The Crowned Stag

You're fairy nobility: regal, generous, self-involved, and radiant.

In the circus you can be performer, ringmaster & host, planner, and worker. You're always there, gorgeous and flirty.

You might play someone by catching eyes with them, or by standing regal before them. You might play a situation by stepping into the woods, or by summoning your court.

(And a true majesty, a true gorgeous majesty you are, saith the Hob. And never you let us forget it!)

The Crowned Stag:
a playbook for
Under Hollow Hills

Large Print Version

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a lumpley game

The Crowned Stag

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

To play the Crowned Stag, create your name, your summer & winter imagery, your place, your plays, your trappings, and your bindings.

Your Job

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

Choose a noble name, and make your family name include a reference to the forest, the seasons, or the natural wilds.

Examples: Alinor Coldrill, Catherine Reed, Richard Springtree, Robert Alder.

Your Summer & Winter Imagery

Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: The lightning arc, thunder echoing off the hills, the morning breeze, drumbeats, the driving storm, deep pools, ripe cherries, the curling vine, antlers in velvet, antlers in bloody rags, antlers of copper, antlers of silver.

Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Wide smile, big eyes, laugh lines, long braids, elaborate braids, curling hair, sweet mouth, lean, curvy, long legs, trim beard, long beard, full beard.

Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Tawny gold, burnished copper, warm black, walnut black, red-brown, pine green, birch white, beech gold, sea green, sea blue, violet, cherrywood brown.

Choose 1 for summer & 1 for winter: Simple clothing, the plaid, silk blouse, tight cut pants, linen shirt, linen gown, cotton shift, cotton shirt, velvet vest, velvet corset, jewelry.

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 winter as well.

Example:

Summer	Winter
● Thunder echoing off the hills	○ The driving storm
● Laugh lines	○ Full beard
● Tawny gold	○ Sea blue
● Silk blouse, tight cut pants	○ Velvet vest
● Mannish, sexy	○ Sexy, forbidding

Begin play in full summer: mark the summer column.

Your Place

In the circus, at need, you can take all of the listed roles.

Plays

You can make all of the obvious plays and the Crowned Stag 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. These are only your plays' starting rolls; you'll have many opportunities to change them.

Mark: +2, +2, +2, +1, +1, +1, +1, +1, 0, 0, -1, -1

Trappings

You get all of the listed trappings.

Bindings

Everybody introduces themselves. On your turn, tell everyone your name, your playbook, your summer imagery, your place in the circus, your wagon, and any of your other trappings you think the others might find noteworthy.

Once everyone's introduced themselves, go around again for bindings. On your turn, ask for volunteers:

- One of you, you and I dally on occasion, and we're easy in each other's company. Who? If I should confront you, put you off, waylay you, or stand regal before you, you may choose to consider it an insult.
- One of you, I've treated your feelings too thoughtlessly before now. Who? I can never again open up to you, and if I catch eyes with you, I make myself beholden to you, whatever you choose.

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 Crowned Stag

Name: _____

Summer	&	Winter
○		○
○		○
○		○
○		○
○		○
Pronouns:		Pronouns:

Place

- Performer;
- Ringmaster & host;
- Planner;
- Worker;
- Always there, gorgeous and flirty.

Plays

- You can make your Crowned Stag plays. To play someone, you can catch eyes with them; or stand regal before them. To play a situation, you can step into the woods; or summon your court.
- You can make all of the obvious plays. To play someone, you can confront them; draw them out; open up to them; put them off; size them up; or waylay them. To play a situation, you can: call for a line; sniff the wind; use your trappings; or weather the storm.

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:

Bindings

- — 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 —'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

Catch Eyes with Them

Your Roll: ___

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.

Stand Regal Before Them

Your Roll: ___

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.

Step Into the Woods

Your Roll: ___

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.

Summon Your Court

Your Roll: ___

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.

The Obvious Plays

To Play Someone

Confront them. Your roll: ____

Draw them out. Your roll: ____

Open up to them . Your roll: ____

Put them off. Your roll: ____

Size them up. Your roll: ____

Waylay them. Your roll: ____

To Play a Situation

Call for a line. (No roll)

Sniff the wind. Your roll: ____

Use your trappings. (No roll)

Weather the storm. Your roll: ____

Consequences

Summer & Winter

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.

Insults

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.

Beholden

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

Violence

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

True death: there are only a few things that can truly kill a fairy. Cold iron is one; there are others. There's no coming back from true death.

Under Hollow Hills

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, and owls. It travels the night world and the day world, fairyland and the living earth, and places otherwise, and no border can keep it. It has mysteries to pose, drama to perform, it has music, juggling, acts of death-defying peril, pratfall comedy. It has dangerous secrets to tell.

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