblin broom, always dancing. My play is *expressing myself in capering antics*." She rolls and hits with an 11. She smiles. "First I choose *it's surprisingly beautiful*. How's the crowd taking it so far?"

"Oh they're in love with it. They're rapt. They're sighing dreamily, swaying in their seats. One of Tip's big bruiser goblins is openly weeping."

"All right. Now comes the ending. At the perfect, poised moment, I drop an apple — but it wasn't me, it was the goblin broom. I'm startled, but I laugh it off. Ha ha, brooms are so clumsy. We get back into rhythm, but then, the broom steps on my foot! I swirl away from it, hopping in pain. It's actually quite a move, keeping the broom upright and following after me while I look like I'm moving away from it, juggling a pear and an apricot at the same time. Nobody in the crowd notices, because of the emotion of the piece, but it's quite a move."

"I notice of course," says Tip. "Very nice move."

"I'm *opening up to the crowd*," says the Teapot Girl, with a smile aside at Tip. She hits the roll with an 8. "I choose, *reveal to them what I'm considering, and judge their reaction to it*. I'm considering leaving this goblin broom guy, he dropped an apple and stepped on my foot! What do they think, does he deserve one last chance?"

"They do! They do! Someone in the crowd even calls out: 'no, Teapot Girl! Give me another chance!'"

"Okay, one more chance. Harebrake, throw me the banana. I trust my broom to juggle with me again. I start to draw close to it again. We eat the banana together — it's not like that, I mean, it's only a little bit like that — but the significance is, I forgetfully drop the peel on the stage."

"Oh no," says the MC, and any number of goblins in the crowd, and Harebrake too.

"I still have a choice left from *expressing myself in capering antics*. Here it is: it's *surprisingly funny*: I do a spectacular fall on the banana peel. I drop all the fruit I'm juggling, it bounces all over the stage. My heels go up, I'm windmilling my arms — and my broom catches me. It's another great move that nobody notices, looking like I'm falling but the broom catches me and sets me back on my feet. We dance off the stage together. Ta da!"

4. Eating Live Coals

Timothy Bones (with Jill Cowdrey)

"I bound out onto the stage," says Harebrake the Goblin. "The Teapot Girl! Apples, Plums, and Cherries! Put your hands together!"

"The crowd's on their feet! Teapot Girl! Teapot Girl! Someone's like, 'I love you Teapot Girl!'"

"Outside of the spotlight, I sweep the fruit off the stage," Jill says.

"Using my broom?" says the Teapot Girl. "That's hilarious, please use my broom." She gestures handing her broom off to Jill, and they share a laugh.

"Now, friends, next, friends, for your amazement," says Harebrake to the crowd, "the mysterious and compelling powers of the Crooked Wand, Timothy Bones, in: Eating Live Coals."

"I step into the spotlight," says Timothy Bones, and the MC mimics the applauding crowd. "My costume gives the impression of a shabby coat, but when I move, it's black velvet and deep red brocade. I barely tip my hat to the audience. I don't shout, I speak in almost a normal tone. 'A volunteer, please. You.' I point my crooked staff at the human being."

Earlier in the session, they met and conversed with a mortal human being, Carl Albers, who had come into the goblin market somehow by accident. He doesn't believe that the what's happening to him is real, they learned. He believes that he's dreaming or something, but he's decided to go along with the Goblin Market and act as though it were real, for now.

"Carl, come here, my friend. Good, stand here. Everyone, you're being rude: this is my friend Carl."

"The crowd applauds," the MC says. "Someone shouts, 'good luck with the live coals, Carl.'"

"No need to worry, Carl," I say. "I'm just going to ask you a few questions, have you do a few simple tasks. On my word, have no fear. Please, first, I'm going to ask you to wear this blindfold. Is he willing to put it on?"

"You can see him reminding himself that it's just a dream and that he's decided to go along with it, so it takes him a minute to resolve himself. But then yes, he puts it on."

"Good. So here's my act. I'm going to ask him some questions and have him eat burning coals — really just put them in his mouth and spit them out again, not swallow them. But that's just the act. My real play is to get the audience so fixed on what's happening with Carl, that I'm actually **blindfolding them** instead. Sound good?"

"Sounds good," says the MC.

"First a question or two. Carl, you're a mortal human being, yes?"

"Yes," says the MC, as Carl.

"I see. Some goblins enjoy eating live coals, you know. On a dare, or as a treat. Is this true of mortal human beings too?"

"No."

"In fact, Carl, do mortal human beings ever eat live coals?"

"No, never."

"What do mortal human beings eat, on a dare, or as a treat? Or let's start with this: what's something that mortal human beings like to lick?"

"Lick? Like a lollipop?"

"A lollipop! I happen to have a lollipop here in my hand, Carl. Please stick out your tongue." Timothy Bones gestures holding forward a live coal in tongs. Jill, helpfully, sticks out her tongue and goes to lick it.

"Okay, now I'm *blindfolding the crowd*." He rolls and misses, with a 5. "Ah. Oh. Hm. What goes wrong?"

"I'll think about it. Go ahead and choose one first," the MC says.

"Okay. *While I'm performing, they don't notice what Jill is doing.*"

"And what are you doing, Jill?"

"Well, I'm worried about that miss Timothy rolled, but here goes. I leave the spotlight shining on Timothy and go down into the market. Remember I was looking over the goods in that jewelry shop? I'm going to *pocket something*."

"Now I'm saying, what's something that mortal human beings like to eat, if not live coals?" says Timothy Bones.

"Cool," says the MC. "Timothy's play says, *on a miss, maybe blinding them to some things awakens their awareness to others*. Before you make your play, you should know that the jeweler will be able to tell that a mortal human being robbed him, not a goblin or fairy. By the atmosphere in his shop, maybe because he's focusing so hard on another human being right now, meaning Carl. Do you still want to go through with it?"

"I do. I'm after that amber panel pendant that shows images of distant places," a magical treasure she admired earlier in the session. She rolls and hits with a 7. "Well, I have it, but *it's not true that I own it*," she reads out, "*and neither it nor anyone else will believe that it belongs to me*. Fair enough, it doesn't. Still, I go back to my place at the spotlight with it in my pocket."

"Now I'm saying, Carl, what would you say is in your mouth? A live coal, or a pickled egg?" Timothy Bones says. "While I'm at it, I'm going to choose a *circus power*. Since our next show's supposed to be in the human world anyway, I whisper to him, 'come with us when we leave, we'll take you home.' I'm going to *turn the circus' course toward the other world*. Who's in favor, hands?"

It's unanimous. When the circus leaves the goblin market, it'll arrive next in the mortal human world.

"Good," says Timothy Bones. "I wrap up my act. I take the live coal out of Carl's mouth, take off his blindfold — I don't let him get a good look at the live coal, it might upset him, maybe I even have a pickled egg handy to let him catch a glimpse of instead. You're all set, Jill?"

"All set."

"Then I snap the audience out of it. Carl Albers, everyone! A round of applause! Thank you, Carl. Take a bow!"

"Timothy Bones, and Carl Albers!" says Harebrake. "And now: the Hazelbrake Wind Ensemble, with 'Quarreling Birds.'"

5. Quarreling Birds

The Hazelbrake Wind Ensemble

"While they're performing," says the Teapot Girl, "should I choose a *circus power*? Retroactively, since I forgot during my act?"

"You should if you want to," says the MC. "Which one?"

"That's the other thing, I don't know which one. I guess I could *captivate* that one goblin who fell in love with me? Not that I want to meet them or have a fling with them or anything. Oh wait, I know! I'll *change their fortune*. It's good luck to fall in love with me, wouldn't you say?"

Everyone votes in favor, except Tip. Nobody asks why — the rules say to cast your own vote and let everyone else cast theirs, no meddling — but we all know that if anybody asked, Tip wouldn't answer anyway, just shrug.

"Let's see," the MC says. "Teapot Girl, you *say how their fortune changes*. On a unanimity, it's permanent; on a split or majority, they might revert over time. How does their fortune change?"

"They become incredibly lucky. Their business booms, whatever it is. They win at dice, their investments all pay off. They're extra lucky in love. At first they can have their pick of lovers, but pretty soon, they find someone they'll truly commit to, and who'll truly commit to them.

"Since the change isn't permanent, that's where my good luck takes them. Where they go after that, is up to them! I hope they're very happy."

All agree that this is appropriate. "Teapot Girl, you're so nice," Jill says.

"The Quarreling Birds' is coming to an end right about now. The crowd's whistling and clapping. You're up next, Tip!" says the MC.

6. Ten Against One

Tip the Lantern Jack

"I bound onto the stage. I call out at the top of my lungs: TEN!
AGAINST! ONE!

"I'm Tip the Lantern Jack, and I say: ten against one! Who'll take those odds? You, sir? You, madam? Ten against one! The rules are simple. Send your ten best, your ten worst, your ten most ferocious on stage to face me. Each one, puts a golden coin into this bowl. I match each coin with a golden coin of my own. (I flash coins so everyone can see them shine. I throw one into the bowl so it rings like a bell.) Attack me singly or all at once — you decide. If you knock me down, you each take your own coin back from the bowl, and look, you take one of my coins to go with it! Ten against one! Risk one coin to gain two!

"Too difficult, you say? Too risky, you say? When did ten, you say, even ten stout brawling dandies like you, ever knock down Tip the Lantern Jack? I tell you, it's happened once or twice, truly it has. But I take your point! How can we even the odds?

"Look! I balance the bowl on my head! You ten, you need not even knock me down! All you must do is knock the bowl from my head. And see? I almost dropped it already!

"Still no takers? Still you quake in fear of the fists (I show my fists) the boots (I'm not wearing boots, I'm wearing soft dancers' slippers, but I caper on my heels as though they were boots) and the jagged gnashers (I snarl and snap, my teeth are perfect) of Tip the Lantern Jack? Fair, fair! I take your point. THREE COINS FOR ONE!"

And to the MC: "tell me I have my ten takers. Tell me I have more than ten! Those free tickets weren't for free."

"You know it. Absolutely."

"Great, great! I count them up onto the stage. I have each one throw their coin into the bowl so that it rings, and make a show of throwing two of my own coins into the bowl too. Eight, nine, ten — that's enough, madam, you'll have to — no, no, I take your point. Come up, come up. Eleven, twelve, and yes, thirteen!

THIRTEEN AGAINST ONE! ONE COIN FOR THREE!"

To the MC: "the crowd better be going wild at this point."

"Of course!" says the MC. "Thirteen against one? They're roaring. They're shouting bets at each other, they're on their feet."

"Okay! I put the bowl on my head for safekeeping, you can hear all the coins ringing around in there. Okay! You look like a swaggering and bloodthirsty bunch of bravos and no lie. I fear I've made an error! But no — thirteen against one it is. First, a test of your strength! You, number one, stand here. Number two, step up! Lock elbows together, thus, and lock knees, so. Number three, next! Lock elbows, good. Lock knees, good. No, yours behind, yours before, good! Number four!

"So I line them all up on the stage, one through thirteen, locked together by the elbows and knees."

Harebrake catches on and starts to laugh.

"Now I address the crowd. Thirteen heroes of Goblin-kind! Each fierce and terrible! Each ready to perform acts of violence upon the person of Tip the Lantern Jack, which is to say, myself! Each with gold to spare! Look at this one, at that one, and this one yet — as filthy and unscrupulous a crew as you could imagine! And hist, is this a hidden dagger? It is! Thirteen against one, and you bring a dagger too for my guts or my gullet? Keep your protests, sir, we all saw it! Away with it. A villain, you, and villains the lot! Who wishes to see these cutthroats, these back alley butchers, rewarded? Three coins, for their one? You, madam? You, sir? Shall they band together, thirteen against one, and strut away, arm still in arm, with the reward?"

To the MC: "Okay, for this to work, I'm going to need to **draw the audience out**. I want to bring them onto my side, as the underdog, against these thirteen. Not by playing on their pity, by planting the idea that if it's thirteen against one, they should be rooting for the one, not the thirteen. If goblins — I mean, come on, if goblins won't pull for the underdog, who on earth will?"

"Got it," says the MC. "Go ahead with the roll."

Tip hits the roll with an 8, and reads from the play: "*I do indeed draw them out, by doing like I said. What's the effect?*"

"It's subtle, but you notice when the crowd tips over. Someone jeers them instead of cheering for them, and just like that they've lost the crowd's support. They're still standing there confident and bold, they don't realize what's happening yet at all."

"You're so kind," says Tip. "At that moment, I hold up my hand for a countdown. The crowd's with me? THREE!"

"Three!" says the MC for the crowd.

"TWO!"

"Two!"

"ONE!"

"One!"

"I whip the bowl off my head and smash number 13 solidly in the face with it. I'm *waylaying him*, actually all thirteen of them." Tip hits the roll with an 11. "*I shock and startle them and they freeze, and I throw them off balance and they fall.* Particularly, number 13 falls off the edge of the stage, and since they're locked together, number 12 falls off the edge of the stage, then number 11, then number 10... Meanwhile, all the gold goes flying into the air for anybody to catch who wants it. I help number 1 over the edge with a last little shove.

"I jump up, fists in the air. THIRTEEN! AGAINST! ONE! HA!"

The crowd goes wild.

Wrapping Up

"All righty," says Tip, "let's put some circus power into that. ***Captivate the audience as a whole, inspiring them to largesse.*** Votes in favor?"

It's unanimous. The power says that on a unanimity, *the audience shares freely what it has in plenty*, in this crowd's case, laughter and its best insults, and *even impoverishes itself of what it holds dear*, genuine words of praise.

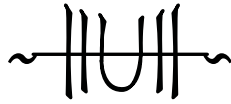
"Let me get this straight," says Timothy Bones. "You threw, what, 40ish gold coins into the crowd from the circus kitty, and what we get back is some grudging genuine praise, but mostly they laugh at us and chase us off-stage with swears and their best insults?"

Tip and Harebrake together: "Worth it."





Vincent Baker



Dear Reader:
A Miscellany
Topics

- ☞ Fairyland, the Mortal Human World, and Otherwise.
- ☞ The Fairy Seasons.
- ☞ Form, Nature & Seeming.
- ☞ Games Fairies Play.
- ☞ A Glossary.
- ☞ Sources & Inspiration.

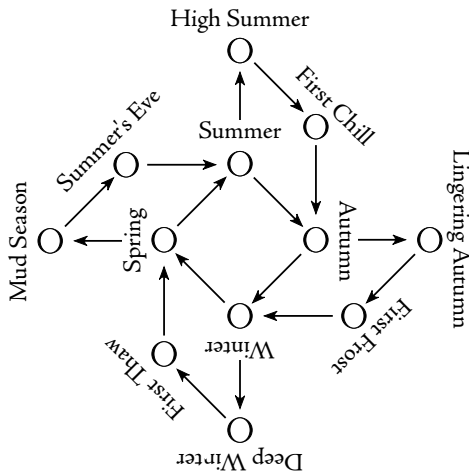

 A Miscellany


Fairyland, the Mortal Human World, the World Between, & Otherwise

There are two worlds: the mortal world and fairyland. There's a liminal space, not a world, between them. The circus can travel from one world to the other, perhaps stopping between them. To do so, you just have to choose to, together, when you perform.

Are there other worlds than these? I can't assure you that there aren't.

The Fairy Seasons



If there were a fairy year, it wouldn't have 4 seasons, it would have up to 12, varying freely one year to the next.

Each of the 4 mortal seasons is a crux:

- ☞ Spring can become Summer, or else it can become Mud Season, and so remain, indefinitely, until Summer's Eve heralds summer's coming after all.
- ☞ Summer can become Autumn, or else it can become High Summer, and so remain, indefinitely, until the First Chill in the air heralds Autumn's coming after all.
- ☞ Autumn can become Winter, or else it can become Lingering Autumn, and so remain, indefinitely, until the First Frost heralds Winter's coming after all.
- ☞ And Winter can become Spring again, or else it can become Deep Winter, and so remain, indefinitely, until the First Thaw heralds Spring's return after all.

The course of the fairy seasons depends on the will and the efforts of the local fairies themselves. The circus can play a part: when you perform, you can choose whether and how the seasons progress.

In the mortal world, the year is set, of course: spring to summer to autumn to winter to spring again. This is true, except that even in the mortal world, the fairy circus can turn summer into high summer, autumn into lingering autumn, winter into deep winter, or spring into mud season.

Form, Nature & Seeming

We can suppose that all beings have their nature, whole and unique (if changeable); their form, which may or may not conform to their nature; and their seeming, which is the least reliable of all. If we then suppose some enchantment of transformation, we can imagine that the least enchantment is to change someone's seeming, then someone's form, and the most enchantment is to change someone's nature. So the game conceives it.

Games Fairies Play

Many things which are, to mortal human beings, unchangeable nature, or deadly serious, are to the fairies only games.

Gender:

You may have a true gender, innate to yourself — some fairies do, some don't; some human beings do, some don't — but whether you have one or not, you can make gender a part of the imagery you use to express yourself and your changing nature.

When you introduce yourself, say your pronouns, and if they change, say them again!

This game text makes free use of singular they, both in its indeterminate sense and its nonbinary sense, and you may too.

Size:

In fairyland, everything is the right size, or else the wrong size for comedic or dramatic effect. Shrink the entire circus down so it can perform for a nation of atomies in a hollow tree, and the Crowned Stag must still duck under the doorways!

Time:

For fairies, the laws of time and causality are the rules of stories and jokes: setup, suspense, punchline, denouement. The game's moves are:

- ☞ *Just then...*
- ☞ *Meanwhile...*
- ☞ *In the nick of time...*
- ☞ *Too soon...*
- ☞ *Too late...*
- ☞ *A year, a month, a week, and a day...*

And others, you know them.

Age:

You might be tempted to guess that *spring–summer–autumn–winter* line up with *youth–adulthood–maturity–old age*, and indeed some fairies sometimes play it that way, but those aren't the rules of the game.

- ☞ The River Queen's prolonging winter and putting off the Breaking of the Ice. The longer it goes, her face — always beautiful, never young — becomes drawn and strained, showing every day more age. But her lover, the Wolf King of Winter, no matter how silver his hair and how lined his face, becomes only more handsome.
- ☞ The Wolf King's Son is a strapping youth in spring, tall and free on the fairy roads. As spring turns to summer, does he put aside his youth, or does his youth flower into another childhood?
- ☞ The Giant Gorebore is a horror in any season. Who'll wait on his island until spring to see if the chasmic lines in his face, the looming stormhead of his brow, the jagged boulders of his teeth seem younger than they did in winter?

Crowned Heads:

Just another game, as though any person, any creature, any force of nature could stand above others and proclaim its right to rule them.

But how serious are its stakes, and do its players remember that they are at play?

Fairy Coins:

There are three denominations of fairy coin: a shaving, a measure, and a trove.

A *shaving* is an annoying and reasonable amount to pay for something small. A meal or a ticket to the circus costs a shaving.

A *measure* is an annoying and reasonable amount to pay for something good and valuable. Your usual share of the circus' take is a measure. Were you to buy a new wagon or a thimbleful of stars it would cost you a measure. Maybe it's 20 or 50 shavings to the measure; there's no set schedule.

A *trove* is too much, really, to pay for anything. The entire circus, empty its stores, sell off its wagons, collect its outstanding debts, would be worth a trove. Maybe it's 200 or 500 measures to the trove, maybe more.

Because they're a game and a symbol, fairies can treat anything valuable as coins. Take a shaving off the applause of the crowd, receive your measure of joyful misrule, or, famously, pay a queenly tithe to hell with the trove of a stolen mortal knight's soul.



A Glossary



Archaicisms & Esoterica

Astonied: Believe it or not, *astonied* is the earlier form of *astonished*. It's related to *stunned*, thence *thunder*: essentially, *thunderstruck*. Astonied is noted "archaic" or "obsolete" in dictionaries, but I'm unswayed by such stodgy condemnation.

Bend a Knee: To bow or curtsy. By extension, to defer, especially to nobility, right, precedence, privilege, class, achievement, dignity, or as an equal, not implying compulsion, authority, or force.

Ciderer: Someone who makes cider as a vintner, wine.

Daub: Plaster, clay, or paint, spread thickly and artlessly as a surface treatment.

Doldrums: Lethargy, or a place so uneventful that you get stuck there. Used by extension of the sailors' term for a windless sea. *Doldrums* may have been constructed originally contra *tantrums*, substituting *dol-*, meaning "dull," for *tant-*, meaning either "vanity" from German, "trumpeting" from French, or "passion" from Welsh. This suggests an interesting avenue for new constructions: "We spent the whole weekend in the ludrums, nothing but game after game at our house!" "Pass me my notebook, I think I'm about to throw a ludrum."

Festoon: To hang with decorative ribbons, garlands, or flowers. Also a weird bird from a Shel Silverstein poem.

Gambol: To run and jump playfully. Carries an implication of innocence: lambs gambol, but an old sheep only gambols when it remembers spring and its lost ... lambency? That can't be right.

Heraldic Shield: A shield-shaped wooden plaque, not a fighting shield. Hang it above your chair or in its place on the wall in mead hall, feasting hall, or hall of court, to proclaim your presence and boast your name.

"Jack": While Jack, along with Tom, Dick, Harry, and Everyman, is a gendered term, gender is a game and you can play it however you like.

Largesse: Generosity in gift-giving, or the gifts generously given.

Leaf Spring: A bow-shaped steel spring originally used for carriage suspensions. For heavier suspensions, made with multiple layered leaves.

Oilcloth: Canvas treated with oil to repel water.

Shillelagh: A very good stick, cured by hanging it in your chimney until it's glossy black and rock hard, something over three foot long, made from heavy root wood of blackthorn, oak or crabapple, with a knot at one end for a handle when it's a walking stick and for skulls when it's not.

Squib: A kind of firecracker, or a short piece of satirical writing: a hiss and a snap.

"Trip it Gaily": To *trip it* just means to dance. "Trip it gaily" was a stock phrase in the 19th Century, appearing in songs and popular writing, along the lines of *let's recall with fondness days of yore, when lads and lasses would trip it gaily o'er the green*. Here, naturally, we're overloading it with double meanings.

Wicker Withes: The flexible branches, strips, or splits of wood used for basketry, chair caning, windbreaks, and other wickery.

Winkle: To get something out of something — usually, to get information out of someone — with effort, cunning, art, and trickery. Named after an edible snail, for the difficulties involved.

The Circus

Aerialist: A performer who does acrobatic feats on the wire or the trapeze.

Barker: A performer who stands outside the gate, the tent, or the sideshow, proclaiming marvels, bantering with passersby, and drawing customers in. The barker's patter, half scripted and half improvised, is called "bally" or "ballyhoo."

Bouts Against All Comers: An act in which a performer invites volunteers from the crowd into the arena for a fight or other contest. The circus or the performer generally puts up a prize or a purse. If the bout's fair, hitting on the right combination of enticing to win, but inexpensive to lose, is an important piece of the act's planning. If the bout's rigged, other considerations might prevail.

Caller: A performer who, in a dance or synchronized performance, calls out the figures or signals the moves. Alternately, a performer who explains the performance in progress to the audience, building expectation and suspense, and acting to focus and direct the audience's attention and reactions.

Capering Antics: Contra more neutral terms like tumbling, juggling, or pantomime, "capering" implies grotesque, exaggerated movements, and "antic" implies senseless, misdirected, or uncontrolled emotion.

Chicanery: Cons, gags, fixes, frauds, rigs, scams, schemes, shorts, bits, grifts, gaffs, games, skims, shades, set-ups, mooches, swindles, cakes, plasters, pitches, pastes, patches, brush-offs, blowoffs, cool-offs, handoffs, face-offs, psych-outs, jams, bags, hooks, rackets, lines, draws, pranks, fades, swaps, runs, joints, bull, filches, shills, stings. The bunk.

Clown: A performer who creates problems out of nothing, and after many attempts, solves them in the way least convenient to himself or to others. Or else, or simultaneously, a performer who breaks the circus' implicit rules, putting himself and others in danger that never quite comes true, or that was never as bad as it seemed.

Conjurer: A performer who produces items from unlikely places, secrets from unlikely informers, or sounds or voices from unlikely sources. This being fairyland, the conjurer's conjury might be all sleights and trickery, might be real magic, or might be a surprising mixture of the two.

Cook: A worker who does the valuable job of taking the scraps, refuse, parings, and cans who've lost their labels that the provisioner provides, and from them feeding the entire circus.

Costumer: A worker who does the valuable job of caring for the performers' costumes, whose time and leisure is so evidently unlimited that the performers press them into every task of mending, laundry, styling, fashion, and personal advice, whether circus business or no.

Creative Collaborator: Performers need to conceive, develop, and refine their acts. This is difficult or impossible to do alone.

Crew: Workers who work directly with the performers while they perform, and between performances: operating spotlights, working the lines of a trapeze or trampoline, putting props in position, clearing one act for the next, hiding inside a platform to create a magical effect, or whatever the performers require.

Escapade or escapado: An act of tumbling, juggling, or acrobatics, with the addition of an element of danger: a flaming hoop, swinging pendulums, torches or chainsaws for juggling, a "hostage" the performer places in peril.

Fortune Teller: A performer who divines and reveals the nature, secrets, future, or fortunes of a volunteer. Fortune-telling isn't generally an audience-captivating act, with its true audience of one, but under some circumstances — performed for a Queen before her court, for instance — it can be. Otherwise it's often relegated to the side show.

Gaff: A rigged prop, the mechanism of a rigged game, or the rigged item that makes a magic trick work. By extension, any con, scam, or gag.

Guide: A performer who leads the audience through the show. Like a ringmaster, they present the show to the audience, but unlike a ringmaster, they take a pretend position outside the show, not part of it.

Heel Dragger: A worker who does the valuable job of refusing, slacking off, malingering, complaining, braking, pointing out downsides, stirring up discontent, and harshing the vibe.

Host: A performer who acts the host, upending the true hospitality relationship in play and establishing, for purposes of the show, the audience as the circus' guest. This isn't a necessary act; without a host performer, the ringmaster traditionally needs simply to acknowledge the true host — "so with your permission, your majesty, we will proceed!" — and get on with the show. Instead, acting the host lets the performer reverse expectations of honor, gratitude, liberty, right, and reciprocity, an effect which a canny circus can put to good use.

Juggler: Some jugglers specialize in juggling more things, some in juggling dangerous things, some in flashy maneuvers while juggling, some in juggling absurd things, and some in novel forms of juggling.

Lookout: A worker who does the valuable job of watching for what's coming and judging, at a snap, whether it's good for the circus or bad. Even if the circus' conscience is clean, it's not *that* clean.

Mark: A member of the audience, evidently rich and evidently gullible; a promising prospect for chicanery. So called because when you spot a likely target in the crowd, you surreptitiously scuff them on the shoulder with chalk, to identify them to your fellow chicanerists.

Muse: A worker who does the valuable job of provoking, unsettling, and getting under the skin of the performers, inspiring them to pursue their most profound and impassioned artistic heights, when really they should be working on acts that'll sell to a crowd.

Novelties & Trinkets: The circus might offer novelties and memorabilia to its audience: keepsake playbills, signed personality cards, toys, flags, branded clothing, water bottles — anything an enterprising producer might think up. The workers who do the actual selling are in a position to observe the audience very closely, without coming under much scrutiny themselves.

Opener & Closer of Doors: A performer who reveals the show to the audience. The pretense here is that the show would otherwise be private, and the opener & closer of doors decides which performances the audience may witness, and which they may not.

Overseer of Work: A worker who does the valuable job of pointing out to you things that you don't want to do.

Performer: If your playbook lists your place in the circus as “performer,” without suggesting an act, you should come up with your own act or acts. Often it’s because the playbook’s suitable for several or many possible acts, and there’s no reason for it to limit you to only one or two. Look over the playbill for example acts.

Planner: A worker who does the valuable job of taking inadequate information, competing needs, and the opinions of the other planners, and from them deciding what, exactly, the circus is going to do.

Plant: A worker or performer who pretends to be part of the audience, to volunteer, cheer, or otherwise support an act.

Playbill: A poster, placard, or printed brochure that lists the sponsors of the circus, the performers, the acts, announcements, rules, and perhaps the circus’ future shows. In the game, the worksheet the circus players use to plan their show.

Pratfall Comedy: An act where the main appeal is, the performers fall down in spectacular, comical, and painful-looking ways.

Problem Solver: A worker who does the valuable job of handling the bribes, soft-talking the authorities, wedging the loose poles, finding the level ground, redirecting the hecklers, and swinging the skull-clubs.

Provisioner: A worker who does the valuable job of sourcing and acquiring the foodstuffs, especially, that the circus depends upon for its survival, but also string, tinware, wax paper, and band-aids.

Refreshments: Depending on the details and specifics of the show, the circus may offer cheap, convenient food and drink to the audience. Popcorn, peanuts, fried dough, soft drinks, beer, lemonade — or, this being fairyland, refreshments much more novel than these.

Ringmaster: A performer who acts as the announcer and director of the other acts; the voice of the circus to the audience.

Roustabout: A worker who does all the work of the circus not otherwise accounted for.

Shill: A worker or performer who pretends to be part of the audience, so to vouch for or help sell a performer’s claims or wares.

Slapstick Comedy: An act where the main appeal is, the performers do violence to each other in spectacular, comical, and painful-looking ways. Slapsticks, by the way, are mock-weapons made of two laths of wood that clap loudly together when you hit someone with them, making it sound like you’ve cracked them a really ringing blow.

Spectacle: A performer who does something — or simply is — momentous, spectacular, outsized, or bizarre.

Star: A performer who's captured the devotion of the crowd, beyond the details of their act.

Tent-pole Show: An important show around which you've planned your season's tour. It could be a show you love and always play, an opportunity you don't usually get, or a command invitation you wouldn't dare miss.

Tickets: Depending on the details and specifics of the show, the circus might sell and collect printed tickets, stamp hands, offer reservations, give special invitations, or just take your nickel and pass you through the gate. The workers who do this actual work are in an important gatekeeping position, able to pick out marks or spot potential problems for other members of the circus to deal with.

Tumbler: A performer who does acrobatic and gymnastic feats: leaps, flips, somersaults, handsprings, cartwheels, and so on.

Worker: If your playbook lists your place in the circus as "worker," without suggesting a job, you should come up with your own job or jobs. Often it's because the playbook's suitable for several or many possible jobs, and there's no reason for it to limit you to only one or two.

Costuming

Counterchanged: A repeating geometrical pattern in two colors. The checkerboard is a simple counterchanged pattern in red and black; counterchanged patterns can be quite a bit more complex.

Dressmaker's Form: A model torso on which you construct a garment. Might be made of shaped blocks of wood, basketry, bent tin hoops, or panels of cloth-covered foam on a frame. Often changeable in a variety of particular dimensions, whether by adjusting the structure of the form itself or by building it out with an assortment of additional pads.

Fillet: A hairband of ribbon, garland, or metal. Used since antiquity; the laurel wreath is a fillet.

Harlequin: A pattern of (usually) diamond shapes in (usually) a few different colors, outlined against each other in (usually) white, black, brown, or gray. Named after the commedia dell'arte character, whose original costume was made with blocky patches to indicate poverty, but whose character and costume became more sophisticated as the form went on.

Motley: Motley is the particular particolored (*below*) and visually incoherent costume of the jester. It may include ribbons, bells, dagging, exaggerated hat or shoes, or pieces borrowed or added on in odd

ways. Significantly, in Elizabethan England, motley wasn't subject to sumptuary dress laws, and so literally placed the wearer outside of normal society.

Mummers' Rags: A costume made of an undergarment sewn all over with free-moving ribbons or strips of rag, often with a hat and veil of the same. Mummers' rags emphasize and disguise your body and your movements, to striking or disorienting effect.

Particolor: Particolor clothing is made with one vertical half in one color, and the other in another; or else in quarters, usually with opposite diagonal quarters in the same color. It was a fashion in medieval Europe, part of the larger fashion for heraldry.

Tatterdemalion: Old, poor-fitting, patched, ragged clothing. Possibly originally literally "tattered shirt." The implication is of poverty.

Vagabond's Rags: Hard-worn, torn, patched clothing. *Contra tatterdemalion*, specifically names the traveling life, the wandering life, the *unsettled* life as the reason for the clothing's poor repair.

Fairy Matters

Beholden: Literally, held, bound. A gift or a favor creates an imbalance between two people that binds one to the other. You must answer to the giver to regain your self-possession.

Boggart: An elf, goblin, or sprite. An imaginary fear, a bugbear. Etymologically related to a wonderful family of words, including *bugbear* (aforementioned), *bug* (like a bug or like to bug someone), *bogey* (like the bogey man or an enemy plane caught on radar), *buck* (like to buck someone off your back), and Puck (*that* Puck). Not related to bogart (like a joint), that's named after a different guy.

Boondoggle: A kind of knotwork or square braiding, used for stop knots, handles, fobs, and the like. Specifically, boondoggle doesn't come undone by itself the way knitting, crochet, or some whipping does. Thus "a boondoggle" is an intractable problem, a knot you can't unpick.

Cold Iron: Any iron, really; the "cold" is for emphasis. Many fairies — in the game, practically all fairies; in real life, only some — can't abide its touch. I've heard that the idea is a mythic memory of a time when iron-wielding conquerers invaded Europe and defeated its tin-working indigenous inhabitants, tin being remembered as "elfin steel" or "elfin silver." Personally I find the proposal too convenient, but I leave it to the reader's sensibilities.

Crowned Heads, or Fairy Crowns: Queens, kings, and other crown-wearers of all sorts. By extension, anyone you must, might, should, or won't defer to.

Fairy "Kinds" (Goblin Kind, Mousey Kind, Witchy Kind &c): Fairy kinds are a convenience for our benefit. They aren't true. Fairies are like stories: they don't have species, they fit into no rigorous catalogue, and when it suits them to have classes or families, they're always changeable, always interpretable, always waiting to be seen in a new light.

Glamourie: The charged, pervasive magical atmosphere of fairies and fairyland; fairy magic, fairy enchantment, fairy arts.

Hob: One of many local words for fairy, elf, or goblin, or one of many local kinds of fairy, elf, or goblin, if you prefer. I read somewhere that until Shakespeare popularized "fairies" with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in English "elves" was the umbrella term. Anyway, a Hob is a goblin of the household, the field, or the countryside, in Northern England and the Scottish Borders. It's the *hob* in hobgoblin and in Hobbit. It's also a shortened version of Robert, so in that way it's like the *Jack* in Jack O'Lantern, the *Robin* in Puck Robin, and the *Will* in will-o'-the-wisp (itself also sometimes called *hobby-lantern*).

Pisky: More commonly spelled *pixie*, but *pisky* is also correct. A local word or local kind of fairy, mischievous, impish, delighted by trouble, eager to mislead. *Pisky-led* means lost.

Secret Heart: We can suppose that all beings have their nature, whole and unique (if changeable); their self, which may or may not conform to their nature; and their self-awareness, which is the least reliable of all. If we then suppose some magic of revelation, the arts of a fortune-teller, we can imagine that the least profound is to reveal someone's self-conception, then someone's self, and the most profound is to reveal someone's nature, their "secret heart." So the game conceives it.

Shifty: In *shifty-kind*: a shape-shifter. All beings' natures can and do integrate many forms. *Shifty* here means a fairy who can take off and put on their different forms, if not freely, still more freely than you or I.

Troll: A word for fairies or a kind of fairy: large, powerful, dangerous, territorial. Ancient, but perhaps not patient. Often shapeshifters. Elemental: you might say a stone-troll, a tree-troll, a mountain-troll, a river-troll.

Under the Hollow Hills: Fairyland, contra the Mortal Human World, places between worlds, and other worlds here unnamed. "Under the sun, under the moon, or under the Hollow Hills" means everywhere, you know, more or less.

Walking Blackthorn (& other walking trees): Trees walk, as we know.

Blackthorn is famously the wood used for Irish fighting sticks. The “ten of walking blackthorn” among the Crowned Stag’s warrior elite are presumably ten walking blackthorn trees, but they might instead simply be ten warriors afoot armed with blackthorn fighting sticks.

Whisps: Correctly, *wisps*, as in a wisp of smoke or a will-o’-the-wisp. Slight fairies, airy, mercurial, next-to-nothing. Why it’s here misspelled with the *wh* is a matter for conjecture; likely by mistaken [or poetic —VB] association with *whisper*.

Wicker-wise: Wise in working. Sensitive to the unseen, crafty (if you know what I mean), or blessed with second-sight. Exclusively, of mortal human beings: fairies are never wicker-wise and have no need to be. Perhaps a healer, a magician, a true priestess, or a kitchen witch. The term comes from a false and debunked etymology linking *witch*, that is, *wicce*, with *wicker*, and is more subtle maybe than it seems: the true witch-wisdom is hidden against discovery; we have no direct recourse to it. Our route to it is made twisting by supposition, wishful thinking, and convenient false equivalences. So we must seek it in bunkery and find our way to it despite, if we can. The truth is poetry, we might say, even when the poetry is a lie. Or else, wicker-wise means wise in working on its own terms, no debunked etymology required: weaving-wise, braiding-wise, boondoggle-wise, mending-wise, knot-wise; wise in the warp and the weft; wise in the ways of the fates and the spiders, the labyrinth-dwellers, our sisters.





Sources & Inspiration



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Darby O’Gill & the Little People (1959). Also, *Finian’s Rainbow* (1968).
DNA: Descendant Now Ancestor (2011) by John Trudell.
Eshu Bumpus, Davis Bates, & Janet Glantz.
Faeries (1978) by Alan Lee & Brian Froud. Also Froud’s *Good Faeries/Bad Faeries* (1998) & *Lady Cottington’s Pressed Fairy Book* (1994).
Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm (2012) by Philip Pullman.
Hartsbrook Garland, Juggler Meadow Morris Men, Wake Robin Morris, & That Long Tall Sword. Rose Sheehan.
The Hobbit (1937) by J.R.R. Tolkien. Also the Rankin-Bass one (1977).
Inkspell (2007) by Cornelia Funke.
Labyrinth (1986). Also, *Pan’s Labyrinth* (2006).
The Last Unicorn (1968) by Peter S. Beagle, and the Rankin-Bass rendition (1982), but no less *The Folk of the Air* (1986).
Little, Big: or, The Fairies’ Parliament (1981) by John Crowley.
Loafer’s Glory with Utah Phillips (1997-2001).
Lyonesse by Jack Vance: *Lyonesse (Suldrun’s Garden)* (1983), *The Green Pearl* (1985), & *Madouc* (1989).
Maddigan’s Fantasia (2005) by Margaret Mahy.
Mechanique: a Tale of the Circus Tresaulti (2011) by Genevieve Valentine.
Many Moomin books by Tove Jansson, and at least one TV series.
A Midsummer Night’s Dream by William Shakespeare, in text and in several productions, live and filmed. Also, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Tempest*, &c., ditto.
Over the Garden Wall (2014).
Penn & Teller: Fool Us (2011–).
The Pentangle, Christie Moore, Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer, Eliza Carthy, Faun, Garmarna, Hedningarna, Julie Fowles, June Tabor, Pete Seeger, Steele Span, Tim Eriksen, and uncountable many more.

Primetime Adventures (2004) by Matt Wilson. *Breaking the Ice* (2005) by Emily Care Boss. *Action Movie World* (2015) by Ian Williams.

Red as Blood, or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer (1983) by Tanith Lee. Also her short story “UOUS” (2005).

The Reckoning (2002). Also, *Judy & Punch* (2019).

The Regard of Flight (1983) with Bill Irwin, Michael O’Connor, & Doug Skinner. Also, *Old Hats* (2013) with Bill Irwin & David Shiner.

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead (1966) by Tom Stoppard, and the film (1990). Also, *Shakespeare In Love* (1998).

Russian Doll (2019).

Scary Fairy Godmother.

Script Change by Beau Sheldon. *The Luxton Technique* by P.H. Lee.

Several Studio Ghibli films, but especially *Spirited Away* (2002) & *Kiki’s Delivery Service* (1989).

Shel Silverstein, especially “An Invitation” & “Enter This Deserted House,” from *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974), but you can’t go wrong.

The Sisters of the Winter Wood (2018) by Rena Rossner.

Slings & Arrows (2003–2006).

Something Wicked This Way Comes (1962) by Ray Bradbury, and moreso the film (1983).

The Spiderwick Chronicles (2003–2004) by Holly Black & Tony DiTerlizzi, and the film (2008).

Steering the Craft (1998) by Ursula K. Le Guin.

Tom Waits, especially *The Black Rider* (1990), but of course *Alice* (2002) and any number of his vaudeville songs.

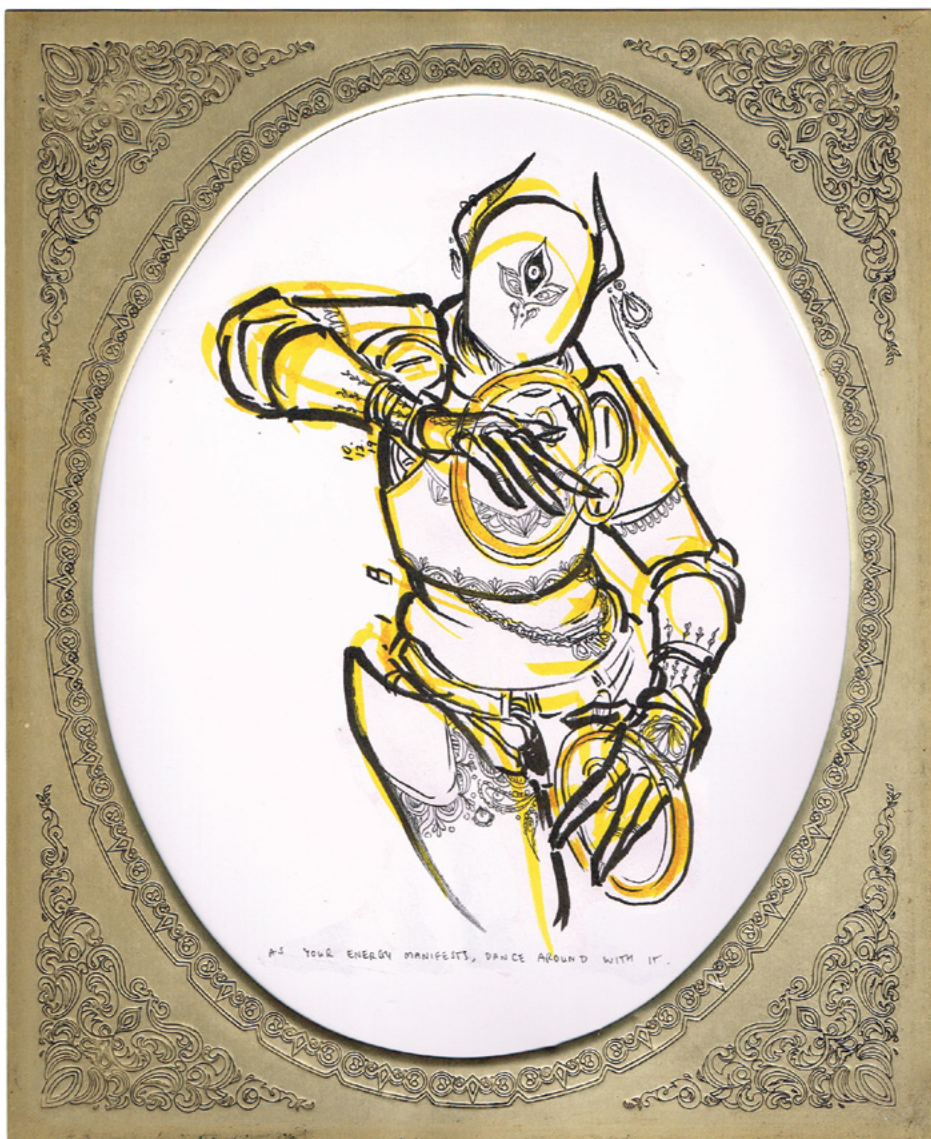
The Weetzie Bat books (1989–1998) by Francesca Lia Block. Also *I Was a Teenage Fairy* (1998) & *The Rose & the Beast* (2000).

The Weirdstone of Brisingamen (1960) by Alan Garner, and its sequel, *The Moon of Gomerath* (1963).

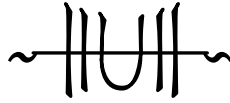
Wings of Desire (1987) and its sequel, *Faraway, So Close!* (1993).

...And the three or four that we’ve forgotten, even though they were the crucial thing at the crucial time.





Robohaven



Chapter 4:

The Mistress of Ceremonies' Timelines

Rules

- ☞ Before your first session, write up an occasion, a place and an audience for the circus. This'll be the circus' first show.
- ☞ You can have the circus players choose and create their characters in advance, or all together at your first session.
- ☞ Begin the session by telling the circus about the place and audience you've prepped, and asking them about the (imaginary) show they most recently performed.
- ☞ Begin play by telling the circus where they are, who's there, who greets them, and what's happening, then by asking them how they want to play it.
- ☞ During the session, help them figure out what their audience wants from them, and what they want from their audience. When they're ready, help them plan their show on a Playbill sheet, then help them follow their plan to put their show on. Remind them to make their occasion plays.
- ☞ After the show, wrap up any loose ends. End the session by asking them where they plan to perform next; whether, reflecting on the session, they'd like to step toward summer or winter; and whether they'd like to schedule a next time to play.
- ☞ Between sessions, choose new occasions for the circus to perform and write them up.
- ☞ Play subsequent sessions just as the first, following the circus wherever it goes.



Timelines



You're the Mistress of Ceremonies, Under Hollow Hills' game master. Your job is to play fairyland, the mortal human world, the places between worlds, and all of the inhabitants of all of them, except for the players' characters.

Before the First Session

- ☞ Download the play material: the circus playbooks, the reference play sheets, and your occasion writeup sheet.
- ☞ You don't need to carefully read through this book. Do read [*Introduction: The Circus & the Game*](#); [*Chapter 2: Plays & Consequences*](#); and this chapter.
- ☞ Look over a few of the circus playbooks in [*Chapter 1: The Circus Playbooks*](#). Read one or two of them carefully through, so that you understand their layout and their procedures.
- ☞ Follow the rules in [*Chapter 6: Occasions to Perform*](#) to prepare an occasion, venue and audience in fairyland. This will be the circus' first show.
- ☞ From [*the downloads*](#), share the Players' Introduction and the character playbooks with the players. You can ask them to choose their playbooks, or even to create their characters, in advance of the first session.

Bring to the first session:

- ☞ Printouts of the playbooks, if the players aren't bringing their own themselves.
- ☞ Several printouts of the Obvious Plays to put out where everyone can refer to them.
- ☞ A copy or two of the Playbill.
- ☞ The occasion & NPCs that you've written up for their first show.

Creating Characters

Have the players create their characters, if they haven't done it beforehand. They should be able to work through their playbooks independently, but here are some points to highlight as they go:

- ☞ A character playbook has two sides, the setup side and the play side. During character creation, you use the naming rules on the setup side to write your name on the play side, for instance. You choose summer & winter imagery from the setup side and copy it over to the play side.
- ☞ Speaking of the naming rules, they're there for you if you want them, but you're fairies! You don't need to follow any rules that you don't enjoy. Who's going to force you?
- ☞ You don't choose between the various jobs and roles under Place. They're all yours.
- ☞ When you're assigning your plays, don't agonize. During play, you'll be changing them all the time. You're just choosing your starting point, not setting your character in stone.
- ☞ That said, one easy and obvious way to assign your plays is to put your high numbers in your playbook plays, and your low numbers in the obvious plays that seem less appealing to you.
- ☞ The way the plays are designed, you should think of your low plays as ways you get into trouble, not as things you can't do. For instance, a low rating in **confront them** doesn't mean that you can't confront someone, it means that when you confront someone, it's more likely to go wrong somehow.
- ☞ The numbers you have to divide out among your plays are listed conveniently on the play side of the playbook too. You can cross them out as you use them.
- ☞ Point out which plays are for playing people, and which are for playing situations that they don't understand or that are out of their control.
- ☞ Like with your place, you don't choose between your trappings, you get all of them. You can also cross any out that you don't want. Replace them with something new, if you like!
- ☞ Once everyone's chosen their playbook, their name, their imagery, their place, their plays, and their trappings, it's time to bring the characters together for their bindings.

Their bindings:

Have them introduce themselves. Ask each player to say:

- ☞ The name of their playbook;
- ☞ Their character's name and pronouns;
- ☞ Their place in the circus;
- ☞ Their summer imagery (or the corresponding, for mortal human characters);
- ☞ Their playbook plays;
- ☞ Their wagon (or none); and
- ☞ Another trapping or two that they find interesting or noteworthy.

Go around again for bindings. Emphasize that if no one volunteers for any particular binding, that's fine.

Beginning the Session

- ☞ Give them a Playbill sheet and tell them they should look it over, but not to plan their performance yet.
- ☞ Tell them that, as they know, the game follows the circus on tour: that they've been performing together for a long time or a short time, but together; that they've come from a previous performance and they'll proceed to a next performance; and that you have some information and questions for them about how their tour is going, as follows.
- ☞ Tell them about the occasion you've written up: where it is, who's the audience, and what's the occasion. Tell them that this is the show that they're about to perform, and that they're arriving now. But before you begin play...

The previous show in their tour:

Ask them about the show they've most recently performed, the show they're coming from now. Ask them specifically:

- *Was it in fairyland or in the mortal world?*
- *What was the location? What was the occasion?*
- *Would they describe it as (a) an easy show, (b) a hostile crowd, (c) a hungry crowd, (d) a minefield, or (e) a welcome respite?*
- *How did their performance go? Well? Poorly?*

The next show in their tour:

Ask them about the show they'll be traveling to next, the show on the schedule after this one. Ask them specifically:

- *Is it in fairyland or in the mortal world?*
- *What's the location? What's the occasion?*

They should answer freely, collectively, as they're inspired. You might assure them that you have no particular answer in mind, you're simply curious about their tour.

Don't let your curiosity run away with you, though: you're about to begin play.

Beginning Play

- ☞ They're arriving at the place you've prepared. Tell them what they see, hear, smell. Tell them what the place looks like as they approach. Technically, this is your first play: *say where*.
- ☞ You've planned the moment of their arrival, so tell them what's happening here. You've also planned the NPC who'll greet them, so introduce them and make their play.
- ☞ Ask the players how they're going to play this character you've introduced, or how they're going to play the situation.
- ☞ If they're hesitant, encourage them to start off easy by sizing your notable up and/or by sniffing the wind.
- ☞ Answer their questions, and play's underway!

In the Early Session

- ☞ In the first part of the session, the players should figure out where they are, what's going on, what their audience wants, and what they want from their audience. You can point the passage out to them on their playbill: Don't plan your show yet!
- ☞ Tell them to take their time, see what they can figure out, and then when they're ready, get together to plan their show.
- ☞ Meanwhile, let them move freely around the place you've prepared. Let them meet their audience, have its notables rush up to meet them or hold back to draw them out. Let them find out what their audience has in abundance and what they hold dear, as largesse.
- ☞ If you have a problem person in mind, introduce them.
- ☞ You should also tell them, or at least hint, the opportunities they might have here.
- ☞ Make your plays freely, whenever you can get one in. Your early plays are to *describe things*, and to have your NPCs *approach, proclaim things*, and *open up*.
- ☞ Always ask the players how they're going to play it, what's their play.
- ☞ And always remember the general two plays rule: you can let somebody make two plays in a row, if you want, but if they're going to make a third, *turn to someone else* and come back to them later.

Mid-Session: Planning Their Show

- ☞ If they don't come to it themselves, you can prompt them: hey, I think you've figured your audience out. Ready to plan your show?
- ☞ Tell them first to list all the performers who'll perform, then figure out their acts.
- ☞ Remind them to look through the list of acts & duties to consider and decide which ones they need to include and which ones they don't.
- ☞ Remind them that they can include any of the NPC performers they want, or none. Tell them that when it's only NPCs alone in the ring, you probably won't pay much attention to them. Their PCs' performances will be the important ones.

- ☞ Tell them that eventually they'll have to put the acts in order, but they can list them all out first, if that's easiest.
- ☞ Encourage them to think ahead about how their acts will work, in terms of their plays. If anybody's struggling, remind them of the standard two-part act: first to **draw their audience out**, second to choose a suitable play now that you have their measure.
- ☞ Point out the section about the **circus powers**, and make sure they all understand how that process is going to go.
- ☞ Sit back and let them plan their show! You're there to answer questions if they have any, not to help with the plan.

Playing Out Their Show

- ☞ Once they've planned their show, return to normal play. The show's about to begin. **Say where.** Describe the performance space and the audience as its assembling.
- ☞ Follow their lead, have them make their plays, and help keep the show moving.
- ☞ React for the audience. Tell them when the audience catches its breath, when it leans forward eagerly in suspense, when it laughs, when it cheers, when it screams in fear or delight. You yourself are their real audience! Enjoy the show.
- ☞ If you've established a "problem person," judge for yourself when or whether the circus wins them over.
- ☞ As the circus performs, if they need prompting, remind them to **choose circus powers**. Tally up the votes and bring their outcomes into play. Look back to [Chapter 3: Sessions & Shows](#) for the complete details.

After Their Show: Ending the Session

- ☞ Resolve any outstanding questions and wrap up any loose ends in play. The session's over.
- ☞ Ask the circus specifically:
 - *How do the events of this show affect you? Who's stepping toward winter, and who's stepping toward summer?*
 - *At the beginning of play, you said you were planning your next show to be [x]. Is that still your plan, or where are you going to perform next instead?*
 - *Shall we schedule a time to play again?*

Subsequent Sessions

- ☞ Play subsequent sessions just like the first.
- ☞ Before the next session, choose a new occasion and write it up. You should usually create the occasion the circus expects, but once in a while it's okay to surprise them with a closed bridge, for instance, or another unavoidable interruption.
- ☞ After you've played a few sessions, consider planning the tour. See [*Chapter 8: The Tour*](#) for details.
- ☞ Play with the form, as you feel comfortable. Open in media res, play with flashbacks, goof off, experiment.

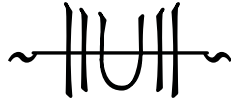




McEwan Redden



Kharchenko




Chapter 5:
The Mistress of Ceremonies'
Principles & Plays
Rules

- ☞ As Mistress of Ceremonies, your job isn't to play a fairy in the circus, but to create and play places and occasions for the circus to perform, and audiences for it to perform for.
- ☞ You have principles and rules for prep and for play.
- ☞ You have moves to make on your own behalf, moves to make for your NPCs, and moves to make for the places in play themselves.
- ☞ Follow your principles, follow your rules, and make your plays!



Your Principles



As the Mistress of Ceremonies, you're the players' and the circus' foremost audience. The circus' story is onstage and backstage, and you're here, not to direct, but to be an enthusiastic fan of both.

Your foremost goal is to:

- ☞ Enjoy the show, onstage and backstage.

During play, your job is to:

- ☞ Make fairyland vivid (and the mortal human world too).
- ☞ Follow the circus wherever it goes.
- ☞ Give the circus good times and bad times.

During prep, your job is to:

- ☞ Daydream fairies and fairyland.
- ☞ Daydream dangers and opportunities for the circus.
- ☞ Create places and occasions for the circus to perform, and audiences for it to perform for.

During play, you should always:

- ☞ Say what your prep demands, unless you have a genuinely better idea.
- ☞ Say what honesty demands, unless you're playing around on purpose.
- ☞ Say what the game's rules demand, unless nothing.
- ☞ Spill your secrets. A secret you never told is a plan you never acted on.
- ☞ Take turns. Everybody gets to make their play, and so do you.
- ☞ Say, "how do you want to play this? Are you making a play for it? Are you playing it safe? What's your play?"



Your Plays



When to Make Your Plays

- ☞ *At the beginning of a session*, start by making a play. First **say where** the circus is, who's there and what's happening, then bring an NPC forward to make one of their plays.
- ☞ *When there's a lull in the game*, and it's time to regather, refocus, or restart it, make a play. You can **say where** the circus is and then bring an NPC into the scene, as when you begin a session, or you can **turn to someone else** and **ask them** where they are now and what's happening.
- ☞ *When someone turns to you* to find out what's happening or what's next, make a play. You can choose any play you like, one of your own, one of your NPCs', or the place's itself. Always choose one that makes sense in the circumstances, in the moment.
- ☞ *When someone misses a play*, and asks you what goes wrong, make a play to answer them. Choose a play that makes sense in the moment — one of your own, one of your NPCs', or the place's itself — and be sure to choose one that constitutes something, in fact, going wrong.
- ☞ *When someone's had their turn*, and now it's time for someone else's, your play is to **turn to someone else**.
- ☞ *When you feel that you should interrupt the conversation of play*, to head it off, reign it in, or take it in a particular direction, get the other players' attention and make a play.
- ☞ *When someone else has done something*, and one of your NPCs can react to it, make one of their plays.

The purpose of your plays isn't to restrict what you say and do, but to make sure that you have a reliable list of things to say and do at every moment of play. You might find yourself referring back to them often or seldom. Only remember that they're here for you and you can refer to them when you need.

Your Own Plays

- ☞ *Ask someone.*
- ☞ *Bring them together.*
- ☞ *Describe something.*
- ☞ *Go the long way around.*
- ☞ *Play with the rules.*
- ☞ *Say where.*
- ☞ *Turn to someone else.*
- ☞ *Use a storytelling technique.*

☞ ***Ask someone:***

Whenever you're curious about something, anything at all, ask.

"Harebrake, where are you while this is going on?" "Teapot Girl, do you notice that Jill Cowdery is gone?" "Tip, just out of curiosity, what's your position on the River Queen right now?"

☞ ***Bring them together:***

Choose any two or more characters, either the players' characters or your NPCs, and announce that they're in the same place. If you'd like, you can include a quick explanation of how they came to be together, but you needn't.

"Timothy Bones, Teapot Girl, the two of you happen to be eating lunch together." "You're all in the River Queen's audience chamber. She's not here, but her steward, a willow-nymph called Rill, is." "All of you except Tip meet back at your parked wagons."

☞ ***Describe something:***

Say what it's like. Use color, texture, mood, theme, simile, allusion, hyperbole — any and every descriptive technique you can muster.

"The frozen waterfall is genuinely majestic, a wall of ice a hundred feet high. It almost looks like marble, it has that translucent whiteness. But it's not still, it's under tremendous pressure, you can almost hear it groaning from the water pent up behind it."

"The Wolf King of Winter is the kind of older man who always likes to go around with two or three dangerous young friends. This, his retainer, is one of those dangerous young friends."

"The hollow tree goblin looks like a cross between a squirrel and a bat. It looks at you first from this eye, then from this eyes, then this eye again, like it just cannot credit how inconvenient you are."

☞ **Go the long way around:**

Instead of going straight to the point, circle it, draw it out, sneak up on it, let it wait. Wander a bit and come back to it when you're ready.

"Actually before I answer, let me tell you about the River Queen's winter palace..." "He's taken aback, Before I tell you how he reacts, Jill Cowdery, let me tell you how it looks from your point of view..."

"Before you get there, let me tell you what you've heard about the history between the River Queen and the Wolf King of Winter..."

☞ **Play with the rules:**

You can play directly with the game's rules, dice, and systems:

- Tell someone they're **wounded, shocked, affronted, or dismayed**, or else have an NPC be wounded, shocked, affronted or dismayed.
- Tell someone to **step toward winter or toward summer**. (Or toward bold, free, careful, or the corresponding, for mortal human characters.)
- Throw someone **between worlds**, or all the way into the other world. It can be a player's character — in which case, your next play is to **say where** — or an NPC.
- **Turn someone's play back on them**, meaning that whoever they were trying to play, plays them instead.
- **Give someone +1 or -1 to the next play they roll**, or to the next time they roll a certain play, which you name.
- **Change someone's form, their seeming, or both**, a player's character's or an NPC's.
- When a player misses a play, **have them take the 7–9 result** instead of the miss result, but also **step toward winter**.

These are often especially appropriate when someone misses one of their plays, but you can do them whenever you want or need.

"Tip, you find that instead of **drawing him out**, he's able to keep you talking and you're revealing more and more. He's turning your play back on you. Let's see: *Where are you open to him, where are you vulnerable, and where are you guarded?*" "Harebrake, the mood you're in, next time you **waylay someone**, take +1 to the roll." "Actually Jill, go ahead and take the 7–9 result, but step toward careful too."

☞ **Say where:**

Whenever anything happens or anyone ever does anything, always begin by saying where it happens.

“Rill, the River Queen’s steward, meets you in the palace courtyard...”

“Teapot Girl, you’re in Timothy Bones’ wagon...” “Tip, when you go out to the Wolf King of Winter’s pavilion, he’s waiting for you...”

☞ **Turn to someone else:**

One of your duties as Mistress of Ceremonies is to make sure that everybody gets to play.

The general rule is, it’s okay to let the same player make two plays in a row, but if they’re about to make a third, turn to someone else and come back to them after.

“Hold that thought, Harebrake. Tip, you’re still in the kitchen...” “Jill, where are you now?” “Timothy Bones, last I knew you were going to ask an audience from the River Queen. She can meet with you now if you like...”

☞ **Use a storytelling technique:**

As Mistress of Ceremonies, you’re not a storyteller, exactly, because you’re telling the story all together, but still, you can use any storytelling technique you think to try.

It’s appropriate to ask the other players to go along with you, rather than imposing on the game without their assent.

“Hey, how about a flashback? Jill, let’s go back to the moment you first learned about the circus. Where are you?” “The Wolf King of Winter and the River Queen are going to fall into an argument here. Tip, would you play the Wolf King for a minute so I don’t have to have an argument with myself?” “Okay, it sounds like you’ve got a solid plan. Rather than playing it out in detail, how about a montage?”

Your NPCs' Plays

- ☞ *To approach.*
- ☞ *To assail someone.*
- ☞ *To draw closer.*
- ☞ *To gang together.*
- ☞ *To get to work.*
- ☞ *To give way.*
- ☞ *To open up to someone.*
- ☞ *To proclaim something.*
- ☞ *To stand on hospitality.*
- ☞ *To step up.*

Ganged together:

- ☞ *To close ranks.*
- ☞ *To enact a plan.*
- ☞ *To fracture & split.*

Obvious plays:

- ☞ *To make an obvious play.*

To make one of your NPC's plays, say what they do. You can name their play explicitly or describe it without naming it, as you like.

Examples:

To approach: "When you look up, the Wolf King's menacing retainer is standing nearby, in that casual way that predators have. You can tell she's considering *drawing closer*." *To give way*: "The River Queen's steward, Rill, throws up her hands. 'Do what you like, then,' she says, and turns to go."

To proclaim something: "The hollow tree goblin stamps its feet and points a trembling, outraged finger right at your face. 'Cursed! Cursed! Cuuuursed!'"

To stand on hospitality: "No, she's going to *stand on hospitality*. She doesn't say anything, but if you press her further, you can tell she's going to take it as an insult."

When your NPCs *gang together*, they act in unison. *To close ranks*: "You ask around discreetly, but no, none of the River Queen's court is willing to go behind her back for you." *To enact a plan*: "Come to discover, while the Wolf King's one menacing young retainer was approaching you, the other two were circling around. Now they've got you flanked." *To fracture & split*: "Ha! The instant your iron nail comes out, no, they scatter and a run. If one of them gets left behind, the rest never stop to look back."

Common & special plays:

Most NPCs also have two plays common to their kind, and a special play for their role in the occasion. To make these plays, the same: say what the NPC does, naming their play explicitly or just describing them doing it.

Examples:

In the Breaking of the Ice, say that you've written the River Queen up as river-kind, so her common plays are *to drown someone* and *to whisper to someone*. Her role is the fairy crown of the river, so her special play is *to withdraw hospitality*.

Her court are nymph-kind, willow nymphs, so their common plays are *to admonish* and *to endure*, while their special play as her court is *to make a welcome or an introduction*.

Say that you've written the Wolf King of Winter up as fairy nobility, so his common plays are *to fall in love* and *to impose his will*. His role is a visiting fairy crown of winter, so his special play is *to fight*. (When Tip the Lantern Jack goes to meet him in his pavilion outside the River Queen's winter palace, which play will he make?)

His retainers, his three menacing young friends, are winter-kind, so their common plays are *to bide their time* and *to corner, press, or encircle someone*. As his retainers, their special play is *to fight* as well.

Obvious plays:

You can have your NPCs make obvious plays, why shouldn't you? Name the play, roll the dice, and follow the play's rules, just the same as anyone else would.

You're entitled to roll at +1. You can freely roll at +0 or -1 instead, if it seems correct. You can roll at +2 if you have a good reason why this NPC should make this play with a bonus.

Don't let your NPCs make obvious plays in order to dodge the consequences of the PCs' plays. But if an NPC wants to size up a PC? Sure!

Examples:

"Timothy Bones, the River Queen has been eager to talk with you, and now that she has the chance, she's going to take it. She *opens up to you*. I'm rolling +2 because when she opens up, it's a floodwater..."

"You know, I think that the way to handle this is, Gorebore the Giant *waylays you*, and I'm just going to roll for it. An 11! Let's see. He chooses to *strike you violently and drive you scrambling back...*"

Your Places' Plays

- ☞ *To close against someone.*
- ☞ *To close around someone.*
- ☞ *To draw someone in.*
- ☞ *To listen to someone.*
- ☞ *To open up.*
- ☞ *To rouse itself.*
- ☞ *To whisper to someone.*

To make one of your place's plays, you can name it explicitly or simply describe it happening.

Examples:

To close against someone: "Now that the Apple Mother's revoked her hospitality, you find the orchard completely impassable. Everywhere you turn, the bath is tangled, overgrown, and barred."

To draw someone in: "You thought you'd get lost in the endless hallways and chambers, but it's like you barely step a foot over the threshold and you're walking into the River Queen's throne room."

To listen to someone: "When you finish singing, even the summer stars sigh with pleasure, and their twinkling is applause."

To rouse itself: "At the troll's command, all the boulders on the mountainside stir themselves, shaking the dirt off their shoulders and forming up into battle array."

To whisper to someone: "Now that you've won them over, the stones of the Goblin Market — all the cobbles and all the lintels — are your spies. They'll whisper answers to whatever you ask them."

Your Plays' Consequences

While you don't roll dice for your plays, or work through a written sequence of decisions like the circus players do for theirs, your plays have the same range of consequence theirs do.

As a result of your plays, people can be insulted, beholden, wounded, shocked, affronted, dismayed, and even beloved. Refer back to [Chapter 2: Plays & Consequences](#), for full details.



Hannah Culbert



Chapter 6: *Occasions: Places to Perform & Audiences to Perform For* Rules

To prep for a session, write up an occasion for the circus to perform:

- ☞ Choose an occasion.
- ☞ Follow its rules to write it up.
- ☞ Write up its NPCs, following the rules in [*Chapter 7: The Mistress of Ceremonies' Characters \(NPCs\)*](#).
- ☞ Plan the moment of the circus' arrival.



Occasions



To prepare a place for the circus to perform and an audience for them to perform before, choose an occasion and follow its rules to write it up.

In Fairyland:



A Betrothing:

A celebration of love; or failing that, a celebration of commitment; or failing that, a celebration of supplication; or failing even that, a celebration of subjugation. Still, when love goes crowned, even we, the cynic, the wounded, the enraged, the disloyal, may tip our heads.



The Breaking of the Ice:

An undamming from winter of spring's flood. An unchaining from the ice of long-held heart and long-held tongue. Stand back, stand back.



A Celebration of the Hunt:

There are shadows of antlers clashing in the firelight on the walls of the hall, while the wind sounds the course outside. When fairies hunt, we who leap with hares, race the deer, dance with goats and swans — we who sometimes ourselves go antler-crowned — who will be our prey?



A Closed Bridge:

When we don't reach our destination, it may be our own failure. We set out unprepared, irresolute, misguided or mistaken. It may be, though, instead, a failure of the road.

A bridge makes a road passable, and vulnerable.



A Funeral:

When a jolly elfin gentlewoman dies, you may catch her, if you are quick and she is forgetful, singing sad drunken songs at her own wake. When John of the Barley dies, we may weep, but you know that in the spring he'll be reborn. The moon dies every month, on the month. Still, each death is a death, and if each is not lasting, we are mistaken to think each untrue.

☞ **A Gift-Giving Occasion:**

There is no more cruel, no more implacable, no more bloody-minded creature under the sun, under the moon, or under the Hollow Hills, than a fairy set on gift-giving. Do not accept or you will be trapped. Do not demur or you offer an insult. Give no gift in return and you're mean; give a gift in return and now we must weigh them. Whose is more golden? Whose is more silver? Whose is lighter, whose heavier, whose more lovely, whose more wonderful, whose more absurd, whose more poetic, whose more practical, whose is better? Whose is better?

When you see an elf hopping toward you with a present in hand, flee, or else get straight to the killing.

☞ **The Goblin Market:**

Under the crooked moon at half-past fall, wear a sprig of willowbud in your hat and hold a fern's seed under your tongue. Hop on one foot, backwards, down to the crossroad at Twitten's Post, whistle like a montebank-bird and blink three times. Turn around quick, and you might catch a glimpse of the Goblin Market.

Bring a silver penny, a wooden nickel, and a brass pin, and maybe you can buy back your dignity.

☞ **A Harvest Murder:**

The fairy seasons spin round sunwise, same as yours but more so, or less so, or sometimes out of order and without regard for precedent, or forgetfully, when the cold blast of winter oversteps its cue and balmy summer departs in an offended huff while autumn stares dumbfounded at winter's audacity. In spring we hoe in the harvest mow, same as you, but in fairyland there's no certainty from year to year which will come first.

So, as a matter of policy, fairies harvest when they think to do it. Who knows when we'll have another chance!

☞ **The Horrible Feast:**

It's the horrible feast, friend. Do you need to see the menu to know what it is?

☞ **Freeform Occasions:**

There are more occasions in your imagination than there are days to celebrate them in.

In the Mortal Human World:

☞ An Arts Festival:

Some say that when a human being sings a song or makes a chair, they do it with a spark of mortal creativity, true creativity born of mortal things' impending death, which fairies, lacking death, lack and crave.

Some say that when a fairy creature sings a song or makes a chair, they do it with a mastery and magical skills surpassing all mortality, which human beings, being mortal, lack and crave.

We meet, let's agree, in our admiration of what we don't have.

☞ Lost in the Woods:

It isn't human nature to become lost in woods. The woods are your home, and those of you who haven't abandoned them, know them well.

The mortal woods, that is; the woods of the mortal human world.

Our woods, fairy woods, aren't your home, they're our home. We bring them with us where we go. They aren't familiar to you and in them, you're not safe.

☞ A Rite of Passage:

At turning points in your lives, it's traditional for human beings to come together, recognize them, exchange blessings and advice, sometimes gifts, sometimes to celebrate, and often to make wishes.

You forget it, but there is power and beauty in a wish.

☞ A Thinning of the Veil:

We think we're separate things, human beings and fairies. We're not. We're each other.

In Any World, or Between Them:

☞ We Are Ourselves the Occasion:

Do you think us a birthday magician, O Fairy Majesty? A garden party ensemble, some troupe of poor hired players to duck and bob and confine ourselves to your small will? No! Do we respect your august birthday, your celebrated ice-breaking, the grand occasion of the bathing of your royal feet? We do not! We go where we go, and we perform when we perform, and you find us or you go without.

Now we are here, and now we perform. Attend the Hob: *Come great, come small, come revelers all! Step up, step up!*



In Fairyland: A Betrothing



To create the story of the Betrothing, choose as many facts and elements as you want, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Betrotheds:

- ☞ *An easy choice:* They're lovers celebrating their love. Write them up as any combination of Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Homely-kind, Pastoral-kind, Nymph-kind, River-kind, Twilight-kind, Wild-kind, or any other kind you choose; their special play is ***to stand together***.
- ☞ The betrotheds are, as they say, star-crossed. They must not love each other, but why? Write them up as any combination of Fairy Nobility, Mortal Human Kind, River-kind, Twilight-kind, Wild-kind, Winter-kind, or any other kind you choose; their special play is ***to stand together when they must not***.
- ☞ The betrothing is a trap. Write one betrothed up as a cruel Fairy Noble, Giant-kind, Goblin-kind, River-kind, Spider-kind, Troll-kind, Twilight-kind, or Winter-kind; their special play is ***to keep a poker face***. Write the other up as hapless Elfin-kind, Homely-kind, Mortal Human Kind, Nymph-kind, Pastoral-kind, Sea-kind, or Wild-kind; their special play is ***to go willingly forward***.
- ☞ They're elves conducting a mock-wedding. Write them up as Elfin-kind; their special play is ***to forget who it is that they're supposed to marry***.
- ☞ They're marrying as a matter of political alliance. Will love blossom between them? Write them up as Fairy Nobility, or Fairy Crowns of other kinds; their special play is ***to stand together***.
- ☞ A mortal human being and a fairy are in love. Write the former up as Mortal Human Kind, and the latter as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Nymph-kind, River-kind, Sea-kind, Twilight-kind, and/or Wild-kind; their special play is ***to stand together***.

- ☞ A witch, giant, ogre, or cruel fairy crown is seizing the power of a great natural force, by binding it in lovers' oaths. Write the former up as Fairy Nobility, Giant-kind, Twilight-kind, or Witch-kind; their special play is **to tighten chains**. Write the latter up as World-kind; their special play is **to constrain themselves**.

Friends, Rivals, & Witnesses:

- ☞ An easy choice: The betrothed's friends and loved ones are here to celebrate with them. Write them up as you choose; their special play is **to cheer and toast their approval**.
- ☞ The betrothed has seconds, whose duty it is to see the betrothing through. Write them up as you choose; their special play is **to compel their primaries to stand**.
- ☞ The betrothing centers one of the betrothed's parents, guardians, warders, or liege, who must or will oversee the relationship. Write them up as you choose; their special play is **to break off the betrothing**.
- ☞ The betrothing requires a ceremonial officiant. Write them up as you choose; their special play is **to make demands of the betrothed and celebrants, symbolic or substantial**.
- ☞ The betrothing will cruelly break a previous commitment of one of the betrothed. Write up the bereft party as you choose; their special play is **to plead their case**.
- ☞ One of the betrothed has a loved one who is against the match. Write them up as you choose; their special play is **to come around**.
- ☞ One of the betrothed has a loved one who is dead-set against the match. Write them up as you choose; their special play is **to refuse to come around**.
- ☞ One of the betrothed has a rival for their love. Write them up as you choose; their special play is **to make one last try**.
- ☞ One of the betrothed, their friends and loved ones are not welcome to the betrothing, and are outside, denied entrance. Write them up as you choose; their special play is **to assail the gates (whatever form the gates may take)**.
- ☞ One of the betrothed was a great one for love, and has many grieving exes in attendance. Write them up as you choose; their special play is **to sigh, weep, or wail**.

The Order of Events:

1. Ingathering.

The celebrants assemble, greet one another appropriately, and take their places for the betrothing to begin.

2. The beginning of the betrothing.

The betrotheds present themselves, or are presented to the celebrants. The celebrants greet them with cheers, with sighs, with silence, or by encircling them.

3. The declaration of the betrothing.

Who declares it? What does it entail, and what are its bounds?

4. The solemnization of the betrothing.

Silence and attention for the commitment of the partners to their betrothal, and for their first act as partners.

5. The celebration of the betrothing.

A collective celebration of the partners in their new role together. Is there feasting, dancing, singing, an extended celebration?

6. Clean-up & afterward.

Someone has clear away the feast, reorder the hall, pay the musicians, see the inebriated safely on their way. Everyone else, doesn't have to.

Note that anyone present could conceivably send the betrothing careening off-outline, to the giddy dismay of all, and potentially to lastingly ruin the partners' and their loved ones' lives. It's not your job as MC, nor the players' job as players, to prevent this from happening.

The Ceremony:

- ☞ *An easy choice:* The ceremony is simple: the betrotheds declare their love and commitment before their assembled loved ones, and all celebrate.
- ☞ The ceremony is baroque and complex, with prescribed words, actions, procedures, observances, and rituals, overseen by duly bonded experts in the material.
- ☞ The ceremony is profound, metaphorical, mythical, with symbolic effigies and portentous acts, invoking powers and mysteries beyond the mere betrotheds and celebrants.
- ☞ The ceremony is sere and formal, unemotional, strict or perfunctory.

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ *An easy choice:* The circus was invited here by the betrothed to celebrate the betrothing and entertain the guests.
- ☞ The circus is here to conduct, officiate, and solemnize the betrothing.
- ☞ The circus is here to bless the betrothing.
- ☞ The circus is here to interrupt the betrothing, and why? At whose word?
- ☞ The circus has a personal connection to one of the betrothed, a past performer, a patron of the circus, or a personal friend.
- ☞ One of the betrothed is, in fact, an NPC performer in the circus.
- ☞ Conceivably, one of the betrothed is a player's character, but this would be their choice, not yours as MC.
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

- ☞ The circus arrives in time for the proceedings to begin.
- ☞ The proceedings can't begin until the circus arrives, but the circus is behind time. Now that it's arrived, they can begin.
- ☞ When the circus arrives, the proceedings have already begun. Which events has the circus missed, and which event is currently underway?

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

The Season:

Consider what the betrothing means, and choose a seasonal transition to stand for it. Spring to Summer? Winter to Spring? Winter to Deep Winter? Mud Season to Summer's Eve?

Additional Imagery:

- ☞ Draw a map if you like.
- ☞ A dramatic sunrise, a dramatic sunset, a beautiful waxing moon, a magnificent full moon, a high blue sky, a gloomy sky, rain, a flowery meadow, a flowery bower, a public square, a private chapel, a great old tree, a threshold to cross, —.
- ☞ Festive clothing, fine clothing, formal clothing, simple robes, elaborate robes, magnificent gowns, casual clothing, bare feet, bare heads, bare skin, ribbons, jewels, cloth bindings, chains, keys, coronets, rings, shoes, an elaborate document, something to exchange, something to break, —.
- ☞ A shared cup, a shared plate, a shared bowl, an artful formal meal, a grand formal meal, an easy bountiful spread, a meal poor and mean, a meal poor but loving, a meal poor but brave, tapped kegs, popped corks, opened jars, unstopped crocks, a passed bowl and just a sip, —.
- ☞ Giddy dancing, giddy brawling, drunken cavorting, somber dancing, formal dancing, rehearsed dances, contests of art, contests of song, strictly proscribed behavior, gifts of wisdom, gifts of advice, gifts of good wishes, gifts of practical goods, extravagant gifts, —.

To play the Betrothing:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Have your NPCs try to hold to the Betrothing's order of events, or try to derail them, as suitable.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Did the betrothal go forward after all?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



In Fairyland: The Breaking of the Ice



To create the story of the Breaking of the Ice, choose as many facts and elements as you want, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Season:

The Breaking of the Ice celebrates the transition from Deep Winter to First Thaw. It is the moment when a great ice dam cracks, and releases the flood of coming Spring.

The Water:

- ☞ *An easy answer:* The fairy crown of the river, host of the celebration. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as River-kind; their special play is *to withdraw hospitality*. Write their court up as Nymph-kind or River-kind; their special play is *to make a welcome or an introduction*.
- ☞ The fairy crown of the river, but they're in love with winter. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as River-kind; their special play is *to withdraw hospitality*. Write their court up as Nymph-kind or River-kind; their special play is *to make a welcome or an introduction*.
- ☞ The fairy crown of the river, but they're winter's hostage. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as River-kind; their special play is *to withdraw hospitality*. Write their court up as Nymph-kind or River-kind; their special play is *to make a welcome or an introduction*.
- ☞ The birds and wild things of the river and riverside. Write them up as Wild-kind; their special play is *to leap, dance, fight and fly*.
- ☞ The flood. Write it up as Giant-kind or as World-kind; its special play is *to shake its chains*.
- ☞ A prisoner, bodily trapped in the ice. Write them up as Fairy Nobility, Ghostly Kind, or Giant-kind; their special play is *to reveal themselves*.
- ☞ The river itself. Write it up as World-kind; its special play is *to dream in its icy sleep*.
- ☞ The riverside woods. Write them up as Tree-kind; their special play is *to waken and stir*.

The Winter:

- ☞ *An easy answer:* A visiting fairy crown of winter, facing the end of their welcome here. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as Winter-kind; their special play is **to fight**. Write their retainers up as Winter-kind; their special play is **to fight** as well.
- ☞ A visiting fairy crown of winter, in love with the water, facing the end of their affair. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as Winter-kind; their special play is **to fight**. Write their retainers up as Winter-kind; their special play is **to fight** as well.
- ☞ A visiting fairy crown of winter, prisoner of the water, unable to depart and allow spring to come. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as Winter-kind; their special play is **to fight**. Write their retainers up as Winter-kind; their special play is **to fight** as well.
- ☞ An ice giant, literally damming the river with its body or holding the dam in place with its shoulder. Write it up as Giant-kind; its special play is **to stand enduring**.
- ☞ Winter itself. Write it up as World-kind; its special play is **to press down hard and unrelenting**.
- ☞ A Winter-witch or Winter-wizard. Write them up as Witch-kind or as Wizard-kind; their special play is **to hold spring hostage**.

Who Else, If Any?

- ☞ The fairies of the countryside, waiting for an end to winter. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Pastoral-kind, Nymph-kind, or Wild-kind; their special play is **to celebrate**.
- ☞ A figure of the spring, who comes along with the flood. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Wild-kind, or World-kind; their special play is **to unveil themselves**.
- ☞ A figure of the sun, whose work the Breaking of the Ice is. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as World-kind; their special play is **to bow down**.
- ☞ A sacrifice, who must give themselves or be given to the ice or to the flood. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Mortal Human Kind, or Wild-kind; their special play is **to set a condition**.

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ An easy choice: The circus was invited here to celebrate the Breaking of the Ice and the coming of spring.
- ☞ The circus is here to reinforce winter or celebrate winter's remain.
- ☞ The circus is here to break winter's hold and speed the Breaking of the Ice.
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

Additional Imagery:

- ☞ Draw a map if you like.
- ☞ Frozen lake, frozen river, frozen waterfall, frozen land, drifting snow, ice-sparkling bare trees, ice-sparkling air, dim pale sun, gray-blue sky, sun low on the horizon, skin-cutting winds, swirling snow, sharp ice edges, snow-blindness, sundogs, a crystalline circled moon, dead branches, —.
- ☞ Warm winter robes, soft capes and coats, deep hoods, heavy woolens, snow hats, snow boots, snow shoes, scarves, mufflers, jackets stuffed with rags, —.
- ☞ Smoky timber hall, cold stone palace, snow-buried garden, snow-drifted road, pavilions in the snow, a great bonfire, small fires, fireless chill, —.

The Order of Events:

1. Assembly and waiting.

The celebrants arrive and greet each other. No one knows the moment the ice will break, so this is a period of waiting, watching, speculating, hoping, and mixed attention and leisure. Loud noises or impacts might set the process off, so the celebration might encourage or prohibit them..

2. The first crack.

A loud, sharp crack signals the moment when force of the pent-up water finally overpowers its damming ice. The process is underway and the celebrants must assemble quickly.

3. Shattering and collapse.

The damming ice can't hold for long and there's no turning back.

4. The loosing of the flood.

With a roar, the pent-up water is fully freed. It'll settle to its flow, but for now it gouts forth.

5. The celebration of the thaw.

The thaw accomplished, the celebrants can turn to celebrating it.

6. Clean-up & afterward.

Someone has to clear away the remnants of the celebration, sweep and wash, see the inebriated safely on their way. Everyone else, doesn't have to.

Note that anyone present could conceivably send the Breaking of the Ice careening off-outline, to the giddy dismay of all, and potentially plunge all into the killing depths of winter or the flood. It's not your job as MC, nor the players' job as players, to prevent this from happening.

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

- ☞ The circus arrives in time for the proceedings to begin.
- ☞ The proceedings can't begin until the circus arrives, but the circus is behind time. Now that it's arrived, they can begin.
- ☞ When the circus arrives, the proceedings have already begun. Which events has the circus missed, and which event is currently underway?

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

To play the Breaking of the Ice:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Have your NPCs try to hold to the Breaking of the Ice's order of events, or try to derail them, as suitable.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Did the ice break after all?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



Dmitriy Cherevko



In Fairyland: A Celebration of the Hunt



To create the story of the Celebration of the Hunt, choose as many facts and elements as you want, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Celebration:

- ☞ The celebration is a literal hunt, carried out between real hunters and real quarry.
- ☞ The celebration is a ritual reenactment of a hunt, with some celebrants playing the role of hunter and some playing the role of quarry.
- ☞ The celebration is a reversal, with prey celebrating (and wishing for) a failed hunt.

The Hunt:

- ☞ *An easy choice:* Predators hunting pray. Write the hunters up as Fairy Nobility, Goblin-kind, Wild-kind, or Winter-kind; their special play is *to course the quarry*. Write the quarry up as Sea-kind or Wild-kind; their special play is *to defy the hunt*.
- ☞ A border-patrol, soldiers hunting their enemy. Write the hunters up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Pastoral-kind, or Winter-kind; their special play is *to course the quarry*. Write the quarry up as enemy Elfin-kind or Fairy Nobility, or as Giant-kind, Goblin-kind, Troll-kind, Twilight-kind, or Witch-kind; their special play is *to defy the hunt*.
- ☞ Elves hunting the moon or some other absurd quarry. Write the hunters up as Elfin-kind; their special play is *to set boldly out, again and again*. Write the quarry up as World-kind, or as you choose; its special play is *to defy the hunt*.
- ☞ Elves parodying a hunt. Write both the hunters and the quarry up as Elfin-kind; their special play is *to forget whether they're hunter or quarry*.

- ☞ A metaphor: a scholar hunting truth, a lover hunting love, a poet hunting inspiration. Write the hunters up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Nymph-kind, or Pastoral-kind; their special play is *to course the quarry*. Write the quarry up as Elfin-kind, Ghostly-kind, Spider-kind, Tree-kind, Twilight-kind, or World-kind; its special play is *to defy the hunt*.
- ☞ A mortal human being who has stumbled into fairyland, hunted by fairies. Write the hunters up as Fairy Nobility, Ghostly-kind, Giant-kind, Goblin-kind, River-kind, Spider-kind, Troll-kind, Wild-kind, Winter-kind, or Witch-kind; their special play is *to course their quarry*. Write the quarry up as Mortal Human Kind; their special play is *to fight for their life* (which fairies rarely must).
- ☞ A mortal human being who is unknowingly hunting a fairy, and has followed it into fairyland. Write the hunter up as Mortal Human Kind; their special play is *to suddenly realize*. Write the quarry up as Sea-kind or Wild-kind; their special play is *to defy the hunt*.

The Season:

Consider what the hunt means and what its success would mean, and choose a seasonal transition to stand for it. Autumn to Winter? Autumn to Lingering Autumn? Winter to Spring? Summer to Winter?

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ *An easy choice:* The circus was invited here to perform in celebration of the hunt.
- ☞ The circus is here to be hunted as quarry.
- ☞ The circus is here to cheer and speed the hunters.
- ☞ The circus is here to interrupt the hunt and spare the quarry.
- ☞ The circus is here to join the hunt as hunters.
- ☞ The circus is here to provide cover for the hunters.
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

Individual Hunters:

- ☞ The beaters, whose duty is to press forward obnoxiously through the hunting ground, to start the quarry. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to become entangled with the hunters*.
- ☞ The butcher, whose duty is to dress the quarry's body for cooking and eating. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to steal the best*.
- ☞ The keener, whose duty is to praise and mourn the quarry when it has been killed. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to paper over holes*.
- ☞ The master of arms, whose duty is to see to the bows, arrows, lances, knives, hooks, nets, and other instruments of violence. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to take poor care*.
- ☞ The master of hounds, and the hounds. Write them up as you choose. The master's special play is *to assemble, release, and recall the hounds*. The hounds' special play is *to course the quarry*.
- ☞ The most accomplished hunter, swift, sure, fleet of foot. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to bungle something*.
- ☞ The most cruel hunter, who loves the moment of killing. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to reveal their own heart*.
- ☞ The most experienced hunter, slower, more careful, less certain. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to stay someone back*.
- ☞ The shape-shifter, whose duty it is to become like the quarry, and so predict or enact its course. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to lose themselves*.

The Quarry's Allies:

- ☞ The calling bird, who cries the quarry to flee before the hunters come near. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to warn away*.
- ☞ The flicker in the forest, an illusion, a sprite, a green man, a friend to the quarry or an enemy to the hunters. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to turn the hunt upon itself*.
- ☞ A guardian of the quarry. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to assail the hunt*.
- ☞ The stillness of the forest. Write it up as Tree-kind; its special play is *to hide the quarry*.



Levon Jihanian

The Order of Events:

1. Ingathering & planning.

The celebrants assemble, ready themselves and their tools, and learn their roles in the literal or symbolic hunt to come.

2. Setting out.

The celebrants depart their own accustomed landscape and enter into the hunting ground.

3. The hunt.

Sighting, flushing, starting, coursing, pursuing, and finally bringing the hunt to the cast, the flight, the bite, or the thrust.

The hunt might repeat and repeat this step many times, unsuccessfully, before it succeeds and can proceed.

4. The moment of the hunt, when one living thing seizes the life of another.

5. The celebration of the hunt.

Mourning the live thing, acclaiming the dead thing, praising the hunters, sharing the first cuts, feasting.

6. Clean-up & afterward.

Someone has to re-order the tools, dress the rest of the carcass, rinse away the blood. Everyone else, doesn't have to.

Note that anyone present could conceivably send the Celebration of the Hunt careening off-outline, to the giddy dismay of all, and potentially to spoil the hunt altogether. It's not your job as MC, nor the players' job as players, to prevent this from happening.

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

- ☞ The circus arrives in time for the proceedings to begin.
 - ☞ The proceedings can't begin until the circus arrives, but the circus is behind time. Now that it's arrived, they can begin.
 - ☞ When the circus arrives, the proceedings have already begun. Which events has the circus missed, and which event is currently underway?
- Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

Additional Imagery:

- ☞ Draw a map if you like.
- ☞ Overshadowed forest, calling forest, tended forest, trackless forest, high bluffs, craggy mountains, cleft valley, falling water, brooks and pools, deepening wetlands, placid blue depths, ice-tossed gray seas, mountainous waves, surging wind, racing wind, rattling wind, the verge between woods and meadow, the verge between woods and cleared land, —.
- ☞ Clap-sticks and bull-roarers, cross-braced lances, arrows fletched with ravens' quills or swans', short sturdy-backed hunting swords, blood-bathed muzzle, wild rolling eyes, the shadows of antlers upon the wall, a stately pace, a light tapping rhythm, the calls of voices, long boats, hide boats, nets, hooks, spears, harpoons, —.
- ☞ A hunting lodge, a stone tower, a blind in the woods, a narrow track, hide tents, a hewn log bridge, a timber hall, a stone hall, —.

To play the Celebration of the Hunt:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Have your NPCs try to hold to the Celebration of the Hunt's order of events, or try to derail them, as suitable.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Did the hunters prevail, or the quarry?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



In Fairyland: A Closed Bridge



To create the story of a Closed Bridge, choose as many facts and elements as you want, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Bridge:

- ☞ *An easy option:* The bridge crossing the river from this fairy realm to the next, but it's half-collapsed and dangerous to cross over.
- ☞ The bridge crossing the river from this fairy realm to the next, but a troll has taken residence under it, and is throwing everyone and everything that tries to cross down into the riverine chasm. Write them up as Troll-kind; their special play is *to defy all assault*.
- ☞ The drawbridge to the manor and estate of a fairy crown, raised for some past defense, but though the danger's now long past, the fairy crown will not lower it again. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as a crown of another fairy kind; their special play is *to cling to their fears*.
- ☞ A common bridge through a placid orchard, upon which a triumvirate of enterprising fairies have erected a toll-gate, and their tolls are breathtakingly exorbitant. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Goblin-kind, or a mix; their special play is *to squabble*.
- ☞ A bridge over a woodland ravine, erected without the permission of the trees. Though it has stood open for fairy centuries, and is bowed from use and green with moss, the trees have at last elected to close it. A sentry oak has taken position now to rebuff traffic, while a labor crew of spruce work to tip it off its foundations. Write them up as Tree-kind; the sentry oak's special play is *to insist*, and the spruce crew's special play is *to ponder the problem*.
- ☞ The bridge spanning the horizons east to west, over which the sun takes each day's stroll, but damaged by the shoulder of a passing giant. Now the sun stands at the edge of the breach, looking glumly down. Write the sun up as World-kind; its special play is *to hold up the traffic of the skies*. Write the giant up as Giant-kind, if it's still nearby; its special play is *to deny culpability*.

Travelers Brought to a Halt:

- ☞ A beeherd leading their flock to market. Write them up as Elfin-kind or as Pastoral-kind; their special play is *to whistle up their bees*. Write the bees up as Wild-kind; their special play is *to swarm after whom they choose*.
- ☞ A company of fairy soldiers under the flag of a fairy crown, impatient to proceed on the march. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Goblin-kind, Wild-kind, or Winter-kind; their special play is *to abandon discipline*.
- ☞ A crew of elves trying to take charge and organize the halted travelers. Write them up as Elfin-kind; their special play is *to muddle things*.
- ☞ A crew of elves trying to reopen the bridge. Write them up as Elfin-kind; their special play is *to exacerbate the problem*.
- ☞ Fairies moving house, with all their household goods in a wagon and no place they can return. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, or Pastoral-kind; their special play is *to unpack their kitchen and make a hospitable camp*.
- ☞ A fairy crown traveling in state with retinue and wardrobe. Write the fairy crown up as Fairy Nobility or as the crown of another fairy kind; their special play is *to impose on someone*. Write their retinue up as you choose; their special play is *to abandon their duties*.
- ☞ A fairy noble traveling incognito. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as a noble of another fairy kind; their special play is *to reveal themselves*.
- ☞ Goblin merchants with a cartload of quick-spoiling produce: golden pears, each one blush-perfect, ripe, and so delicate that they'll be bruised by a hard word or a sharp look. This delay imperils their livelihood. Write them up as Goblin-kind; their special play is *to howl their misfortune*.
- ☞ A hunter, prowling along the edges of the road, preying on those who wander. Write them up as Goblin-kind, River-kind, Spider-kind, Troll-kind, Twilight-kind, Wild-kind, Winter-kind, or Witch-kind. Their special play is *to spring upon someone*.
- ☞ Traveling musicians, eyeing the circus as rivals. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Goblin-kind, Nymph-kind, River-kind, Tree-kind, Twilight-kind, or Wild-kind; their special play is *to perform beautifully, or to perform terribly*.

- ☞ A traveling scribe, writing letters for who needs them. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Nymph-kind, or Twilight-kind; their special play is *to offer their service*.
- ☞ A wanderer. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Ghostly-kind, Goblin-kind, Troll-kind, Twilight-kind, Wild-kind, or Winter-kind; their special play is *to shrug and go another way*.

Additional Imagery:

- ☞ Draw a map if you like.
- ☞ A narrow switchback road, a twin-rut road, a wide road set with milestones, a sunken road overarched with trees, a wandering road like a deer path, a buttressed road on a steep hillside, a banked road alongside the river, a cliffside road with a stout railing, a cliffside road with no railing though it clearly requires one, a cliffside road with a railing so flimsy the birds don't dare perch on it.
- ☞ A roadside house on the near side of the bridge, already overbooked; a roadside house on the far side of the bridge, looking glumly at the custom it's losing; a fairy farmer's field pressed into service as a campground, and its disgruntled farmer; a fairy farmer's field pressed into service as a campground, and its disgruntled sheep; an eddying pool in the river, now made a laundry; an eddying pool in the river, now made a bathtub; an eddying pool in the laundry, where the people who come to drink dispute with the people who come to wash.

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ *An easy choice:* The circus must cross the bridge to make it to their next show.
- ☞ The circus is here to entertain the travelers brought to a halt, as a captive audience.
- ☞ The circus was invited here to solve the problem of the bridge. By whom?
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

The Season:

Consider what the bridge represents and what's on the other side, and choose a seasonal transition to stand for it. Winter to Spring? Spring to Summer? Deep Winter to First Thaw? Mud Season to Summer's Eve?

Developments:

During the session, introduce any or all of the following, in any order, as they occur:

- ☞ New travelers arrive, crowding up at the rear.
- ☞ A labor crew arrives, with orders to reopen the bridge. (Whose orders?) They are brusque and efficient but have none of the required tools or skills.
- ☞ A labor crew arrives, with orders to clear the road, closed bridge irregardless. (Whose orders?) They are brusque and efficient and have good crabtree sticks for the motivation of stragglers.
- ☞ The local fairy regent arrives to survey the situation.
- ☞ A personage dangerously predatory arrives, drawn to the confusion.
- ☞ The bridge suffers a further misfortune and the halted travelers are faced with bad news.
- ☞ The bridge is reopened, but cannot bear many at once, so the halted travelers must put themselves into an order of precedence in which to pass over.
- ☞ Someone arrives with news of approaching disaster: a coming giant or a terrible storm.
- ☞ Someone arrives with news of another way, longer and more difficult going, but at least open.
- ☞ Someone hatches an implausible plan to reopen the bridge, and tries to rally support for it.

Note that as developments introduce new NPCs, you may write them up as you choose.

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

Which developments has the circus missed, if any, and which might be coming next?

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

To play the Closed Bridge:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Introduce the developments at the Closed Bridge if and as you choose.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Is the bridge still closed?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



In Fairyland: A Funeral



To create the story of a Funeral, choose as many facts and elements as you want, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Honored Dead:

- ☞ **An easy choice:** A fairy beloved and respected. Write them up as Fairy Nobility, Homely-kind, Pastoral-kind, Tree-kind, Wild-kind, or Winter-kind; their special play is **to eavesdrop**.
- ☞ A champion of battle and guardian of their community in war. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Wild-kind, or Winter-kind; their special play is **to eavesdrop**.
- ☞ An elf, in an elfin mock-funeral, very grave and boisterous. Write them up as Elfin-kind; their special play is **to forget that they're dead**.
- ☞ A figure of hope, peace, wisdom, or abundance, whose death leaves us impoverished. Write them up as Fairy Nobility, Spider-kind, Tree-kind, Wild-kind, Witch-kind, or World-kind; their special play is **to truly depart**.
- ☞ A mortal human being whose death we don't truly understand. Don't write them up; they're dead.
- ☞ A tyrant, and we're giddy with joy. Write them up as Fairy Nobility, River-kind, Troll-kind, or Winter-kind; their special play is **to eavesdrop**.

They died (choose all that apply): *too soon, in childhood, violently, by mischance, betrayed, in their prime, in childbirth, with much left undone, leaving behind old wounds, without saying goodbye, unforgiven, alone, lost, in battle, and no one's surprised, having accomplished much, within reach of great achievement, with great achievement behind them, among their loved ones, in peace, at the end of a great life, —.*

Mourners:

- ☞ **An easy choice:** The true friends and loved ones of the Honored Dead. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to grieve*.
- ☞ The bereft family. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to quarrel without wanting to*.
- ☞ The bereft lover or spouse. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to seek comfort elsewhere*.
- ☞ A confidante, who knew the Honored Dead's secrets. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to say too much*.
- ☞ An enemy in life. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to ill-speak*.
- ☞ A lover unrequited in life. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to mourn*.
- ☞ A keener or keeners, whose duty is to give voice to the celebrants' grief. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to lay bare the other celebrants' true feelings*.
- ☞ A sacrifice, whose duty is to go with the Honored Dead into death. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to defy the sacrifice*.

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ **An easy choice:** The circus was invited here to perform in tribute to the Honored Dead.
- ☞ The circus is here to conduct, officiate, and solemnize the funeral.
- ☞ The circus is here to recount, in performance, episodes from the life of the Honored Dead.
- ☞ The circus is here to celebrate the death of the Honored Dead.
- ☞ The circus is here to interrupt the funeral, and why? At whose word?
- ☞ The circus has a personal connection to the Honored Dead: a past performer, a patron of the circus, or a personal friend.
- ☞ Conceivably, the Honored Dead is a player's character.
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

The Season:

Consider what the funeral means, and choose a seasonal transition to stand for it. Autumn to Winter? Summer to Autumn? Winter to Spring?

The Order of Events:

1. Ingathering.

The celebrants assemble, greet one another appropriately, and take their places for the funeral to begin.

2. The beginning of the funeral.

Presenting, introducing, acknowledging, and/or encircling the Honored Dead.

3. Remembering the Honored Dead.

Which of the celebrants speak, and what do they say?

4. The moment of goodbye.

Silence and attention for the final moment of the Honored Dead's presence among the living.

5. Leaving the Honored Dead behind.

A collective acknowledgement and recognition that life must and does proceed, with the Honored Dead no longer present in it.

6. Clean-up & afterward.

Someone has to clear away the memorial feast, reorder the hall, pay the hired mourners, see the bereft safely on their way. Everyone else, doesn't have to.

Note that anyone present could conceivably send the Funeral careening off-outline, to the giddy dismay of all, and potentially to lastingly ruin some celebrants' lives and memories. It's not your job as MC, nor the players' job as players, to prevent this from happening.

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

- ☞ The circus arrives in time for the proceedings to begin.
- ☞ The proceedings can't begin until the circus arrives, but the circus is behind time. Now that it's arrived, they can begin.
- ☞ When the circus arrives, the proceedings have already begun. Which events has the circus missed, and which event is currently underway?

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?



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Additional Imagery:

- ☞ Draw a map if you like.
- ☞ A wide field, a stone hall, a wooded grove, a narrow crescent moon, a full moon, a moonless night, stormy skies, gloomy skies, rain, sunny skies, a windy coast, a wide river, a reedy lake, the open sea, a peat bog, upthrust boulders, an orchard, a promontory, a village green, —.
- ☞ A fairy graveyard, a stone cairn, a crypt, a pyre, a bonfire, a landed ship, a ship afloat, a ship aflame, a mass grave, a churned battlefield, standing stones, stone cists, the inverted tree, swords thrust into the mud, —.
- ☞ A simple shared meal, stately music, a grand feast, toasts and cheers, rambling reminisces, broached kegs and unstoppered jars, a formal meal, strictly prescribed stories, songs of death, songs of live and love, many lies, open weeping, hidden weeping, —.

To play the Funeral:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Have your NPCs try to hold to the Funeral's order of events, or try to derail them, as suitable.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Did the funeral answer the needs of the mourners?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



In Fairyland: A Gift-Giving Occasion



To create the story of a Gift-Giving Occasion, choose as many facts and elements as you want, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Occasion:

- ☞ **An easy choice:** It's the day of celebration of some fairy crown, and we assemble to give them gifts. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as the crown of another fairy kind; their special play is *to rebuff a gift*.
- ☞ It's the day of celebration of some fairy crown, and we assemble to honor them by receiving gifts from them. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as the crown of another fairy kind; their special play is *to withhold a gift*.
- ☞ It's a day of community celebration, and we assemble to give gifts to one another, under the auspices of a figure of abundance, generosity, and wisdom. Write them up as Spider-kind, Tree-kind, Wild-kind, or World-kind; their special play is *to bless those who participate*.
- ☞ It's the naming-day of a baby fairy, and we assemble to hear their name and give them gifts. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Goblin-kind, Homely-kind, Nymph-kind, Pastoral-kind, or Wild-kind; their special play is *to laugh with delight*. Write their parents or guardians up as you choose; their special play is *to weigh a gift critically*.
- ☞ It's a bidding-day. Someone who's given us all many gifts before, has put out word that, on this happy day, it's time to return the favor. Write them up as Homely-kind or Pastoral-kind; their special play is *to remember carefully, but not begrudge*.
- ☞ It's tax day. We assemble to render our share to the fairy crown who rules us. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as the crown of another fairy kind; their special play is *to demand more or better*.
- ☞ It's tribute day. We assemble to render our share to the tyrant who oppresses us. Write them up as Fairy Nobility, Giant-kind, Spider-kind, Troll-kind, Twilight-kind, Winter-kind, Witch-kind, or Wizard-kind; their special play is *to demand more or better*.

The Gifts:

- ☞ Fanciful gifts: birds, animals, concoctions, rich trade goods, elaborate jewelry, exotic foodstuffs, rarities.
- ☞ Gifts of expression: songs, art, blessings, carols, compositions, recitations, performances, luck, foretelling, promises, oaths.
- ☞ Practical gifts: tools, small jewelry, household items, personal items, simple trade goods, coin, fruit, yardgoods, ribbons.
- ☞ Taxes or tribute: coin, livestock, produce, indenture, duties, commitment to work, conscription to fight.

The Season:

Consider what the Gift-Giving means, and choose a seasonal transition to stand for it. Mud Season to Summer's Eve? Winter to Dpring? Summer to High Summer? Autumn to Winter?

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ An easy choice: The circus is here to give their performance as a gift.
- ☞ The circus is here by hire, to perform as someone else's gift. Whose?
- ☞ The circus is here to render their share in taxes or tribute, subject to the same crown or tyrant as the rest of us.
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

Additional Imagery:

- ☞ Draw a map if you like.
- ☞ A picnic in a garden, a bedecked hall, a timber pavilion by a river, a bower in the woods, a sandy beach landing, a grand stone hall, a cold stone hall, a smoky timber hall, a circle fire, a meeting-hall on a troubled border, a wayside house at a crossroad, a throne room, a humble cottage, a common green, a yard for tax-collecting, a private palace, a lovely and festive park, —.
- ☞ Festive clothing, workaday clothing, formal clothing, outlandish costumes, symbolic costume, ceremonial costume, anonymous costume, disguises, —.

The Order of Events:

1. Ingathering.

The celebrants assemble, makes appropriate introductions among themselves, and take their places for the Gift-Giving to begin.

2. The First Gift.

Presenting, introducing, acclaiming, and/or encircling the Honoree, and the giving of the first gift.

3. Giving the Gifts.

Are they given anonymously? Are they wrapped, to be opened later, or presented for all to see? In what order are they presented, with what formality, with what pomp?

4. The conclusion of the Gift-Giving.

The giving of the final gift, and the Honoree's last remarks.

5. Congeniality and Farewells.

Now that the Gift-Giving is accomplished, the celebrants can stay to pass time together, if it's appropriate, and depart when the time is right.

6. Clean-up & afterward.

Someone has to sweep away the refuse, wash the dishes, tidy the hall, see things old and new to their proper places. Everyone else, doesn't have to.

Note that anyone present could conceivably send the gift-giving careening off-outline, to the giddy dismay of all, and potentially create hard feelings, greed, jealousy, and ruptures in the celebrants' lives. It's not your job as MC, nor the players' job as players, to prevent this from happening.

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

- ☞ The circus arrives in time for the proceedings to begin.
- ☞ The proceedings can't begin until the circus arrives, but the circus is behind time. Now that it's arrived, they can begin.
- ☞ When the circus arrives, the proceedings have already begun. Which events has the circus missed, and which event is currently underway?

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

To play the Gift-Giving

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Have your NPCs try to hold to the Gift-Giving Occasion's order of events, or try to derail them, as suitable.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Were the gifts, after all, given?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



In Fairyland: The Goblin Market

To create the story of the Goblin Market, choose as many facts and elements as you want, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Crossroads:

Draw on the map:

- ☞ A road. *Choose 1 or more:* stone-paved, twin-rutted, high-banked, hung with banners, "the King's road," "the Queen's road," "the Wide Way."
- ☞ Another road. *Choose 1 or more:* narrow, shadowy, wet, overgrown, deep-worn, "the Witches' road," "the Vanishing road," "the Long Way."
- ☞ A river. *Choose 1 or more:* winding, bridged, tree-lined, sandy-banked, reedy, stony, quick-flowing, meandering, sluggish, shallow, leaping.
- ☞ Permanent structures: shops, halls, a public house, a hostlery, a grange.
- ☞ A single gigantic all-overtowering tree.
- ☞ A central green with a raised platform for a stage.
- ☞ Other: —.

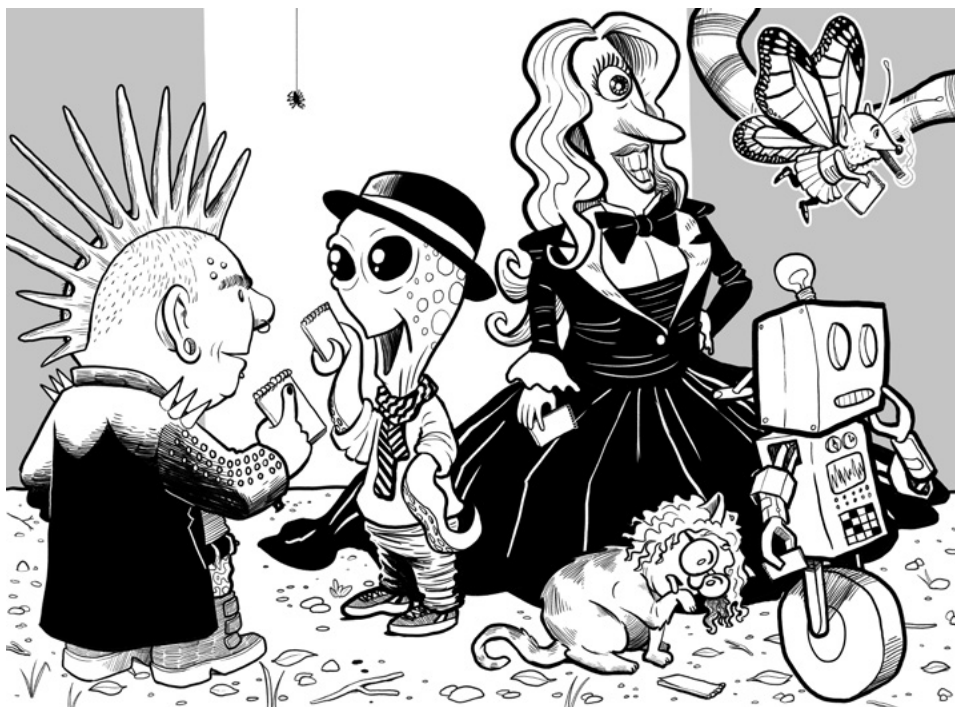
Folk in the Market:

- ☞ *A requisite choice:* The goblins of the market, sharp-eyed, sharp-eared, eager for custom, their tables spread with wonders, enticements, enchantments and dangers. Write them up as Goblin-kind; their special play is *to call and haggle, mill and roar*.
- ☞ One merchant in particular, offering a unique rare good for sale, namely [x]. Write them up as Goblin-kind; their special play is *to turn aside the eager*.
- ☞ The bell-ringer, whose duty is to keep time for the market. Write them up as Goblin-kind; their special play is *to drowse off*.

- ☞ A captive, a person, not a thing, nevertheless to be bought and sold. Write them up as Ghostly-kind, Mortal Human Kind, Nymph-kind, Sea-kind, Tree-kind, or Wild-kind; their special play is *to defy the selling*.
- ☞ A fairy prince, princess, or crown, visiting the market incognito, but everyone knows who it is. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as nobility of another fairy kind; their special play is *to pretend to be unrecognized*.
- ☞ A fairy prince, princess, or crown, visiting the market incognito, successfully. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as nobility of another fairy kind; their special play is *to quietly reveal themselves*.
- ☞ A fortune-teller. Write them up as Sea-kind, Spider-kind, or Witch-kind; their special play is *to offer warnings and lures*.
- ☞ The host of the market, upon whose land the market's held. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as a wealthy landowner of another fairy kind; their special play is *to impose upon the market, just a little*.
- ☞ The Market-Crowned Beauty, the great acclaimed beauty of the market. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Goblin-kind, Mortal Human Kind, Nymph-kind, Pastoral-kind, or Wild-kind; their special play is *to break hearts*.
- ☞ A mortal human being, here by art or by accident. Write them up as Mortal Human Kind; their special play is *to fall prey*.
- ☞ The peacekeeper and their bully-gang, armed with crabtree sticks. Write them up as Goblin-kind, with perhaps a troll among them; their special play is *to give good advice*.
- ☞ The overseer of entertainment & games, whose duties include the circus. Write them up as Elfin-kind or as Goblin-kind; their special play is *to favor their favorites*.
- ☞ One robbed, someone from whom a treasured belonging has been stolen. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Goblin-kind, Mortal Human Kind, Pastoral-kind, Troll-kind, or Wizard-kind; their special play is *to uproar*.
- ☞ The tidy-crew. Write them up as Goblin-kind, their special play is *to "tidy" things that aren't trash*.
- ☞ A wizard seeking magical goods at a bargain. Write them up as Wizard-kind; their special play is *to haggle ungraciously*.

Additional Imagery:

- ☞ A caravan of laden bullfrogs, a beeherd bringing the flock to market, a little goblin with an enormous jar of milkweed kefir on its back, sprightly pickpockets, a booming crier, pavilions decked with ribbons, timber stalls selling roast turnips, quaffs, or kisses, —.
- ☞ Someone's private business turning suddenly public, someone signaling a covert partner, someone lurking behind a shop stall, someone presenting themselves as someone else, someone searching the faces of passers-by, someone seeking to dissolve a curse, —.
- ☞ Apples & quinces, lemons & oranges, plump unpeck'd cherries, melons & raspberries, bloom-down-cheek'd peaches, swart-headed mulberries, wild free-born cranberries, crab-apples, dewberries, pine-apples, blackberries, apricots, strawberries, grapes fresh from the vine, pomegranates full and fine, dates & sharp bullaces, rare pears and greengages, damsons and bilberries, currants and gooseberries, bright-fire-like barberries, figs to fill your mouth, citrons from the south; gold on the furze that shakes in windy weather, copper on the heather, a golden curl, a precious golden lock, a tear more rare than pearl; honey, cow's milk, kneaded cakes of whitest wheat, churn'd butter, whipp'd up cream, a hen's egg; a silver penny.



Barry Deutsch

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ *An easy choice:* The circus is here to perform for the crowd.
- ☞ The circus is here to shop.
- ☞ The circus is here to sell.
- ☞ The circus is here to meet someone, a friend, a patron, or a guide. Who?
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

The Season:

Consider what the Goblin Market means, and choose a seasonal transition to stand for it. Mud Season to Summer's Eve? High Summer to First Chill? Deep Winter to First Thaw? Lingering Autumn to First Frost?



The Order of Events:

1. Setup.

Before the Goblin Market opens, workers ready the fields and roadsides, vendors and merchants arrive, they squabble over their assigned lots, they load their goods into their pavilions, shops and stalls, they step on each others' toes and tweak each others' noses, all in preparation for the customers to come.

2. The Grand Opening.

Special customers may be let in ahead of the rabble, or sneak in, but sooner or later, the Goblin Market is open to all.

3. Market Days & Market Nights.

The Goblin Market is open for a week, a day, an hour, a minute, a second, and a sneeze.

4. The Closing Sneeze.

When someone sneezes the closing sneeze, the Goblin Market is closed. Customers have only until the vendors and merchants find their thrashing sticks to depart.

5. Before departing.

Now that the Goblin Market's closed, the vendors can finish their business, count their returns, load out their goods, and celebrate together.

6. Clean-up & afterward.

Someone has to undertake the herculean labor of restoring the crossroads to order when the market's gone. Everyone else, doesn't have to.

Note that anyone present could conceivably send the Goblin Market careening off-outline, to the giddy dismay of all, and potentially ruin the livelihoods of many or all. It's not your job as MC, nor the players' job as players, to prevent this from happening.

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

- ☞ The circus arrives in time for the proceedings to begin.
- ☞ The proceedings can't begin until the circus arrives, but the circus is behind time. Now that it's arrived, they can begin.
- ☞ When the circus arrives, the proceedings have already begun. Which events has the circus missed, and which event is currently underway?

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

To play the Goblin Market

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Have your NPCs try to hold to the Goblin Market's order of events, or try to derail them, as suitable.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Was the circus' performance at the Goblin Market, after all, a success?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.

In Fairyland: A Harvest Murder

To create the story of a Harvest Murder, choose as many facts and elements as you want, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Harvest:

- ☞ *An easy choice:* Circle 1: barley, apples, grapes, onions, hay, dandelion blossoms, honey, cabbage, pumpkins, nuts, raspberries, —.
- ☞ Something fanciful: Circle 1: thistledown, spider silk, morning dew, violets, moonwine, —.
- ☞ Something poetical: The fruit of commitment to an emotion or vision, like falling in love or choosing hope, for which reluctance and reservation must die, namely [x]
- ☞ Something sinister: Circle 1: nightshade, human children's dreams, thorns, human luck or happiness, —.
- ☞ The harvest is an ingathering: a reaping, a mowing, a picking, a gathering, —.
- ☞ The harvest is a first processing: pressing olives for oil, grapes for wine, apples for cider, —
(If you'd like to research how this harvest is actually done in the human world, do; or invent for yourself how the fairies do it.)

The Season:

Consider what the harvest is and what it means, and choose a seasonal transition to stand for it. Spring to Mud Season? Summer's Eve to Summer? Summer to High Summer? Summer to Autumn? Linger in Autumn to First Frost? First Frost to Winter?

Who Must Die?

- ☞ *An Easy Choice:* An effigy of the harvest, a volunteer or someone pressed into the role against their will. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Mortal Human Kind, Pastoral Kind, or Wild-kind; their special play is *to defy the murder*.

- ☞ No one really, but an unliving effigy of the harvest: the barley cut down, the apple crushed for cider, the pumpkin carved into a face, or as so. Write it up as Ghostly-kind, Pastoral-kind, or World-kind; its special play is *to unbegrudge*.
- ☞ An enemy of the harvest. Write them up as cruel Fairy Nobility, Ghostly-kind, Giant-kind, Goblin-kind, River-kind, Troll-kind, Twilight-kind, Winter-kind, or Witch-kind; their special play is *to defy the murder*.
- ☞ A sacrifice of beauty. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Mortal Human Kind, Nymph-kind, Sea-kind, or Twilight-kind; their special play is *to set conditions*.

Celebrants:

- ☞ *A requisite choice:* The workers, the harvesters themselves. Write them up as Elfin-kind or as Pastoral-kind; their special play is *to malingering*.
- ☞ The crown of the harvest, someone chosen to rule for only this single celebration. Write them up as Elfin-kind or as Pastoral-kind; their special play is *to give permission*.
- ☞ The crown, the ruler of this place. Write them up as Fairy Nobility or as the crown of another fairy kind; their special play is *to command order*.
- ☞ The figure of death, whose duty is to commit the harvest murder. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Pastoral-kind, or Winter-kind; their special play is *to kill*.
- ☞ The gleaners, allowed to take for their own use the byproduct of the harvest. Write them up as Elfin-kind, Goblin-kind, Homely-kind, Pastoral-kind, or Wild-kind; their special play is *to tell the truth*.
- ☞ The master of the staves, whose duty is to lead all in cutting, thrashing, breaking, chopping, stomping, or grinding. Write them up as Elfin-kind or as Pastoral-kind; their special play is *to assemble and lead a violent gang*.
- ☞ The master taster, whose duty is to confirm what all know: that the harvest is ready. Write them up as Elfin-kind or as Pastoral-kind; their special play is *to drop a bombshell*.

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ An easy choice: The circus is here to celebrate the conclusion of the harvest.
- ☞ The circus is here to join the work.
- ☞ The circus is here to entertain the workers.
- ☞ The circus is here to perform the murder
- ☞ The circus is here to interrupt the murder. At whose word?
- ☞ The circus is here to provide the sacrifice.
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

Additional Imagery:

- ☞ Draw a map if you like.
- ☞ Rolling hills, rolling fields, placid river, threatening rain, night breezes, huge full moon, tended forest, coppiced arbor, half-wild orchard, crops or vines in rows, crops or brambles in no order, mushrooms, —.
- ☞ Staves, sickles, scythes, pails, pitchforks, flails, grindstone, barrel press, stone press, press tub, measuring sticks, measuring cords, baling twine, stone basin, copper pots, barrels, stoneware crocks, stone cistern, —.
- ☞ Timber hall, timber platform, stone silo, wide pavillion, sawhorse tables, scattered tents, dancing-green, fenced working field, —.
- ☞ Working-songs, walking-songs, threshing-songs, stomping-songs, love songs, comic songs, family songs, bragging-songs, labor songs, feats, contests, boasts, challenges, head down and work hard, malingering, muttering, excuses, good-natured griping, hard griping, —.

The Order of Events:

1. Ingathering & preparation.

The celebrants assemble, learn what the work is to be, learn what the tools are, learn how the celebration will proceed, and take their places.

2. The beginning of the harvest.

Silence and attention for the first apple picked, the first sheaf cut, the first turn of the press.

3. The work of the harvest.

Encompassing both the material work and the symbolic work.

4. The culmination of the harvest.

Silence and attention for the last apple picked, the last sheaf cut, the last turn of the press.

5. The celebration of the harvest.

Releasing the celebrants from the work, to celebrate the work. Feasting, dancing, singing; not only the end of the workday, or the end of the workweek, but the end of the workyear.

6. Clean-up & afterward.

Someone has to re-order the tools, rinse down the tubs, clear the yards. Everyone else, doesn't have to.

Note that anyone present could conceivably send the Harvest Celebration careening off-outline, to the giddy dismay of all, and potentially to spoil the harvest altogether. It's not your job as MC, nor the players' job as players, to prevent this from happening.

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

- ☞ The circus arrives in time for the proceedings to begin.
- ☞ The proceedings can't begin until the circus arrives, but the circus is behind time. Now that it's arrived, they can begin.
- ☞ When the circus arrives, the proceedings have already begun. Which events has the circus missed, and which event is currently underway?

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

To play the Harvest Murder:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Have your NPCs try to hold to the Harvest Murder's order of events, or try to derail them, as suitable.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Was the harvest, after all, a success?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.

In Fairyland: The Horrible Feast

To create the story of the Horrible Feast, choose as many facts and elements as you want, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Chef:

- ☞ *An easy choice:* Write the chef up as Fairy Nobility, Giant-kind, Goblin-kind, River-kind, Spider-kind, Troll-kind, Twilight-kind, Winter-kind, or Witch-kind; their special play is *to flatter the feasters*.
- ☞ The chef isn't an NPC, it's (choose 1): a battle, a catastrophe, a disease, or a shipwreck. Interpret the removes in the feast's outline as its progress: the first remove as the first exchange of sallies in the battle, the feast proper as the waves of the epidemic, &c.

The Feast:

- ☞ Write the feast up as Elfin-kind, Fairy Nobility, Mortal Human Kind, Sea-kind, or Wild-kind; their special play is *to defy the feasters*.

The Celebrants:

- ☞ *A requisite choice:* The host of the feast. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to withdraw hospitality*.
- ☞ *A requisite choice:* The guests of the feast. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to gratify the chef*.
- ☞ The bereft, who loved the feast. Special play: *to scream*.
- ☞ An embodiment of death, the founder of the feast. Special play: *to acknowledge praise on the chef's behalf*.
- ☞ A prisoner, forced to witness the feast. Special play: *to grieve or rage*.
- ☞ The unwitting, who doesn't realize what they're eating. Special play: *to relish with gusto*.

Masters of Service:

- ☞ The master of the chamber, whose duties include the entertainment of the feasters, including directing the circus if it's here in that capacity. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to extend invitations*.
- ☞ The master of casks, who directs the service of drinks, and must suit them to each remove. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to show excellent taste*.
- ☞ The master of knives, who directs the kitchen to meet the needs of the chef. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to open the kitchen door*.
- ☞ The master of removes, who directs the service and announces each remove as it is served. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to command silence*.
- ☞ The master of toasts, who directs the participation of the feasters. Write them up as you choose; their special play is *to call the feasters to join together*.

The Season:

Consider what the Horrible Feast means, and choose a seasonal transition to stand for it. Spring to Mud Season? Summer to Autumn? Lingering Autumn to First Frost? First Frost to Winter?

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ *An easy choice:* The circus is here to entertain the feasters.
- ☞ The circus is here as guests, to join the feast.
- ☞ The circus is here to provide the feast.
- ☞ The circus is here to interrupt the feast. At whose word?
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

The Order of Events:

1. Assembling.

The celebrants take their places at table and greet each other appropriately.

2. The first remove.

Silence and attention for the serving of the first remove. The first remove introduces the feast and both the skill and the intentions of the chef. It awakens the senses, the appetite, and the bloodlust, and makes promise of the feast to come.

3. The feast proper.

Each new remove — there may be only one, there may be several or many — reveals another facet of the chef's skill, while developing the chef's themes and drawing out the fulfillment of the feast's promise.

4. The last remove.

Silence and attention for the serving of the last remove. The last remove resolves the chef's themes, underscores the chef's mastery, and fixes the feast in the mind.

5. The postprandial.

Conversation, delectation, conviviality. Toasting the chef, who may or may not grace the company by appearing in person.

6. Clean-up & afterward.

Someone has to scrape the dishes, count the glasses, scrub the pots, give mercy, gnaw the bones. Everyone else, doesn't have to.

Note that anyone present could conceivably send the Horrible Feast careening off-outline, to the giddy dismay of all, and potentially to spoil the feast altogether. It's not your job as MC, nor the players' job as players, to prevent this from happening.

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

- ☞ The circus arrives in time for the proceedings to begin.
- ☞ The proceedings can't begin until the circus arrives, but the circus is behind time. Now that it's arrived, they can begin.
- ☞ When the circus arrives, the proceedings have already begun. Which events has the circus missed, and which event is currently underway?

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

Additional Imagery:

- ☞ Draw a map if you like.
- ☞ A cookfire in the wilderness, a roaring smoky kitchen, a stately manor, a formal dining hall, an intimate dining chamber, a rough dirty room, a house made of something fanciful like straw or gingerbread, a great mortar & pestle, spits aturning, cauldrons full of flame, an enormous clay bread-oven, a spotless professional kitchen, a food truck or traveling food wagon, a cold raw meal by night, —.
- ☞ A battle pitch with soldiers clashing in ranks, travelers caught in impossible wilderness & weather, a ship foundering and sinking, a plague-house or plague city, collapsing buildings, a gallows, a harrying pack, a trap for the guileless, an ambush for the lost, wire snares, a deadfall, a baited cage, a barbed hook, a hanging loop, a game sack, a fattening pen, a butchery yard, —.

To play the Horrible Feast:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Have your NPCs try to hold to the Horrible Feast's order of events, or try to derail them, as suitable.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Was the feast devoured after all? Was the chef gratified?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



In Fairyland: Freeform Occasions



When there's no suitable playbook — or whenever you like — you can create an occasion of your own. Any interesting place to perform and interesting audience will do. Just summarize its story in a few sentences, write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

Where to start?

☞ **Generalize the particular and particularize the general.**

To generalize the particular, think of a situation that interests you, a conversation you had with a friend or a relationship from a book, and create from it a general principle or theme. "You can't trust a parent." "There's no such thing as a moral king." "Don't go into business with someone you love."

To particularize the general, take a general principle or theme, and cast it in individual people, in a particular situation. "Gorebore the Giant is abroad with his daughter, but intends to give her over as a gift to the Wolf King of Winter." "The King of the Wild Moon has made himself a peacemaker between warring goblins and elves, but has achieved peace by arming one side against another and sending his own warrior to do their dirty work." "A selkie and a mortal human fisherman have fallen in love, but in order to prosper, the fisherman is ever-increasingly exploiting the selkie's gifts."

☞ **Literalize the metaphorical and metaphoricize the literal.**

To literalize the metaphorical, invent a metaphor, then make it a real person or a real place. "The bridge over which the sun crosses from horizon to horizon." "The river of time: wade upstream and you turn your years backward, emerging young; wade downstream and you turn your years forward, until at last you drown of old age."

To metaphoricize the literal, take a concrete person or place, and stand them in for a larger situation. "A little bridge over a stream in the woods, and a woodswife can't cross over, and so it is with the seasons: summer's stuck and can't become autumn." "A spider is hunting among the elves of the pasture, and anyone it takes, becomes a soldier in the ghostly army of the Gibbet-god."

☞ **Set and people the stage.**

Choose a place that you can imagine, and then simply imagine who's there. Imagine it on a normal occasion, or an unusual one: busy when it's usually deserted, deserted when it's usually busy; in an off-season, or at night.

"The square of a walled elfin town, on the borders of a Troll-wood and looking up upon a wind-haunted mountain. On any typical evening, mingle here elves, fairies of the pasture and heath, farm-fairies, fine fairy ladies and gentlemen, uncanny beings from the twilit mountains, trolls from the wood, goblins, and sometimes a witch." "The summer palace of the River Queen, but she is not in attendance. Her court of nymphs idles away the summer days, while her household staff busies itself preparing for her return."

☞ **What-if yourself out of the sensible.**

Ask yourself a question and try on different answers — what if? — until you arrive at a situation you find comical, dangerous, poetic, just, or absurd.

"Why would the Wolf King of Winter be stranded on an isle in the Summer Sea? What if he's fallen in love with a seal? Or, what if he's fallen in love with a whale? And she secretly hated him, and drew him out to the island to abandon him? But why would a whale hate the Wolf King of Winter? What if he's been providing whale-hunters with harpoons of deadly ice?"

☞ **You don't know what the circus will do.**

Your goal and job is to create an interesting place and an interesting audience for the circus' performance, not necessarily to create a problem for the circus to solve. Consequently, if you find that you've created a situation with a villain, spend a moment imagining how to make the villain appealing, sympathetic, or useful to the circus.

"The Wolf King of Winter has pursued his love, a whale-woman, to this island, where she lured and abandoned him. She hates him for providing whale-hunters with harpoons of ice, and who can blame her? Still, he can offer the circus opportunities and rewards, if they'll take him off the island again when they go." "A spider is hunting the elves of the pasture, turning them into ghostly soldiers for the Gibbet-god's army. Still, the spider is pleasant, wise, and thoughtful, far less frivolous and absurd than the elves, she doesn't take more than they can spare, and she's excited and eager to watch the circus perform."

Where are we?

- ☞ A Court
- ☞ A Crossroads
- ☞ A Festival Fair
- ☞ A Market Fair
- ☞ A Roadside
- ☞ A Town
- ☞ A Wild Place
- ☞ Another of your own invention: —

Draw a map if you like.

What season is it now, and what season will it become?

Who's here?

- ☞ Choose a working kind, a playing kind, a buying kind, a selling kind.
- ☞ Choose a fairy kind, a fairy kind, a fairy kind, and another fairy kind.
- ☞ Choose the kind of the earth, the kind of the water, the kind of the air, the kind of the dancing fire.
- ☞ Choose the wicked kind, the trodden kind, the complicit kind, the kindly kind.
- ☞ Choose the fools, the jokers, the ranks, and the court.
- ☞ Choose the humanish kind, the beastish kind, the birdish kind, and the kind like shadows and wind.
- ☞ Others of your own invention: —.

Write them up as you choose.

What's happening?

- ☞ All here are accustomed to luxury and the best, and the circus will be hard put to impress them.
- ☞ The circus introduces an uncertainty, an uncontrolled element, into someone's plans or comfortable arrangement.
- ☞ Some here are content, and others aren't.
- ☞ There's a building tension, hostility beneath the surface, soon to erupt.
- ☞ There's someone here
- ☞ Things are hard here, and all are eager for diversion and change.
- ☞ Things are precarious here, and the circus might disrupt delicate balances.
- ☞ Things are well here, and the circus is warmly welcome.
- ☞ Another of your own invention: —.

What are the laws here?

- ☞ Ask none else to settle your dues.
- ☞ Ask none to curtail their nature.
- ☞ Declare yourself in full to all you meet.
- ☞ Don't look behind the hanging curtains.
- ☞ Don't open this door. In fact, don't open any doors uninvited.
- ☞ Free all who serve.
- ☞ Go masked.
- ☞ Harbor never the foe, nor the foe's friend.
- ☞ Keep off the regent's road.
- ☞ No complaining.
- ☞ No immoderate levity.
- ☞ No kissing.
- ☞ No music.
- ☞ Observe the regent's woe and weal.
- ☞ Present yourself for service and duty due.
- ☞ Render tribute to the regent.
- ☞ Still all mistemper.
- ☞ Surrender to the regent all humankind and all human things.
- ☞ Tax to the measure, nor skim.
- ☞ Wages for work, no work for none.
- ☞ Another or others of your own invention: —.

The circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

The moment of its arrival:

What's happening at the moment of the circus' arrival?

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

Play the session as usual:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Have your NPCs try to hold to the occasion's order of events, or try to derail them, as suitable; or else introduce the occasion's developments if and as you choose.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

How did it go?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



In the Human World: An Arts Festival



To create the story of an Arts Festival, choose as many facts and elements as you want, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Festival's Theme:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☞ Arts & crafts | ☞ Local distilling |
| ☞ Beer | ☞ Local history |
| ☞ Bread | ☞ Mead |
| ☞ A community, namely [x] | ☞ Movies |
| ☞ The county, namely [x] | ☞ A music genre, namely [x] |
| ☞ Dancing | ☞ Poetry |
| ☞ Fireworks | ☞ Pot |
| ☞ Games of chance | ☞ The region, namely [x] |
| ☞ Games of skill | ☞ Restaurants |
| ☞ Garlic | ☞ Scarecrows |
| ☞ A giant puppet parade | ☞ The season, namely [x] |
| ☞ A hobby or enthusiasm, namely [x] | ☞ Song |
| ☞ Holiday lights | ☞ Stones & minerals |
| ☞ Honey & beekeeping | ☞ Stunts & tricks |
| ☞ Hot peppers | ☞ Textile arts |
| ☞ Jack-o-lanterns | ☞ The town, namely [x] |
| ☞ Labor & workers | ☞ Wine |
| ☞ Livestock & produce | ☞ Other: — |
| ☞ Local artists | |

The Festival's Title:

Choose words related to the themes and string them together. *Mill Hollow Scarecrow Fest, Garlic & Games, Toast of the Town, Solidarity Sings, Greenfield Dinosaur Days.*

The Festival's Setting:

- ☞ A beach or riverside.
- ☞ A commercial venue like a theater or restaurant.
- ☞ A downtown.
- ☞ A fairground.
- ☞ A farm or farmers' market.
- ☞ An institutional site like a school or hospital.
- ☞ A nature reserve, discovery center, or campsite.
- ☞ A retreat center or place of worship.
- ☞ A sculpture garden.
- ☞ Someone's home.
- ☞ A town, city, state or national park.
- ☞ A vacant lot.
- ☞ A wild place.
- ☞ Other: —.

Draw a map if you like.

Things To Do:

- ☞ Challenge the champion.
- ☞ Compare your art or work with others'.
- ☞ Dance together.
- ☞ Go from booth to booth, stand to stand, table to table, or site to site.
- ☞ Greet your friends old and new.
- ☞ Judge the best.
- ☞ March and chant in unison.
- ☞ Participate in the contests.
- ☞ Put money in the hat.
- ☞ Play the games.
- ☞ Sing together.
- ☞ Take a turn performing.
- ☞ Taste the theme ingredient in many forms.
- ☞ Try your hand at it.
- ☞ Volunteer in the kitchen, at the grills, at the ovens, at the sinks.
- ☞ Volunteer to help clean up.
- ☞ Watch, admire, marvel and cheer.
- ☞ Window shop and actual shop.
- ☞ Other: —.

The Season:

Choose the Arts Festival's season. Since it's being put on by mortal human beings, choose the season convenient to its organizers.

The Festivalgoers:

- ☞ Someone bold. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to plunge in*.
- ☞ Someone careful. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to wonder what they don't realize*.
- ☞ Someone cynical. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to assume there's an angle*.
- ☞ Someone devoted. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to guard or defend someone*.
- ☞ Someone fearful. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to hold back or draw away*.
- ☞ Someone inventive. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to take a novel tack*.
- ☞ Someone loving. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to treat someone thoughtfully*.
- ☞ Someone patient. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to keep at it, stick to it, or wait for it*.
- ☞ Someone steadfast. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to stand by someone*.
- ☞ Someone suspicious. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to ask questions before committing*.
- ☞ Someone watchful. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to notice what they might*.
- ☞ Someone wicker-wise. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to assert guest-right or host-right*.

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ *An easy choice:* The circus is here to perform, presenting itself as mortal human beings.
- ☞ The circus is here to take in the festival, to do the things to do.
- ☞ The circus is here to sell its wares.
- ☞ The circus is here to interrupt the festival. Why? At whose word?
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

Developments:

During the session, introduce any or all of the following, in any order, as they occur:

- ☞ The arts celebrated here, made as they are with human creativity and care, outshine fairy work.
- ☞ The arts celebrated here, of mere mortal make, reveal themselves as cheap, gaudy, crude, dull, poor.
- ☞ The arts celebrated here take on a marvelous, magical, unaccustomed glamor or quality, astonishing all.
- ☞ Fairies wander in from fairyland to join the festival, drawn by the circus' presence here.
- ☞ A fairy is cornered by a human being carrying iron, and panics. Who, and how do they play it?
- ☞ A human being enters into a bargain with a fairy, without realizing it. Who, and what bargain?
- ☞ A human being falls in love with one of the players' characters. Who?
- ☞ A human being resolves to join the circus. How do they play it?
- ☞ A human being thinks to challenge one of the players' characters. Who, and to what contest?
- ☞ A human being thinks to recognize one of the players' characters from their childhood or their dreams. Who, and which?
- ☞ A human being, leaving the festival, goes into fairyland instead of back into their human life. Who, and how do they play it?
- ☞ Someone else from fairyland has been here all along, and now a player's character sees the signs of them. What are they doing here?

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

Until the circus arrives, the Arts Festival is innocent of fairy mischief. It has a normal human opening ceremony, its own proper festivities as printed on the daybill, and a closing ceremony that startles no one.

Once the circus arrives, the festival can't remain the same.

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

To play the Arts Festival:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Introduce further developments as you choose.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

How did the Arts Festival go?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



In the Human World: Lost in the Woods



To create the story of *Lost in the Woods*, choose facts and elements as follow, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The Woods:

- ☞ A beach or riverside with hiking paths nearby.
- ☞ A nature reserve, discovery center, or campsite.
- ☞ An old cemetery in the woods.
- ☞ A public park with groves of trees.
- ☞ A retreat center or place of worship in the woods.
- ☞ A sculpture garden with a wooded section.
- ☞ Someone's home, far back from the road.
- ☞ A state or national park.
- ☞ A town or city park or graveyard.
- ☞ A vacant lot with trees growing up in it.
- ☞ A wild place.
- ☞ The wooded grounds of a library, museum, school, or hospital.
- ☞ A wooded hill within town boundaries.
- ☞ Other: —.

Draw a map if you like.

Name the woods: *Northfield Mountain Discovery Center, Peskeomscut Cove, Savoy State Park.*

The Season:

Choose the season, or ask the circus to choose the season

Who's in the Woods?

- ☞ Someone bold. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to plunge in*.
- ☞ Someone careful. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to wonder what they don't realize*.
- ☞ Someone cynical. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to assume there's an angle*.
- ☞ Someone devoted. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to guard or defend someone*.
- ☞ Someone fearful. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to hold back or draw away*.
- ☞ Someone inventive. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to take a novel tack*.
- ☞ Someone loving. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to treat someone thoughtfully*.
- ☞ Someone patient. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to keep at it, stick to it, or wait for it*.
- ☞ Someone steadfast. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to stand by someone*.
- ☞ Someone suspicious. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to ask questions before committing*.
- ☞ Someone watchful. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to notice what they might*.
- ☞ Someone wicker-wise. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to assert guest-right or host-right*.

Denizens of the Woods:

- ☞ An antiquarch of squirrels and its countless living descendants.
- ☞ Bats.
- ☞ A black bear and her cubs.
- ☞ The cats of every neighborhood nearby.
- ☞ A convocation of crows, dapper and perhaps self-concerned.
- ☞ An extended family of deer: stag, does, fawns.
- ☞ Fireflies.
- ☞ Foxes.
- ☞ The migrating songbirds, at this stayover on their journey.
- ☞ Owls & panthers.
- ☞ Peepers, chirpers, buzzers & croakers.
- ☞ A raven younger than the moon, but not much younger.
- ☞ The skunks, possums, whistle-pigs, raccoons, beavers, badgers, and other like persons.
- ☞ A timeless thing, an ancient creature forgotten in the modern human world.
- ☞ A vast people of rabbits.
- ☞ The wild bees.
- ☞ Other: —.

Write them up as mortal animals: wild and speechless, quick to fly, transfixed by fairy glamour. They crave nothing of the circus, and offer nothing but their unthinking wonder. Their only play is *to shake off enchantment and go back to their own small business*.

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ The circus is here to perform for the denizens of the woods, not for the human beings at all.
- ☞ The circus is here to perform for just these precise people, and chose just this precise night to do it.
- ☞ The circus is here to practice, try, and improve new acts, in front of no audience that matters.
- ☞ The circus is here to meet someone. Who?
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.



Tomáš Sedlár

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

Before the circus arrives, no one's Lost in the Woods, they're just in the woods. They're together at a time and place where no one else is there, but the paths are familiar. The mood is innocent of fairy mischief.

At the moment of the circus' arrival, they step off any known path, and the woods can't remain the same.

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

Developments:

During the session, introduce any or all of the following, in any order, as they occur:

- ☞ Different human beings, lost in the woods themselves, but maybe from different woods, different times, arrive as well. Who, and how do they play it?
- ☞ Fairies pour in from fairyland to watch the circus, completely surrounding and engulfing the human beings.
- ☞ A human being falls in love with one of the players' characters. Who, and which?
- ☞ A human being flees in terror into the woods. Who, and where does their flight take them?
- ☞ A human being realizes something about their own nature. Who, and what?
- ☞ A human being resolves to go with the circus when it departs, with or without the circus' permission. Who, and how do they play it?
- ☞ A human being thinks to beg a boon of one of the players' characters, maybe without understanding why. Who, and what boon?
- ☞ A human being thinks to challenge one of the players' characters. Who, and to what contest?
- ☞ A human being thinks to confront one of the players' characters. Who, and to what end?
- ☞ A human being thinks to recognize one of the players' characters from their childhood or their dreams. Who, and which?
- ☞ Someone else comes here from fairyland, following the circus or drawn by it. Who?
- ☞ Someone else from fairyland has been here all along, and now a player's character sees the signs of them. Who, and what are they doing here?

To play *Lost in the Woods*:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Introduce further developments as you choose.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Did they ever find their way home again?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.

In the Human World: A Rite of Passage

To create the story of a Rite of Passage, choose facts and elements as follow, and summarize them in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

Today marks someone's:

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| ☞ Adulthood | ☞ Diagnosis | ☞ Ordination |
| ☞ Bereavement | ☞ Divorce | ☞ Rebirth |
| ☞ Birth | ☞ Graduation | ☞ Recovery |
| ☞ Birthday | ☞ Initiation | ☞ Retirement |
| ☞ Birth-giving | ☞ Last day of life | ☞ Transition |
| ☞ Burial | ☞ Liberation | ☞ Widowing |
| ☞ Coming out | ☞ Marriage | ☞ Other: — |
| ☞ Conscription | ☞ Menopause | |
| ☞ Conviction | ☞ Naming | |

Its Title:

Name the person whose passage it is, and name the passage. *Benjamin's Conscription, Cara's Marriage, Mercy's Transition.*

The Season:

Choose the season. Since this is a mortal human occasion, its season and its meaning might not be related at all. Choose at random or by human considerations.

The Setting:

- ☞ A beach, river, or swimming hole.
- ☞ A commercial venue like a theater or restaurant.
- ☞ A downtown.
- ☞ A fairground, library or museum.
- ☞ A farm or farmers' market.
- ☞ An institutional site like a school, hospital, or prison.
- ☞ A ghost town.
- ☞ A municipal site like a courthouse, city hall, or police station.

- ☞ A nature reserve, discovery center, or campsite.
- ☞ A retreat center or place of worship.
- ☞ A sculpture garden.
- ☞ Someone's home.
- ☞ A state or national park.
- ☞ A town or city park or graveyard.
- ☞ A vacant lot.
- ☞ A wild place.
- ☞ Other: —.

Draw a map if you like.

Who's Here?

- ☞ Someone bold. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to plunge in*.
- ☞ Someone careful. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to wonder what they don't realize*.
- ☞ Someone cynical. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to assume there's an angle*.
- ☞ Someone devoted. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to guard or defend someone*.
- ☞ Someone fearful. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to hold back or draw away*.
- ☞ Someone inventive. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to take a novel tack*.
- ☞ Someone loving. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to treat someone thoughtfully*.
- ☞ Someone patient. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to keep at it, stick to it, or wait for it*.
- ☞ Someone steadfast. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to stand by someone*.
- ☞ Someone suspicious. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to ask questions before committing*.
- ☞ Someone watchful. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to notice what they might*.
- ☞ Someone wicker-wise. Write them up as a Mortal Human Being; their special play is *to assert guest-right or host-right*.

The Observances:

- ☞ A blessing or blessings.
- ☞ Cake.
- ☞ A caregiver: doctor, doula, hospice worker, midwife, nurse, pharmacist, mortician.
- ☞ Champagne.
- ☞ Dedication to a new role or to new tasks.
- ☞ A dunking, a jeering, a mock-beating, a real beating, or other hazing.
- ☞ A festive informal meal.
- ☞ A formal meal.
- ☞ A formal officiant.
- ☞ Formal words, oaths, recitations.
- ☞ Gift-giving.
- ☞ Giving & receiving advice.
- ☞ Laughing, cheering, toasting.
- ☞ Leave-taking.
- ☞ Mourning.
- ☞ Music, singing & dancing.
- ☞ Private reflection.
- ☞ Reminiscing.
- ☞ Solemnity.
- ☞ Symbolic acts, words, or ceremony.
- ☞ Well-wishing.
- ☞ Witnesses.
- ☞ Other: —.

Also consider which should rightly be part of the passage's observances, but aren't.

The Circus:

At the beginning of the session, ask or tell the circus how they came to be here, and what they should therefore expect for their performance.

- ☞ The circus is here to celebrate the rite of passage.
- ☞ The circus is here to welcome the person to this side of their passage.
- ☞ The circus is here to interrupt the rite of passage. Why? At whose word?
- ☞ The circus is here to meet someone. Who?
- ☞ The circus is here for no reason, just fate or happenstance. This is the road the circus was on.

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

Until the circus arrives, the Rite of Passage is innocent of fairy mischief. It's a normal celebration, a normal grieving, a normal acknowledgment of a milestone in a person's life.

Once the circus arrives, the Rite of Passage can't remain the same.

Who greets the circus, and how do they play it?

Developments:

During the session, introduce any or all of the following, in any order, as they occur:

- ☞ The circus participates in the observances.
- ☞ The circus has interfered with the passage and must do [x] to set it right.
- ☞ Fairies pour in from fairyland to watch the circus, overrunning the rite of passage with complete disregard.
- ☞ A human being closes themselves off from the intensity of the experience. Who, and how do they play it?
- ☞ A human being falls in love with one of the players' characters. Who?
- ☞ A human being, maybe unthinking, makes a wish aloud. Who, and for what?
- ☞ A human being objects to the circus' presence here. Who, and how do they play it?
- ☞ A human being realizes something about their own nature. What?
- ☞ A human being suddenly leaves. Who, and where does their departure take them?
- ☞ A human being thinks to beg a boon of one of the players' characters, maybe without understanding why. Who, and what boon?
- ☞ A human being thinks to confront one of the players' characters. Who, and over what?
- ☞ A human being thinks to recognize one of the players' characters from their childhood or their dreams. Who, and which?
- ☞ Someone else comes here from fairyland, following the circus or drawn by it. Who?
- ☞ Someone else from fairyland has been here all along, and now a player's character sees the signs of them. Who, and what are they doing here?

To play the Rite of Passage:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Introduce further developments as you choose.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

Have they, in fact, entered into the new phase of their life?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



In the Human World: A Thinning of the Veil



A Thinning of the Veil is when an occasion in the mortal human world overlaps, intermingles with, and opens the doorway to, an identical occasion in fairyland.

Choose an occasion in fairyland and write its story, but recast it into the mortal human world. Replace many or all of the fairies with mortal human beings. Hide the fairy magic underneath normal human emotion and business.

Play the session as usual:

1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. Have your NPCs try to hold to the occasion's order of events, or try to derail them, as suitable; or else introduce the occasion's developments if and as you choose.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

How did it go?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.





Anywhere: We Are Ourselves the Occasion



When the circus must create their own occasion, lead them through the following questions to create the story. Summarize their answers in a few sentences. Write up your NPCs as you choose, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

If the circus is between the worlds, they must always make the occasion themselves. There are no occasions otherwise!

Ask the circus where they'll stop to perform:

- ☞ If they're in fairyland, they can name the domains — *the River Queen's summer palace, the Crowned Stag's home woods* — or else they can describe the spot. If they'd like suggestions, you can offer: *an ancient whispering forest; a beautiful lake with hills all around; a castle in the clouds; a cave beneath the stones; a crooked river in a steep, rocky land; a market fairground when the market isn't on; fields of barleycorn; fields of fairy dock; a field of wildflowers; a lost crossroads with an overgrown signpost; a narrow bridge, groaning and rocking as you pass; an orchard by a slow, wide river; a palace beneath the sea; a pool of lilies and reeds; a ring of standing-stones; a stone castle on a windy promontory; a stone hall hung with tapestries of silver and gold; a timber mead-hall with roaring fires and split-log tables; a wide, decorated stone bridge; a wide overspreading oak on a hill; any other that strikes your fancy.*
- ☞ If they're in the mortal human world, have them describe the spot. If they'd like suggestions, you can offer: *a beach, river, or swimming hole; a commercial venue like a theater or restaurant; a downtown; a fairground, library or museum; a farm or farmers' market; an institutional site like a school, hospital, or prison; a ghost town; a municipal site like a courthouse, city hall, or police station; a nature reserve, discovery center, or campsite; a retreat center or place of worship; a sculpture garden; someone's home; a state or national park; a town or city park or graveyard; a vacant lot; a wild place; any other that strikes your fancy.*
- ☞ If they're between the worlds, they have little enough choice: there are no neighborhoods in the city of all cities, no moonlit groves in the gray woods. Describe for them where they are and what's around them, and there's no sense hoping for a better spot around the next corner.

Ask the circus who they hope to perform for:

They can name the audience they hope for, if indeed they have one in mind, or else they can perform for whomever happens to be there.

Once they've told you, it's up to you to decide who their audience will, in fact, be. Will the audience they hope for, come to see them? Who *does* happen to be there?

But before you decide, have them choose 1:

- ☞ No one knew that we were coming.
- ☞ Only one or a few people knew that we were coming, namely [x].
- ☞ Everyone knew that we were coming, as we've been announcing it everywhere we go, and we've had the place posterred in advance.
- ☞ Somehow everyone knew that we were coming, but we never announced it, so we can only guess how they knew.

Write the story of their occasion:

Summarize their choices in a few sentences. Write the audience up as NPCs, as you choose, and plan the moment of the circus' arrival. Who's there and what's happening? Which NPC will be the first to greet them, and how will they play it?

Play the session as usual:

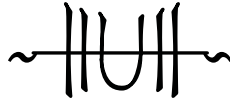
1. Establish with the circus the place of this performance in their tour. What was their last show, and what's their next planned show?
2. Tell the circus where they are right now, who's there, and what's happening as they arrive. Make your first play. Ask the circus their plays in response. You're off!
3. Help the circus follow their outline for planning and putting on their show. As there's no order of events or list of possible developments, simply have your NPCs act according to their natures and interests.
4. After the circus' show, resolve any outstanding questions and tie up any loose ends.

How did it go?

5. To end the session, remind the circus what they planned for their next show, and ask them if that's where they're still going to go. Ask them to reflect on the show and step toward summer or winter, and schedule a next session, if you're going to play again.



Arthur Rackham



Chapter 7:
The Mistress of Ceremonies' Characters
(NPCs)
Rules

To prep for a session, follow the rules to write up your occasion's NPCs:

- ☞ First write up your occasion, following the rules in [Chapter 6: Occasions to Perform](#), to create the list of NPCs you need to write up.
- ☞ For each NPC, list their kind, their role, their plays, their name & pronouns, and their imagery.
- ☞ List what they crave from the circus, and the largesse they have to give.
- ☞ For the NPCs in the circus, choose their place in the circus instead of their role in the occasion, and choose what they want from and offer to the circus players' characters.



Creating NPCs



To create an NPC, in any order:

- ☞ List the occasion you're creating them for.
- ☞ List their role in the occasion and their special play.
- ☞ Choose their kind. List their common plays.
- ☞ Choose what they crave and what they have to give.
- ☞ Choose their name & pronouns.
- ☞ Choose imagery.

On “fairy kinds”:

To fairies, always mercurial, *kind* isn't fundamental. Kind is a costume you put on, a part you play, and if it becomes habitual from long practice, still, you are not the costume you wear.

When you're writing up a fairy NPC, often you'll have a choice of kinds even for the same fairy. While Gorebore the Giant is, we can say, giant-kind, is the Wolf King of Winter fairy nobility or winter-kind? The answer is both or either (or another). Read both, and choose the one that better suits your vision, occasion by occasion.

Like all costumes, fairy kinds are occasionally a poor fit for the fairies who wear them. When you write up an NPC, you can change any word, any play, any rule. While Gorebore the Giant is a giant, he is not, we must admit, full of calculation, but instead full of appetite. (Full of wanting, full of lack, full of emptiness? A comical conundrum.)

Their plays might represent *what they do*, but might instead be *what they hold in reserve*, or even *what they're capable of but will never do*.

Further, fairies can change their kinds, on purpose or on occasion. Today's goblin jester is tomorrow's crowned fairy queen. Once per year, the fairy queen sets aside her crown and becomes a witch of the crossroad, answering the questions of those who seek her out. And what's the destiny of a witch but to become eventually world-kind, to *be* the moon or the forest or the great stones of the earth that she loves?



Fairy Kinds



- ☞ [Elfin-kind](#): Mock-prim, mock-solemn, disobedient and whimsical, full of fun and lies.
- ☞ [Fairy Nobility](#): Courtly, courteous, judgmental and indifferent, full of poetry and themselves.
- ☞ [Ghostly-kind](#): Haunting and haunted, mysterious and bound, full of sorrow and silence.
- ☞ [Giant-kind](#): Gargantuan, solitary, violent and unpleasant, full of passion and calculation.
- ☞ [Goblin-kind](#): Wry, uncouth, practical and malicious, full of caring and hurt.
- ☞ [Homely-kind](#): House-brownies, woods-helpers, the goblin who lives in the barn, the elf who lives under the hearth. The fairies closest, by habit, to mortal humanity. Hardworking, sullen, loyal and unforgiving, full of warmth and mischief.
- ☞ [Mortal Human Kind](#): Open-hearted, forgiving, creative and mortal, full of truth and dreams.
- ☞ [Nymph-kind, Lily-nymphs, Reed-nymphs, & Willow-kind](#): Stately, quiet, slender and irresolute, full of envies and unacted-upon impulses.
- ☞ [Pastoral-kind](#): Laconic, quick-witted, unhurried and calculating, full of patience and mistrust.
- ☞ [River-kind or Lake-kind, Mer-kind, & Dwellers in Pond & Pool](#): Beautiful, watchful, treacherous and merciless, full of death and premonition.
- ☞ [Sea-kind](#): Beautiful, unreachable, implacable and lost, full of song and doom.
- ☞ [Spider-kind](#): Beautiful, curious, fastidious and hungry, full of patience and caution.

- ☞ [Tree-kind](#): Slow-moving, slow-living, philosophical and resilient, full of strength and memory.
- ☞ [Troll-kind](#): Big, suspicious, quarrelsome and outlandish, full of emotion and physical power.
- ☞ [Twilight-kind](#): Mercurial, lurid, intense and cautious, full of love and cruelty.
- ☞ [Wild-kind](#): Graceful, quiet, easily startled, quick to violence, full of heart and life.
- ☞ [Winter-kind](#): Untamed, beautiful, calculating and hard, full of hunger and self-assurance.
- ☞ [Witch-kind](#): Calculating, kind, unflinching and inward-looking, full of half-truths and powers.
- ☞ [Wizard-kind](#): Miscalculating, thoughtless, indifferent and long-looking, full of arcane impulses and unmet needs.
- ☞ [World-kind](#): The wind, the sky, the sea, the mountain, the forest, the river, the island, the thunderstorm. Vast, impersonal, eternal and ever-changing, full of generosity and danger.
- ☞ [And other kinds still](#), in variety to baffle the categorian.



Elfin-kind



Mock-prim, mock-solemn, disobedient and whimsical, full of fun and lies. Plays common to the kind: *to disappear into the landscape, to parody someone.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Beauty, comeuppance, flattery, music, romance, titillation, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Applause and cheers, dry leaves (fairy coins), fairy coins (dry leaves), invitations of all sorts, laughter, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ Acclaim, my loyalty, a promise, words of praise, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and an evocative image. Marigh Blushbloom, Roanne Star-caller.
- ☞ Choose a mashup of nature words and a profession. Pinewind the Weaver, Stoneplover the Illuminator.
- ☞ Choose a relationship and a nonsense word. Cousin Iorro, Aunt Cheesewall.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What makes this fairy stand out from other elves?
- ☞ What feature does this fairy have in common with a plant or animal?
- ☞ What makes this fairy charming, appealing, or beautiful?
- ☞ What makes this fairy menacing, off-putting, or uncanny?
- ☞ What does this fairy smell like?
- ☞ What's this fairy's affectation, habit, or style?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Fairy Nobility



Courtly, courteous, judgmental and indifferent, full of poetry and themselves. Plays common to the kind: *to fall in love, to impose their will.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Beauty, real danger, flattery, mystery, romance, the truth, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Courteous applause, my love, roses, wildflowers, toasts, words of praise, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ A boon I'll grant, my bowed head, immoderate expressions of delight, an invitation to dally, an invitation to perform elsewhere, an invitation to return, real tears, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and a toponym. Aglinelle of the Sea Isle, Torrasten of the Vale.
- ☞ Choose a good name and a compliment. Aven Calm, Tara the Lively.
- ☞ Name me by my title. The River Queen, the Wolf-King of Winter.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What circlet, coronet, veil, or crown does this fairy wear?
- ☞ What makes this fairy imposing, beautiful, or regal?
- ☞ What makes this fairy ugly, menacing, or unapproachable?
- ☞ What feature does this fairy have in common with a plant or animal?
- ☞ What color or colors does this fairy favor?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Aaron King



Ghostly Kind



Haunting and haunted, mysterious and bound, full of sorrow and silence. Plays common to the kind: *to beckon, to menace*.

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Justice, kindness, my own story told, recognition, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ My mercy, a nod of my head, treasures of the grave, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ My blessing, my protection, safe passage, secrets of the grave, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose my name in life. The Ghost of Elinore Marshall, the Ghost of Walter MacAvery.
- ☞ Name me by a description of my appearance or my habits. The Lady with White Teeth, the Walker by the Pool.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature marks this fairy as a ghost or a creature of the grave?
- ☞ What does this fairy smell like?
- ☞ What clothing's remnants does this fairy wear?
- ☞ What does this fairy's voice sound like?
- ☞ What remains of this fairy's mortal humanity (if, that is, it ever was a mortal human being)?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Giant-kind



Gargantuan, solitary, violent and unpleasant, full of passion and calculation. Plays common to the kind: *to seize hold of something, to turn to violence.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Comedy, distraction, flattery, music, violence real or pretend, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Food & drink from my table, items from my hoard of mortal human wealth, laughter, praise, the threat of violence if you don't please me more, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ A boon I'll grant, my mercy, a promise, a magical treasure, the truth, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and the name of my kind. Lyaselle the Giant, Orbo the Giant, Staka the Giant.
- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and a toponym. Aglinelle of the Sea Isle, Torrasten of the Vale.
- ☞ Choose an old-fashioned name and an insult. Hieronymus Pigeyes, Elisande the Sly.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ How does this fairy reveal its tremendous strength?
- ☞ What is this fairy's most beautiful feature, and do they show it off to good effect?
- ☞ What is this fairy's most grotesque feature, and do they show it off to good effect?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.

☼
Goblin-kind
☼

Wry, uncouth, practical and malicious, full of caring and hurt. Plays common to the kind: *to nurse a grudge, to turn fair to foul.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Chaos, real danger, music, pathos, romance, pretend violence, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Apples (wormy), a boon I'll grant, food & drink (vile), my best insults, invitations of all sorts, laughter, magical treasures (acorns), words of praise (backhanded), —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ Honest acclaim, my loyalty, a magical treasure (genuine), a wish granted, words of praise (genuine), —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a common name and a grotesque image. Annie Bothknees, Carl Fleabrewer.
- ☞ Choose a name, image, or nonsense word, and a trade good. Batflight the Candy-maker, Orianna the Ribboner.
- ☞ Choose an old-fashioned name and an insult. Hieronymus Pigeyes, Elisande the Sly.
- ☞ Choose a title and a juxtaposition of images. Officer Berrydive, Madame Croakthrower.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other goblins?
- ☞ What does this fairy's voice sound like?
- ☞ What feature does this fairy have in common with a plant, an animal, or a stone?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Homely-kind



House-brownies, woods-helpers, the goblin who lives in the barn, the elf who lives under the hearth. The fairies closest, by habit, to mortal humanity. Hardworking, sullen, loyal and unforgiving, full of warmth and mischief. Plays common to the kind: *to do the chores, to "misplace" a tool.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Broad comedy, broad pantomime, a jape, a jibe, a joke, a moment's fun, a song I can whistle to myself later, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ A bent coin dropped in a hat, desultory applause, a grudging nod of the head, a short chuckle, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ An affectionate or approving scowl, a good word, a long limb-shaking laugh, shared food, a task accomplished, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a common name and a household item. Lucy Soapdish, Tom Cellarstairs.
- ☞ Name me by a description of my appearance or my habits. The Lady Churner, the Walker in the Yard.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other elves and goblins?
- ☞ What color does this fairy favor?
- ☞ What feature does this fairy have that allows it to go unseen, unnoticed, or unremarked in the mortal human world?
- ☞ What feature or habit does this fairy have, that it has borrowed from the mortal human beings whose home it uncannily shares?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Mortal Human Kind



Open-hearted, forgiving, creative and mortal, full of truth and dreams. Plays common to the kind: *to bear cold iron, to wonder.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Adventure, beauty, comedy, safe danger, the forbidden, music, romance, tragedy, pretend violence, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Adoration, applause and cheers, my pure delight, mortal human coins, food & drink, laughter, love, tears, thanks, mortal human wine, words of praise, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ A promise, the truth, a wish made, —.

For my name, choose a human name.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular person):

- ☞ What feature makes this person stand out from those around them?
- ☞ What feature makes this person appealing, attractive, or beautiful?
- ☞ What is this person's least appealing feature or habit?

Additionally, they might be...

- ☞ Bold; their special play is *to plunge in*.
- ☞ Careful; their special play is *to wonder what they don't realize*.
- ☞ Cynical; their special play is *to assume there's an angle*.
- ☞ Devoted; their special play is *to guard or defend someone*.
- ☞ Fearful; their special play is *to hold back or draw away*.
- ☞ Inventive; their special play is *to take a novel tack*.
- ☞ Loving; their special play is *to treat someone thoughtfully*.
- ☞ Patient; their special play is *to keep at it, stick to it, or wait for it*.
- ☞ Steadfast; their special play is *to stand by someone*.
- ☞ Suspicious; their special play is *to ask questions before committing*.
- ☞ Watchful; their special play is *to notice what they might*.
- ☞ Wicker-wise; their special play is *to assert guest-right or host-right*.

☼
Nymph-kind:
Lily-nymphs, Reed-nymphs, & Willow-kind
☼

Stately, quiet, slender and irresolute, full of envies and unacted-upon impulses. Plays common to the kind: *to admonish, to endure*.

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

☞ Beauty, flattery, mystery, nostalgia, romance, tragedy, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

☞ Adoration, expressions of delight, mortal human curiosities, an invitation to dally, sighs, songs, tears, fairy wine, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

☞ Love, mercy, roses, truth, —.

For my name:

☞ Choose a fanciful name and an evocative image. Marigh Blushbloom, Roanne Star-caller.

☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other nymphs?

☞ What's this fairy's affectation, habit, or style?

☞ What riverside bird, insect, or other creature does this fairy favor?

☞ What feature does this fairy have in common with a fish or amphibian?

☞ When this fairy sings, what is its voice like?

☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Pastoral-kind



Laconic, quick-witted, unhurried and calculating, full of patience and mistrust. Plays common to the kind: *to get the work done, to stall someone.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Comedy, comeuppance, distraction, music, overthrow, a scapegoat, tragedy, a moral, real violence, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Applause and cheers, food & drink from my table, an invitation to return, laughter, toasts, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ Love, mercy, a promise, fairy brandy, a wish granted, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a common name and an agrarian term. Lucy Grapeseed, Tom Planting.
- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and an evocative image. Marigh Blushbloom, Roanne Star-caller.
- ☞ Choose a good name and a compliment. Aven Calm, Tara the Lively.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other pastoral fairies?
- ☞ What creature of the field or farmyard does this fairy favor?
- ☞ How does this fairy dress, when they dress up? How do they dress for work?
- ☞ What's the most surprising feature this fairy has?
- ☞ What's this fairy's most appealing, attractive, or lovely feature?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.


 River-kind or Lake-kind,
 Mer-kind, & Dwellers in Pond & Pool


Beautiful, watchful, treacherous and merciless, full of death and premonition. Plays common to the kind: *to drown someone, to whisper to someone.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Beauty, cruelty, real danger, the forbidden, gifts, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Reserved applause, mortal human wealth, an invitation to dally, the threat of violence if you don't please me more, truth, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ An invitation to return, love, mercy, a promise, tears, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and a toponym. Aglinelle of the Long Lake, Torrasten of the Pools.
- ☞ Choose a syllable or two, and the creature I am or resemble. Taph the Otter, Ula the Salmon.
- ☞ Choose a word for water. Brook, Rill, Tarn.
- ☞ Name me by my title. The River Queen, the King Under the Lake.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other water-fairies?
- ☞ Many water-fairies are shape-changers, and many keep features of their other forms. What feature of another form does this fairy keep?
- ☞ What are this fairy's eyes like? What is their body like?
- ☞ What feature does this fairy have, that will warn the careful?
- ☞ When this fairy sings, what is its voice like?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Whitney Delaglio



Sea-kind



Beautiful, unreachable, implacable and lost, full of song and doom. Plays common to the kind: *to capsize someone, to disappear away.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Escape, music, mystery, nostalgia, romance, the truth, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ My acclaim, an invitation to perform elsewhere, mercy, songs, words of praise, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ My love, a promise, a magical treasure, a wish granted, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and the name of my kind. Lyaselle the Mermaid, Orbo the Sea-serpent, Staka the Undertow.
- ☞ Choose a syllable or two, and the creature I am or resemble. Taph the Gull, Ula the Leopard Seal.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other sea-fairies?
- ☞ Which sea animal does this fairy favor? In what way?
- ☞ What's this fairy's most beautiful, arresting, or fascinating feature?
- ☞ What's this fairy's strangest, most off-putting feature?
- ☞ What are this fairy's teeth like?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Spider-kind



Beautiful, curious, fastidious and hungry, full of patience and caution. Plays common to the kind: *to entangle, to show a path*.

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Music, prey, puzzles, riddles, stories with very complicated plots, truth, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Advice, applause, a favor granted, money, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ My blessing, a gift of silk, my guidance, my love, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a name, a nonsense word, or a family relationship and a reference to hands, feet, arms, legs, or textiles. Elisande Longsleeves, Grandma Knitter.
- ☞ Choose a spider's name. Pholcus Phalangioides, Thiodina Sylvana.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other spider-kind?
- ☞ Which jewel does this fairy favor? Does it wear any on its person?
- ☞ Which of this fairy's limbs does it use for hands, and which for feet?
- ☞ What's this fairy's most beautiful feature, and do they show it off to good effect?
- ☞ What is this fairy's silk like?
- ☞ What is this fairy's most persistent, distinctive habit?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.

☼
Tree-kind
☼

Slow-moving, slow-living, philosophical and resilient, full of strength and memory. Plays common to the kind: *to outwait, to shift a foundation.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Beautiful music, a long story well-told, philosophical jokes, truth, wind and sunlight, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Advice, fruit or nuts, shelter, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ My acclaim, my loyalty, the oldest songs, a promise, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a tree's name, Latin or common. *Betula Lenta*, *Quercus Lyrata*.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other tree-kind?
- ☞ What kind of tree is this fairy?
- ☞ What's this fairy's voice like?
- ☞ What's this fairy's most beautiful feature, and do they show it off to good effect?
- ☞ What are this fairy's trunk, limbs, and crown like?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Troll-kind



Big, suspicious, quarrelsome and outlandish, full of emotion and physical power. Plays common to the kind: *to be annoyed, to upheave something*.

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Beauty, comedy, danger of all sorts, the forbidden, nostalgia, pathos, violence of all sorts, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Acorns (fairy coins), applause & cheers, mortal human curiosities, mortal human wealth, fairy wine, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ A boon I'll grant, an invitation to perform elsewhere, a promise, my thanks, a magical treasure, a wish granted, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a common name and a threatening image. Matilda the Gibbet, Sawbite John.
- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and the name of my kind. Lyaselle the Troll, Orbo the Troll, Staka the Troll.
- ☞ Choose an old-fashioned name and an insult. Hieronymus Pigeyes, Elisande the Sly.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other trolls?
- ☞ What's this fairy's voice like?
- ☞ What's this fairy's most beautiful feature, and do they show it off to good effect?
- ☞ What's this fairy's most horrifying feature, and do they show it off to good effect?
- ☞ What are this fairy's hands like? What are its teeth like?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.


Twilight-kind


Mercurial, lurid, intense and cautious, full of love and cruelty. Plays common to the kind: *to change shape, to touch someone*.

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Chaos, cruelty, real danger, distraction, the forbidden, overthrow, real violence, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Reserved applause, an invitation to remain here, soft laughter, a promise, roses, fairy wine, wishes granted, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ Real delight, mortal human wealth, a magical treasure, mercy, truth, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and the name of my kind. Lyaselle the Puca, Orbo the Moon-Owl, Staka the Gallows-Woman.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other fairies?
- ☞ What nighttime animal does this fairy favor? In what way?
- ☞ What's this fairy's voice like?
- ☞ What's this fairy's most beautiful, attractive, striking feature?
- ☞ What are this fairy's hands like? What are its teeth like?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Wild-kind



Graceful, quiet, easily startled, quick to violence, full of heart and life. Plays common to the kind: *to lead a chase, to turn at bay*.

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

☞ An escape, flattery, music, mystery, oneness, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

☞ Acorns, boons granted, fruit, an invitation to return, laughter, mercy, thanks, wildflowers, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

☞ My bowed head, an invitation to perform elsewhere, my loyalty, a promise, a wish granted, —.

For their names:

☞ Choose a fanciful name and the name of my kind. Lyaselle the White Deer, Orbo the Badger, Staka the Raven.

☞ Choose a syllable or two, and the creature I am or resemble. Taph the Fox, Ula the Leopard Seal.

☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other fairies?

☞ What wild animal does this fairy favor? In what way?

☞ What's this fairy's voice like?

☞ What's this fairy's most beautiful feature, and do they show it off to good effect?

☞ What are this fairy's hands like? What are its teeth like? Its eyes?

☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Winter-kind



Untamed, beautiful, calculating and hard, full of hunger and self-assurance. Plays common to the kind: *to bide their time; to corner, press, or encircle someone.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Cruelty, flattery, the forbidden, novelty, ruination, the truth, real violence, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ Reserved applause, fairy coins, an invitation to perform elsewhere, an invitation to return, the threat of violence if you don't please me more, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ My bowed head, a caught breath, a boon granted, honest laughter, mercy, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and the name of my kind. Lyaselle the Wolf, Orbo the Hungry, Staka the Winter Storm.
- ☞ Name me by my title. The Snow Queen, the Wolf-King of Winter.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other fairies?
- ☞ What feature reveals this fairy's wintry nature?
- ☞ What color does this fairy favor?
- ☞ What are this fairy's hands like? What are its teeth like? Its eyes?
- ☞ What's this fairy's most beautiful feature, and do they show it off to good effect?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Andre Kiselev



Witch-kind



Calculating, kind, unflinching and inward-looking, full of half-truths and powers. Plays common to the kind: *to reveal the best, to reveal the worst.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

☞ Beauty, gifts, music, mystery, romance, tragedy, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

☞ Acclaim, a boon granted, my honest delight, my friendship, sighs, toasts, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

☞ Kindness, laughter, tears, thanks, the truth, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a common name and a threatening image. Matilda the Gibbet, Sawbite John.
- ☞ Choose a familiar title and a name or word: Cousin Morris, Granny Glass.
- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and the name of my kind. Lyaselle the Witch, Orbo the Witch, Staka the Witch.
- ☞ Choose a relationship and a nonsense word. Cousin Iorro, Aunt Cheesevall.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other witches?
- ☞ Was this fairy ever a mortal human being? What feature of their mortal humanity do they still keep?
- ☞ What color does this fairy favor?
- ☞ What animal does this fairy favor? In what way?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Wizard-kind



Miscalculating, thoughtless, indifferent and long-looking, full of arcane impulses and unmet needs. Plays common to the kind: *to bluster, malign, and threaten with unlikely horrors.*

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

☞ Low comedy, distraction, escape, titillation, pathos, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

☞ Applause & cheers, expressions of immoderate delight, magical curiosities I'll come after later to get back, an invitations to remain, an invitations to return, toasts, words of praise, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

☞ My respect, a magical treasure, the truth, —.

For my name:

- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and the name of my kind. Lyaselle the Enchantress, Orbo the Wizard, Staka the Mage.
- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and a toponym. Aglinelle of the Sea Isle, Torrasten of the Vale.
- ☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other wizards?
- ☞ Was this fairy ever a mortal human being? What feature of their mortal humanity do they still keep?
- ☞ What feature or affectation reveals this fairy to be a wizard?
- ☞ What habit or mannerism does this fairy always exhibit?
- ☞ What animal does this fairy favor? In what way?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



World-kind



The wind, the sky, the sea, the mountain, the forest, the river, the island, the thunderstorm. Vast, impersonal, eternal and ever-changing, full of generosity and danger. Plays common to the kind: *to overwhelm, to stand in effigy*.

From the circus, I crave (choose 1 or more):

☞ Beauty, mystery, oneness, the truth, —.

If you please me, I'll freely give you (choose 1 or more):

☞ Acorns, apples, dry leaves, fruit, my protection, my respect, roses, pure water, wildflowers, —.

I could give you, but I value and hold back (choose 1 or 2):

☞ A boon granted, a promise, tears, —.

For my name:

☞ Choose a syllable or two, and the thing I am. Taph the Summer Sky, Ula the River.

☞ Name me by my title. Queen Mountain, King Sun.

☞ Or use the naming rule of a suitable unused character playbook.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other fairies?

☞ What feature reveals this fairy's true magnitude?

☞ What feature reveals this fairy's nature?

☞ What's this fairy's voice like?

☞ What's this fairy's body like, when it chooses a body?

☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.



Other Kinds



The Brown-furred Scurrying Kinds;
Flora-kinds and Tree-root-kinds;
Stone-kinds and Thunder-kinds;
The Folk of the Air;
Thimble-stealers, Summer-sprites;
Working-kinds and Playing-kinds;
Border goblins, Butter-goblins;
Goblins of the vat and keg;
Mine-thumpers, Door-knockers, Cat-chasers, and Chimney-men;
The Thistle-crowned Hosts;
Waiting-kinds and Walking-kinds;
Strangler-kinds and Changelers-kinds;
Stealers of Treasure, of Life, of Love, of Worse;
Nightmares under the mortal sky;
Steeple-sitters and Fence-pullers;
Dullers of knives;
Unkindly-kinds;
And those of us of no kind at all.

Plays common to the kind (invent 2):

- ☞ What is in our nature to do; what we can do at need; what we find ourselves doing unthinking; what we hold in reserve; what we long to do, but rarely can; what we do in secret; what we're capable of, but must never do.

From the circus, we crave (invent or choose 1 or more):

- ☞ What we already have, but more; what we can never have, but dream of; what we find fearful but fascinating; what we have only tasted before; what keeps us bound, but safe; what we lack in our own natures; what we see others enjoying.
- ☞ Action, comedy, danger, vicarious justice, mystery, pathos, romance, tragedy, the truth, violence, —.

If you please us, we'll freely give you (invent or choose 1 or more):

- ☞ What comes easily to us; what we find abundant in our nature or our environment; what we have in plenty; what we share together.
- ☞ Acclaim, applause & cheers, fairy coins, laughter, an opportunity to perform again, roses, toasts & cheers, —.

We could give you, but we value and hold back (invent or choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ What we can do, but humbles or costs us; what we crave, but have little of; what we must invest ourselves in; what we must sacrifice to have.
- ☞ Boons granted, bowed heads, our love, our mercy, our protection, promises, our tears, our thanks, the truth; wishes granted, —.

For our names:

- ☞ Choose a common name and a threatening image. Matilda the Gibbet, Sawbite John.
- ☞ Choose a fanciful name and the name of my kind. Lyaselle the Squirrel Captain, Orbo Thunder-hill, Staka the Changeling.
- ☞ Choose a relationship and a nonsense word. Cousin Iorro, Aunt Cheesewall.
- ☞ Name me by my title. The Drowned King, the Lady Understairs.

Imagery (answer 1 or more, for this particular fairy):

- ☞ What feature makes this fairy stand out from other fairies?
- ☞ What feature reveals this fairy's nature?
- ☞ Choose a question from another fairy kind.

NPCs in the Circus

The NPCs in the circus are the circus players' supporting cast. They're competent, hard-working, and they don't steal the scene. Use them to make the circus players' characters look good and to set them up for success.

To create an NPC in the circus, in any order:

- ☞ List their place(s) in the circus, as follow, and their special play(s).
- ☞ Choose their kind, as for any NPC. List their common plays.
- ☞ Choose what they hope for and what they offer.
- ☞ Choose their name & pronouns.
- ☞ Choose imagery.



Meredith Scheff-King

The NPC's place in the circus (choose 1 or 2):

- ☞ A performer in an opening act or a warm-up act. Special play: *to prime the audience.*
- ☞ A performer in a flash act. Special play: *to hold the audience's attention while other things are underway.*
- ☞ A performer in a backup act or accompaniment. Special play: *to highlight the performance.*
- ☞ A talker, whose job is to bring an audience to the performance. Special play: *to oversell the show.*
- ☞ An advance, whose job is to go ahead and set up the circus' arrival. Special play: *to greet the circus with bad news.*
- ☞ A worker. Special play: *to bring a problem to a planner or a problem-solver.* Circus workers' jobs include: cook, costumes, hair & makeup, laundry, lookout, props, provisioner, roustabout, ticket-taker, and any others you can think of.

The NPC hopes for (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ I hope for [x]'s attention.
- ☞ I hope for a chance to shine.
- ☞ I hope for just my fair cut.
- ☞ I hope for [x]'s loyalty.
- ☞ I hope for [x]'s love.
- ☞ I hope for [x]'s gratitude.
- ☞ I hope to surpass [x] in talent and skill.
- ☞ I hope for the smooth, easy, and professional working of the circus.
- ☞ I hope for the crowd's acclaim.
- ☞ I hope for drama in my relationships.
- ☞ I hope for travel, novelty, and adventure.
- ☞ I hope for [x].

The NPC offers (choose 1 or more):

- ☞ I offer a shoulder to cry on.
- ☞ I offer a sympathetic ear.
- ☞ I offer a professional ally.
- ☞ I offer a port in the storm.
- ☞ I offer comfortable companionship.
- ☞ I offer unwavering loyalty.
- ☞ I offer a fruitful working relationship.
- ☞ I offer good advice.
- ☞ I offer really bad advice.
- ☞ I offer [x].

It's up to you as MC how, when, whether, and how much to bring the circus NPCs into play. You might only bring them into play to add bulk to the circus' shows, at the circus players' requests; you might bring them into play in every session, almost every scene, to round out the circus' backstage life; or you might bring them into play only as "guest stars" when a particular occasion or particular NPC in the audience calls for them. It's always your call.



An Example Occasion & Audience: The Summer Hunt



Choices

The Occasion:

- ☞ In Fairyland: The Celebration of the Hunt.

The Celebration:

- ☞ The celebration is a ritual reenactment of a hunt, with some celebrants playing the role of hunter and some playing the role of quarry.

The Hunt:

- ☞ *An easy choice:* Predators hunting prey. I'll write the hunters up as Fairy Nobility; their special play is *to course the quarry*. I'll write the quarry up as Wild-kind; their special play is *to defy the hunt*.

The Season:

- ☞ The Summer Hunt ritually negotiates harvest, forage, and hunting rights between two fairy courts: the Court of Honey and the Wild Court of the neighboring wood. It climaxes with a real bout between champions, with the winner securing rights for their side in the coming autumn.

Consequently, if the Honey-Court's Champion wins, the laziness of summer can continue, but if the Champion of the Woods wins, the Honey-Court must hurry their harvest ahead of the Wild Court's autumn foraging, so it marks summer's end.

The Circus:

- ☞ *An easy choice:* The circus was invited here by the Court of Honey to perform in celebration of the hunt.

Before the climactic bout, here on the Honey-Court's side, there'll be contests to choose its champion. The circus is scheduled to judge these contests. In the past, the contestant champions have taken judgments against them poorly; better to have outsiders do it.

Who is the circus inconveniencing?

- ☞ The winning side's customarily obliged to settle accounts for the entire celebration. The circus was invited by the Honey-Court, to celebrate on the Honey-Court's side, so if the Wild Court wins, they'll decline to pay the circus.

Individual Hunters:

- ☞ A contestant champion: the most accomplished hunter, swift, sure, fleet of foot: the Honey-Court's favorite. I'll write them up as Fairy Nobility; their special play is *to bungle something*.
- ☞ A contestant champion: the most cruel hunter, who loves the moment of killing. I'll write them up as Fairy Nobility; their special play is *to reveal their own heart*.
- ☞ A contestant champion: the most experienced hunter, slower, more careful, less certain. I'll write them up as Fairy Nobility; their special play is *to stay someone back*.
- ☞ In charge of the celebration: the shapeshifter, whose duty is to become like the quarry, and so predict or enact its course. I'll write them up as Fairy Nobility; their special play is *to lose themselves*.

The Quarry's Allies:

- ☞ The calling bird, who cries the quarry to flee before the hunters come near. I'll write them up as Wild-kind; their special play is *to warn away*.

In the Order of Events:

- ☞ **3. The hunt** represents the contests to choose the champion. There are three contests for the players' characters to judge: hide-and-seek, a foot race, and a contest of thrown spears, each supposed to prove the contestant's skill as a hunter.

The Moment of the Circus' Arrival:

- ☞ The circus arrives in time for the proceedings to begin.

Who Greets the Circus, and How Do They Play it?

- ☞ The shapeshifter, who's in charge of the proceedings. They'll play it easy, welcoming, and a little weird.

Additional Imagery:

- ☞ The verge between woods and meadow, pavilions and bonfires on the grassy fields below an overshadowing forest. Singing, dancing, feasting. A rolling golden moon. Shooting stars. In the woods, the Wild Court is conducting their own celebration, quiet and intense.

Under Hollow Hills Presents: The Summer Hunt

Story

The Summer Hunt is an ancient rite and celebration between the Court of Honey and the Wild Court of the neighboring woods. It's centered around a real bout between champions, with the winning side holding rights of forage, harvest, and hunt in the coming autumn. It's a peaceful way to negotiate who has plenty and who might go hungry, that could otherwise easily turn violent.

The circus is invited to attend on the side of the Honey-Court, to feast and sing, to judge the contests that will decide our champion, and to perform in celebration of the victor, whether our champion, or theirs!

NPCs

The Honey-Court at large:

- ☞ **Our role:** Celebrants of the ritual hunt; predators hunting prey. Play: *to course the quarry*.
- ☞ **Our kind:** Fairy Nobility. Plays: *to fall in love, to impose their will*.
- ☞ **From the circus, we crave:** Flattery. **We secretly crave:** The truth.
- ☞ **We have to give freely:** Courteous applause and toasts.
- ☞ **We value and hold back:** Their bowed heads, real tears.
- ☞ **Some individuals:** Amia Moon-crowned (she/her); Olice the Shooting Star (they/them); Parathem the Bright (he/him), their king, host of the celebration.

The Shapeshifter:

- ☞ **My role:** To become like the quarry, to predict its course. Play: *to lose myself*.
- ☞ **My kind:** Fairy Nobility. Plays: *to fall in love, to impose my will*.
- ☞ **From the circus, I crave:** Mystery.
- ☞ **I have to give freely:** My love.
- ☞ **I value and hold back:** A boon I'll grant.
- ☞ **My name:** The Shapeshifter (they/them).
- ☞ **What crown do I wear?** A hood of ragged brown, like autumn leaves.

The most accomplished hunter:

- ☞ My role: A contestant champion. Play: *to bungle something*.
- ☞ My kind: Fairy Nobility. Plays: *to fall in love, to impose my will*.
- ☞ From the circus, I crave: Victory.
- ☞ I have to give freely: Roses.
- ☞ I value and hold back: A boon I'll grant.
- ☞ My name: Sabret Green-Spear (she/her)
- ☞ What makes me beautiful? My ease and confidence.

The most cruel hunter:

- ☞ My role: A contestant champion. Play: *to reveal my own heart*.
- ☞ My kind: Fairy Nobility. Plays: *to fall in love, to impose my will*.
- ☞ From the circus, I crave: Victory.
- ☞ I have to give freely: Words of praise.
- ☞ I value and hold back: My bowed head.
- ☞ My name: Cylren the Hunter (he/him)
- ☞ What feature do I have in common with an animal? Hawks' eyes.

The most experienced hunter:

- ☞ My role: A contestant champion. Play: *to stay someone back*.
- ☞ My kind: Fairy Nobility. Plays: *to fall in love, to impose my will*.
- ☞ From the circus, I crave: The truth.
- ☞ I have to give freely: Courteous applause.
- ☞ I value and hold back: A boon I'll grant.
- ☞ My name: Tiann Swift-River (he/him)
- ☞ What makes me ugly? My closed, guarded expression.

The calling bird:

- ☞ My role: The ally of the Champion of the Wild Court. Play: *to warn away*.
- ☞ My kind: Wild-kind. Plays: *to lead a chase, to turn at bay*.
- ☞ From the circus, I crave: Oneness; that is, their allyship.
- ☞ I have to give freely: Thanks.
- ☞ I value and hold back: An invitation to perform elsewhere.
- ☞ My name: Doni the Jay (it/it)
- ☞ What's my most beautiful feature? My gorgeous, croaking, grating, screeching, loud voice. I show it off to excellent effect.

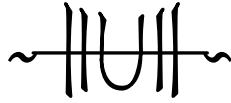
The quarry:

- ☞ **My role:** The Champion of the Wild Court of the Woods. Play: *to defy the hunt*.
- ☞ **My kind:** Wild-kind. Plays: *to lead a chase, to turn at bay*.
- ☞ **From the circus, I crave:** Music.
- ☞ **I have to give freely:** Laughter.
- ☞ **I value and hold back:** My loyalty.
- ☞ **My name:** Brown (she/her). (*"I don't know who their champion is. When I asked for a name, they seemed confused. All they could finally agree to was 'Brown.'"*)
- ☞ **What wild animal do I favor?** I'm a brown bear like literally 20 feet tall. I shoulder trees out of the way.





Finlay Loudon



Chapter 8: *The Tour* Rules

- ☞ Once you've played a few sessions, if you think you'll keep playing, sit down together and plan your tour.
- ☞ On a tour sheet, list your shows up until now, and plan four future shows, the tent-pole shows of your planned touring season.
- ☞ To plan a show, list its place & occasion, what your appearance there will likely include, who your likely audience will be, and what reward you expect to receive.
- ☞ In play, use your tour sheet to track your shows as you put them on, and to answer the MC's questions about your upcoming shows.
- ☞ MC, in prep, use the circus' tour sheet to choose and write up your occasions. When there's not an obvious occasion to match the show, take it as an opportunity to think flexibly and choose any occasion that's fun and fitting.
- ☞ In play, an unexpected occasion like a closed bridge, or a mishap like a misstep between worlds, can put the circus off-schedule. When this happens, decide all together whether the circus has missed their planned show, or whether they can still make it in time.
- ☞ Over the course of the tour, you might decide to take turns playing the MC. It's easy to do.
- ☞ You might decide to leave the tour and the circus behind, but keep playing anyway. If you do, what changes?



The Tour



Once you've played a few sessions, if it looks like you're going to keep playing, you might want to sit down together and take a longer-term look at your tour.

Take a tour sheet and fill it out together.

First, list the shows you've already played. List each one by name, and whether it was in fairyland, the mortal human world, or between the worlds.

Next, plan four future shows. A complete tour is thirteen shows, so maybe you have ten more shows to go, or nine, or however many, before your tour's done. For now, though, you're only going to plan four: your tent-pole shows, the important shows around which you're organizing your whole touring season.

Your tent-pole shows might be your favorite shows, shows that you always play and never skip, valuable opportunities to perform that you don't usually get, or command performances you wouldn't dare miss — but they don't have to be. You're the Circus Under the Hollow Hills. You go where you choose, and you set your own calendar. If you make one of your tent-pole shows a small child's birthday party in a vacant lot, and blow off the invitation of one of fairyland's great crowns, who can say you've chosen wrong?

So: plan four future shows. Plan two in fairyland, and two in the mortal human world. Space them out in the calendar with room for other shows between them, however you like.

Planning a Show

To plan a show, choose:

- ☞ Where will it be, and what's the occasion?
- ☞ What will your appearance likely include?
- ☞ Who is your likely audience?
- ☞ What reward do you expect to receive?

Where will it be, and what's the occasion?

For a place in fairyland, make up a place name. Choose a descriptive name, use a fairy's name, or make up a name that sounds like nonsense. Examples: Tattle Cross, the Court of the Ivy Queen, Widen Road, Porrich Quatter, the Wild Wood, the Goblin Sawmill.

For a place in the mortal human world, choose a real place anywhere within about a day's drive of where you're sitting. Ideally, it should be someplace you know well and can describe with ease, perhaps in several seasons or on several different occasions. Examples: a local beach or swimming hole, a farm or farmer's market, a local downtown, a city park, state park or national park, a vacant lot in your city or a city nearby, a local attraction, a wild place.

If, as a group, you don't share local landmarks, you can try to limit yourself to places the MC knows, but you don't need to. If you choose a place that you know well but the MC doesn't, then when the time comes, all you have to do is take responsibility for helping the MC to set the scene.

For the occasion, choose 1:

- ☞ An annual (or otherwise) convention, conference, or meeting, like a hobby convention, a music festival, a conference of local historians, or a Witch-Moot.
- ☞ A seasonal celebration or festival, like a winter carnival, a harvest fair, or May Day on the Green.
- ☞ A personal celebration or observance, like someone's birthday, coming-of-age, naming-day, wedding, graduation, funeral, or memorial.
- ☞ A traditional or civic occasion specific to the place, like the opening of a bridge or park, a walking tour of historical sites, the County Fair, or the Tribute Day of a fairy court.
- ☞ No particular occasion: you'll be there to put on your show, and that's occasion enough.
- ☞ An occasion of your own invention.

What will your appearance likely include?

Most likely — but not always! — it'll include putting on your show.

It might also include officiating a ceremony, judging a contest, keeping the official count, giving a blessing, giving peace, telling or changing someone's fortune, giving or receiving a gift, solemnizing an act as witnesses, standing up for someone or in for someone, opening a door long-shut, closing it again, reenacting an event, offering mercy, acting the champion for someone in dispute, stealing children, or — or anything! Name it.

Who is your likely audience?

List them. It's probably obvious from the place and the occasion who they'll be, but you can brainstorm and throw some curves if you like.

Examples: the festival-goers; the buyers and sellers of the market; the elected Harvest Beauty; the Baby Regent of Owls and their parent, the Crowned Owl; let's say that there'll be a mortal human being there, lost in fairyland, who I want to meet, outside the show; the tax collectors of the King of the Forest.

What reward do you expect to receive?

- ☞ The proceeds of your ticket sales, less a cut to the Minister of Revels?
- ☞ Whatever you can steal from the unwary crowd?
- ☞ The thanks and largesse of the Crowned Owl?
- ☞ Settling a dispute with your rival?
- ☞ Pursuing your interest in a potential love?
- ☞ The pure unstinting bounty of the crowd's acclaim?
- ☞ A single wish granted by the First Spider, Sister of All Witches?

It can be anything. Name it.

List your shows on your tour sheet.

List your tent-pole shows on your tour sheet, leaving space between them, and you're done.

The Tour In Play

From here on, until the end of your tour, record your shows on your tour sheet as you perform them.

At the beginning of every session, the MC asks you about your next show after this one. Check your tour sheet. If your next show's going to be one of your scheduled tent-pole shows, say so, and give the MC the details. Otherwise, answer the MC's questions to invent one as normal.

You can plan and add more shows to your tour whenever you choose. You can also strike planned shows from your tour.

Missing a Show:

You might find yourself unable to make one of your planned shows after all. You might have trouble crossing over into the correct world, for instance, or a mishap like a missed ferry or a closed bridge might delay you, beyond your control. There's no given penalty for missing a show, only the lost opportunity, so get with the MC and choose:

- ☞ You've missed the show, and there's no remedy for it.
- ☞ You've missed the show, offending someone, and you'll hear about it from them soon.
- ☞ You've missed the show, and alack alas, you haven't been missed. You may take offense if you wish.
- ☞ You can still make the show, in the nick of time.

MC: the Tour In Prep

You'll find that the occasions of the circus' planned shows don't always perfectly match your prep occasions. Some do: if the circus plans to perform for the wedding of the Daughter of Ivy to the Crowned Owl, you can write it up as a Betrothing and not give it another thought. But if the Crooked Wand has been invited by the witches of the Witch-Moot to attend their Winter Conference, there's no such obvious choice of occasion. Which should you choose?

The answer is: it's your call. There's no wrong answer, so think flexibly, and choose whichever seems fun and fitting.

You might write it up as a Betrothing: maybe at the Witch-Moot the witches all renew their vows? Or as a Celebration of the Hunt, with the witches ceremonially reenacting their memories of the 16th & 17th

Centuries? Or as a Gift-Giving Occasion, a chance for the witches to foster friendships in reciprocity and show off the various ways they've prospered since last time?

You can always choose to write it up as a Freeform Occasion as well.

Interrupting the Tour:

You can choose to interrupt the tour whenever you like, inserting an occasion that the circus had no plan for. Prepping a Closed Bridge is the most obvious way to do this, but you can treat any occasion the same way.

Maybe the circus' road takes them through the Goblin Market, and they didn't realize it until that moment. Maybe a chance encounter with a fairy crown on the road obliges them to a detour, to a Betrothing, a Gift-Giving Occasion, or the Breaking of the Ice. Maybe the mystery of a Harvest Murder has elfin soldiers setting up roadblocks and diverting traffic until they can solve it!

When you decide to interrupt the circus with an unexpected show like this, you might decide that it means that they miss their next planned show, but they'll probably consider it good form for you to let them make it in time anyway, after all.



Taking Turns As MC



Taking turns as MC is fun and easy!

- ☞ You choose a circus playbook and create a circus character to play.
- ☞ Introduce your character to the group. Ask for volunteers for your bindings. Decide together whether you're joining the circus anew or rejoining after an absence.
- ☞ Choose the next MC, or someone can volunteer. They can invent a reason for their character to be away from the circus, called away to other duties, taking time to pursue other interests, or leaving the circus forever.
- ☞ They get to prep for the circus' next show, and you get to play in it.
- ☞ If they want your help or your pointers, cool. Otherwise, let them find their own way.
- ☞ Going forward, you can alternate, you can bring more people into the mix, or you can hand it off for good. Time'll tell.

Leaving the Tour & Circus Behind

One day, it's possible that your game will take a turn: the characters will leave the tour, leave the circus, but as a group you'll decide to keep playing anyway. What then?

Here are some questions you'll have to answer. Don't try to answer them in advance, just know that you'll need to. They'll be easy to answer when the time comes.

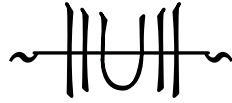
- ☞ Does the circus continue on without the characters, or does this mark the end of the circus altogether?
- ☞ Which of their trappings do the characters keep, which do they abandon, and which go on with the circus instead?
- ☞ Are the characters settling down here, or are they continuing on the move? As MC, how does this change what you need to prep from session to session?
- ☞ Which of the characters' bindings still apply, and which are now resolved? For those that no longer hold, what replaces them, if anything?
- ☞ The characters can still make the obvious plays, of course, except, can they still *call for a line*? Does leaving the circus mean that they can no longer rely on each other in that way, or do their commitments to one another still stand?
- ☞ Does leaving the circus change any of their other obvious plays or their playbook plays? If so, how?
- ☞ In fact, do any of the players want to rewrite their characters, now that they've left the circus? Change their playbooks, change their imagery, change their plays, change anything they want to change? They can.
- ☞ As performers, they could draw power from their audiences to make show plays. Can they still? Under what circumstances? If not performers, who are they now?



Shamain



Kay Pilatzke



Conclusion: Rule Summaries

- ☞ The Circus & the Game
- ☞ Circus Playbooks
- ☞ Plays & Consequences
- ☞ Sessions & Shows
- ☞ The MC's Timelines
- ☞ The MC's Principles & Plays
- ☞ Occasions
- ☞ The MC's Characters (NPCs)
- ☞ The Tour
- ☞ Taking Turns as MC
- ☞ Leaving the Tour & Circus Behind



Rule Summaries



The Circus & the Game: 11–21

- ☞ The game is about the performers and crew of a circus traveling through fairyland and the mortal world.
- ☞ Each of you has a role that you play, called your playbook. Your playbook gives you a unique role in the conversation, and special conversational rules you can use.
- ☞ One of you takes the role of Mistress of Ceremonies. You're responsible for the places the circus performs and the audiences it performs for. You prepare a unique playbook for each performance.
- ☞ The rest of you take the roles of the circus' performers and workers, according to the playbooks you choose.
- ☞ Your playbook gives you “plays” you can make: rules you can follow to expand the conversation or change its direction. When you make a play, roll dice and proceed according to your roll.
- ☞ Every session of the game is a new place for you to perform and a new audience to perform for. You arrive, you get the lay of the land, you meet your audience, you plan your performance, and finally you perform. Your performance has the power to change things here, so you decide how to use that power.
- ☞ The game and its system of plays are designed to protect and preserve your consent and communication as a player, and also to be compatible with any support & communication tools you choose to bring with you from outside the game.

Circus Playbooks: 23–79

- ☞ Choose a playbook.
- ☞ Follow the rules in your playbook to create your character.
- ☞ At the end of creating your character, introduce your character to the group, then go around for “bindings,” special rules that make the relationships between you more concrete and more unique.
- ☞ The Mistress of Ceremonies doesn’t choose a circus playbook. You create places and occasions for the circus to perform instead.

Plays & Consequences: 81–117

- ☞ Generally, you say what your character says, does, thinks, and intends, and the Mistress of Ceremonies says where you are and what’s happening there. When you want to get to the bottom of something, change what’s happening, or take control for a moment, you do it by making a play.
- ☞ You can make all of the obvious plays, and you can make your own playbook’s plays.
- ☞ Always choose a play that makes sense to you, given the circumstances and your own goals and interests.
- ☞ Announce your play by name.
- ☞ Follow the procedure in the play precisely. When you roll, add or subtract your modifier for that play in your playbook. A sum of 10+ is the strongest play; a sum of 7–9 is a strong play; and a sum of 6 or less means you’ve missed your play.
- ☞ You choose your play and make your roll. The play tells you what the outcome and consequences are.
- ☞ In addition to the direct consequences listed in your plays, there are both short-term consequences that the Mistress of Ceremonies can add to your play, at their option, and long-term consequences that your play might invoke: stepping toward summer or winter, violence, insults, favors, and love.

Sessions & Shows: 119–139

- ☞ Play the game in sessions, with each session being an occasion for the circus to perform.
- ☞ Begin the session by talking briefly with the MC about this show's place in the circus' tour, and how the tour's going so far.
- ☞ It's the MC's job to tell you where the circus arrives, who's there, and what's going on. You can help by asking questions.
- ☞ Before you plan your show, get the lay of the land. Figure out what this audience wants from you, and what you want from them.
- ☞ When you're ready, plan your show. Give each character a role to play. Include NPC performers if you choose.
- ☞ Put on your show, using obvious plays and your playbook plays.
- ☞ During your show, you have the power to change things here. Use your power to make your show impactful and consequential.
- ☞ After your show, wrap up any loose ends.
- ☞ End the session by choosing to step toward winter or toward summer, and telling the MC where you're going to perform next.

The MC's Timelines: 159–167

- ☞ Before your first session, write up an occasion, a place and an audience for the circus. This'll be the circus' first show.
- ☞ You can have the circus players choose and create their characters in advance, or all together at your first session.
- ☞ Begin the session by telling the circus about the place and audience you've prepped, and asking them about the (imaginary) show they most recently performed.
- ☞ Begin play by telling the circus where they are, who's there, who greets them, and what's happening, then by asking them how they want to play it.

- ☞ During the session, help them figure out what their audience wants from them, and what they want from their audience. When they're ready, help them plan their show on a Playbill sheet, then help them follow their plan to put their show on. Remind them to make their occasion plays.
- ☞ After the show, wrap up any loose ends. End the session by asking them where they plan to perform next; whether, reflecting on the session, they'd like to step toward summer or winter; and whether they'd like to schedule a next time to play.
- ☞ Between sessions, choose new occasions for the circus to perform and write them up.
- ☞ Play subsequent sessions just as the first, following the circus wherever it goes.

The MC's Principles & Plays: 169–177

- ☞ As Mistress of Ceremonies, your job isn't to play a fairy in the circus, but to create and play places and occasions for the circus to perform, and audiences for it to perform for.
- ☞ You have principles and rules for prep and for play.
- ☞ You have moves to make on your own behalf, moves to make for your NPCs, and moves to make for the places in play themselves.
- ☞ Follow your principles, follow your rules, and make your plays!

Occasions: 179–253

To prep for a session, write up an occasion for the circus to perform:

- ☞ Choose an occasion.
- ☞ Follow its rules to write it up.
- ☞ Write up its NPCs, following the rules in [Chapter 7: The Mistress of Ceremonies' Characters \(NPCs\)](#).
- ☞ Plan the moment of the circus' arrival.

The MC's Characters (NPCs): 255–291

To prep for a session, follow the rules to write up your occasion's NPCs:

- ☞ First write up your occasion, following the rules in [Chapter 6: Occasions to Perform](#), to create the list of NPCs you need to write up.
- ☞ For each NPC, list their kind, their role, their plays, their name & pronouns, and their imagery.
- ☞ List what they crave from the circus, and the largesse they have to give.
- ☞ For the NPCs in the circus, choose their place in the circus instead of their role in the occasion, and choose what they want from and offer to the circus players' characters.

The Tour: 293–298

- ☞ Once you've played a few sessions, if you think you'll keep playing, sit down together and plan your tour.
- ☞ On a tour sheet, list your shows up until now, and plan four future shows, the tent-pole shows of your planned touring season.
- ☞ To plan a show, list its place & occasion, what your appearance there will likely include, who your likely audience will be, and what reward you expect to receive.
- ☞ In play, use your tour sheet to track your shows as you put them on, and to answer the MC's questions about your upcoming shows.
- ☞ MC, in prep, use the circus' tour sheet to choose and write up your occasions. When they don't match, take it as an opportunity to think flexibly and choose an occasion that's fun and fitting.
- ☞ In play, an unexpected occasion like a closed bridge, or a mishap like a misstep between worlds, can put the circus off-schedule. When this happens, decide all together whether the circus has missed their planned show, or whether they can still make it in time.

Taking Turns as MC: 299

- ☞ Over the course of the tour, you might decide to take turns playing the MC. It's easy to do.

Leaving the Tour & Circus Behind: 300

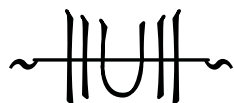
If the characters one day leave the tour and the circus, but you decide to keep playing, you'll need to answer these questions:

- ☞ Does the circus continue on without the characters, or does this mark the end of the circus altogether?
- ☞ Which of their trappings do the characters keep, which do they abandon, and which go on with the circus instead?
- ☞ Are the characters settling down here, or are they continuing on the move? As MC, how does this change what you need to prep from session to session? How does it change your principles?
- ☞ Which of the characters' bindings still apply, and which are now resolved? For those that no longer hold, what replaces them, if anything?
- ☞ The characters can still make the obvious plays, of course, except, can they still *call for a line*? Does leaving the circus mean that they can no longer rely on each other in that way, or does their commitment to one another still stand?
- ☞ Does leaving the circus change any of their other obvious plays or their playbook plays? If so, how?
- ☞ In fact, do any of the players want to rewrite their characters, now that they've left the circus? Change their playbooks, change their imagery, change their plays, change anything they want to change? They can.
- ☞ As performers, they could draw power from their audiences to make show plays. Can they still? Under what circumstances? If not performers, who are they now?





Vincent Baker



Appendix:
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- ☞ Places in the Circus
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- ☞ Topical Index
- ☞ Special Thanks



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Eric Orchard

Trappings

- An annoying cat (*the Crooked Wand*) [33](#)
- Any number of little songbirds who perch on your shoulders and eat seeds from your fingers (*the Troll*) [64](#)
- An assortment of parts: spare, castoff, scavenged, kept. They're not as fine as your own but they'll serve in a pinch (*the Stick Figure*) [60](#)
- A bed in someone's wagon, soft, warm, and private (*the Winding Rose*) [68](#)
- A big, rumbling wagon pulled by a pair of surly bull-pigs (*the Boondoggle Hob*) [27](#)
- A birch branch broom, bold and steadfast, an excellent listener and a fine dancer (*the Stick Figure*) [60](#)
- Birch-bark books written with words stolen from the creation of the world (*the Crooked Wand*) [33](#)
- A blessed stone: place your hand on it and you cannot speak untrue (*the Chieftain Mouse*) [30](#)
- A boar spear nearly five feet long (*the Chieftain Mouse*) [30](#)
- A book where you keep your sketches, your journal, your notes and memories (*the Lostling*) [50](#)
- Books of children's stories, homey recipes, jovial songs, and accounts of murder (*the Boondoggle Hob*) [27](#)
- A cart you inherited somehow from its previous owner, small, splintery, drafty in the wind, and the pissy little donkey that pulls it (*the Seeker*) [57](#)
- A changeable cloak of real and embroidered feathers, warm and waterproof (*the Feather-Cloak*) [40](#)
- A comfortable wagon, remarkable among fairy things for its human touches... (*the Lostling*) [50](#)
- Comfortable work clothing, a flashy costume, a subdued costume, and well kept and well mended dress-up clothing. Also, stilts (*the Lostling*) [50](#)
- A comfortable place in someone else's wagon: a crate, a trunk, maybe just a hook on a post to hang yourself up on (*the Stick Figure*) [60](#)
- A corner in a friendly wagon where you can ride and sleep, curled up in your blanket. You don't need much (*the Interloper*) [43](#)
- Crates and bottomless barrels of unsavory foodstuffs. Turnip mead, salt-brined cheese, lentil sausages spiced with pungents, Moxie (*the Lantern Jack*) [46](#)
- A creaking weather-warped cart, pulled by a cheerful old ox (*the Crooked Wand*) [33](#)
- A crooked bow and splintery arrows, with which you never miss (*the Troll*) [64](#)
- A deft and sharp little sword (*the Chieftain Mouse*) [30](#)
- A dragon's egg (*the Lantern Jack*) [46](#)
- Fairy poison you've dropped into your eyes. Weep, and you'll wash it out and return to mortal life (*the Interloper*) [43](#)
- A fine sword, named, stashed thoughtlessly somewhere (*the Winding Rose*) [68](#)
- A friendly yellow jacket who makes her nest in your elbow (*the Stick Figure*) [60](#)
- A glamorous wagon, pulled by dancing matched geldings (*the Nightmare Horse*) [53](#)
- A glass bottle in which is caught the blowing winter gale (*the Troll*) [64](#)
- A glowing hot coal that will never cool (*the Crooked Wand*) [33](#)
- A helmet made for someone whose head was smaller than yours (*the Troll*) [64](#)

A heraldic shield, hung with pelts of weasel, mink, fox and owl (*the Chieftain Mouse*) [30](#)

A human memory: a loved one's face, a farm on a hillside, warm evenings by firelight, a job in a town with neighbors and employer (*the Interloper*) [43](#)

A jaunty, colorful roofed cart, pulled by a big old angry goat (*the Troll*) [64](#)

A key, a nail, or some other piece of cold iron. No fairy can bear its touch, so it'll betray you to any who see it (*the Interloper*) [43](#)

A knife of cold iron. No fairy can bear its touch (*the Seeker*) [57](#)

A knothole of wood, peer through it and you see what's invisible (*the Boondoggle Hob*) [27](#)

A magical cabinet: reach into it and it will deliver an outfit marvelously well-suited to the occasion at hand (*the Nightmare Horse*) [53](#)

Maps, histories, genealogies, and studies of flora and fauna (*the Chieftain Mouse*) [30](#)

Memories of the human world, not whole, snatches of song and incomplete vignettes, that come to you in dreams and unbidden (*the Lostling*) [50](#)

A minor infinity of silk scarves (*the Lantern Jack*) [46](#)

A mirror. Look in it and in your own face you'll see your father's face, your mother's face, your past, your future, what you've lost, what you've kept, and/or what you'll yet have (*the Crowned Stag*) [36](#)

Music and wildflower perfume wherever you walk (*the Winding Rose*) [68](#)

A musical instrument of mortal make, contrary and unmastered (*the Crowned Stag*) [36](#)

Neat crates and bundles of useful things: buttons, buckles, ribbons, needles and thread, candles, combs, wire, scissors, sharpening stones, polish, paint, grease, and sweets (*the Feather-Cloak*) [40](#)

An old weapon, more interesting than it first looks (*the Crooked Wand*) [33](#)

A pet snake, yellow and black like a hornet, but more wicked and not so tame (*the Boondoggle Hob*) [27](#)

A polished, knotted skull-club, and a wicked little hook-shaped knife (*the Boondoggle Hob*) [27](#)

A polished lake stone, always icy cold, that remembers the secrets of past worlds (*the Nightmare Horse*) [53](#)

A raw hide war coat, stained with old adventures, shedding wiry hairs (*the Boondoggle Hob*) [27](#)

A sea shell in which speaks the voice of the moon (*the Winding Rose*) [68](#)

A servant, a silent elfin boggart called Tirophene (*the Crowned Stag*) [36](#)

A sharp sword of mortal bronze, stolen from some drowned warrior of ages past (*the Nightmare Horse*) [53](#)

A sharp, useful, plain little knife (*the Winding Rose*) [68](#)

A shillelagh to guard you, and who's laughing now? (*the Lantern Jack*) [46](#)

A shimmering golden thimble. Rap someone sharply with it and you transform them... (*the Crooked Wand*) [33](#)

A silver necklace, or bridle, but who dares place it around your neck? (*the Nightmare Horse*) [53](#)

A small tidy wagon festooned with ivy, pulled by a gentle mare with a little foal gamboling alongside (*the Feather-Cloak*) [40](#)

Someone's antique bronze armor, given to you for safe keeping, you forget whose (*the Crooked Wand*) [33](#)

Something of iron that you wear around your neck, by right, token of who you are (*the Lostling*) [50](#)

A stone hammer as old as the living world (*the Troll*) [64](#)

A strong chestplate, a thick skull cap, and heavy solid fists that you can attach at need in place of your hands (*the Stick Figure*) [60](#)

Sword and armor befitting, laid out in a figured chest, under the bed (*the Crowned Stag*) [36](#)

Teas, teacakes, teapots, cups, and saucers (*the Feather-Cloak*) [40](#)

A tiny golden crown: pin it to your cloak and you may go as a bird (*the Feather-Cloak*) [40](#)

A token of what the fairies stole from you... (*the Seeker*) [57](#)

Tokens of love and memory, your own and others' (*the Winding Rose*) [68](#)

A traveling kitchen, jumbled, full of good smells (*the Boondoggle Hob*) [27](#)

A traveling kitchen, tidy and spare, with labeled jars of delicate spices and many fresh, novel things (*the Nightmare Horse*) [53](#)

A trunk overflowing with jugglers' balls, torches, knives, candles, jugs, bunnies, slapsticks, sparklers, squibs, fans, whirligigs, rattles, whistles, and some fat complacent old parakeets. (*the Lantern Jack*) [46](#)

Unmistakeable human clothing: fur and leather, which fairies rarely use; a big oilcloth coat, where fairies rarely mind the rain (*the Seeker*) [57](#)

A wagon changeably cozy and regal, pulled by a proud bull. In your wagon is the best bed in the circus, by far (*the Crowned Stag*) [36](#)

A wagon more spacious than seems likely, pulled by a truly gargantuan stag- or rhinoceros beetle (*the Lantern Jack*) [46](#)

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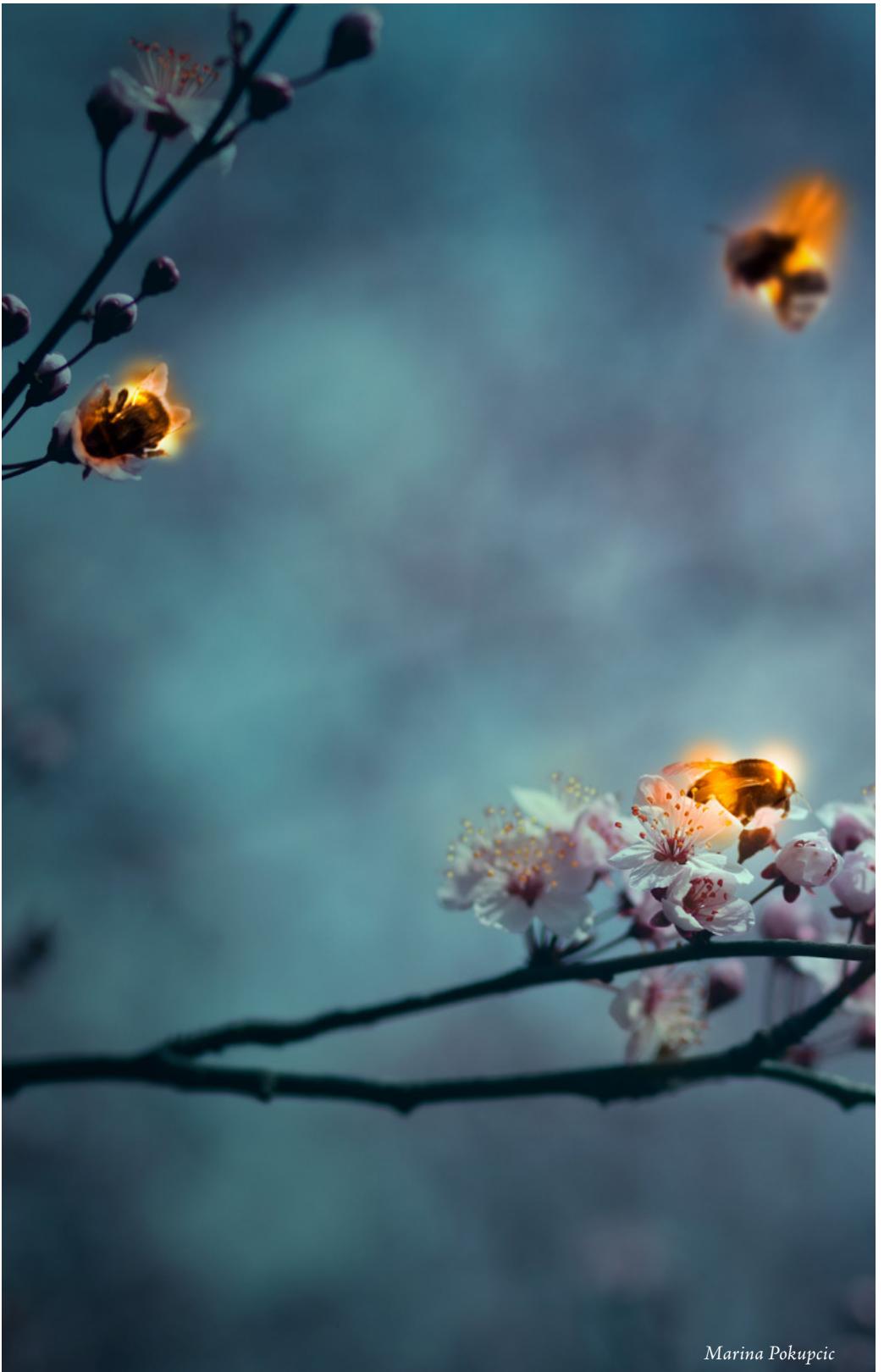
Special thanks to the Kickstarter backers, & the patrons.

Special thanks to the wonderful artists, we're so proud to include your work in our book.

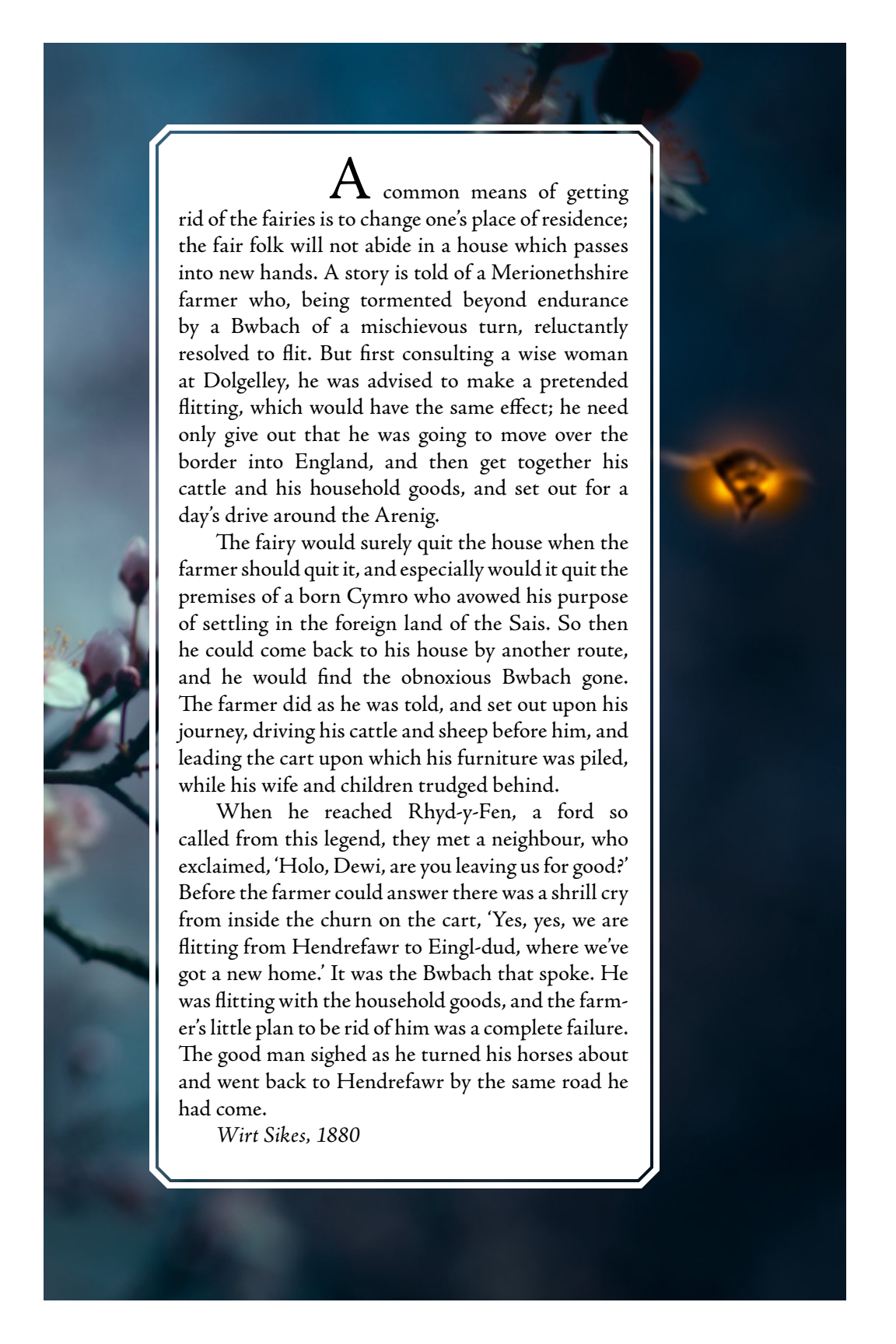
To all of you: our love.

To others: our bent knee.





Marina Pokupcic



A common means of getting rid of the fairies is to change one's place of residence; the fair folk will not abide in a house which passes into new hands. A story is told of a Merionethshire farmer who, being tormented beyond endurance by a Bwbach of a mischievous turn, reluctantly resolved to flit. But first consulting a wise woman at Dolgelley, he was advised to make a pretended flitting, which would have the same effect; he need only give out that he was going to move over the border into England, and then get together his cattle and his household goods, and set out for a day's drive around the Arenig.

The fairy would surely quit the house when the farmer should quit it, and especially would it quit the premises of a born Cymro who avowed his purpose of settling in the foreign land of the Sais. So then he could come back to his house by another route, and he would find the obnoxious Bwbach gone. The farmer did as he was told, and set out upon his journey, driving his cattle and sheep before him, and leading the cart upon which his furniture was piled, while his wife and children trudged behind.

When he reached Rhyd-y-Fen, a ford so called from this legend, they met a neighbour, who exclaimed, 'Holo, Dewi, are you leaving us for good?' Before the farmer could answer there was a shrill cry from inside the churn on the cart, 'Yes, yes, we are flitting from Hendrefawr to Eingl-dud, where we've got a new home.' It was the Bwbach that spoke. He was flitting with the household goods, and the farmer's little plan to be rid of him was a complete failure. The good man sighed as he turned his horses about and went back to Hendrefawr by the same road he had come.

Wirt Sikes, 1880

UNDER HOLLOW HILLS

A Role-Playing Game



*The
Crooked Wand*



*The
Interloper*



*The
Crowned Stag*



*The
Winding Rose*



a lumpley game



There is a traveling circus under the Hollow Hills. It travels the night world and the day, fairyland and the mortal world, and no border stays it.

You are its cast and its crew, its ringmaster, its roustabouts, its clowns and its stars. You are the Boondoggle Hob, the Crooked Wand, the Chieftain Mouse, and the Winding Rose. You're fairykind and humankind: you're the Lostling, a mortal human being fostered in fairyland, and the Interloper, stolen into fairyland in disguise to make away with fairy treasures. You're the Crowned Stag, child and heir of the King of the Woods; you're the Lantern Jack, friend to fireflies and misleader of travelers; you're the Nightmare Horse, drowner and beguiler, dweller in the deep water under the reflected moon.

You are the circus and the circus is you. You go where you choose and where you go, you change.

You have dangerous truths to tell...

Under Hollow Hills
Meguey & Vincent Baker

