The Stick Figure

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

In the circus, you can be clown, fortune teller, worker, and problem solver. You're always there, trying to fit in.

You might play someone by blurting out to them what you think is going on, or by expressing yourself to them in capering antics. You might play a situation by falling apart, or by getting to work.

(And sweep up, broomstick! Haw haw! saith the Hob, but kindly.)

The Stick Figure:
a playbook for
Under Hollow Hills

Large Print Version

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a lumpley game

The Stick Figure

To play the Stick Figure, 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 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 winter as well.

Example:

Summer	Winter
● A twisting horn	○ The crescent moon
● Long hair, beauty	○ Long hair, control
● Twilight blue	○ Glossy black
● Rich clothing	○ Understated clothing
● Queerish, sexy	○ Queerish, 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 Stick Figure 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 knows where I came from or who made me, but won't tell me. Who? I can never ask you to explain or tell you what I think is true, until you decide to tell me after all.
- One of you, I've taken to be my especial role model, following you around and trying to match your style and aplomb. Who? I can never confront you or waylay you.

Note: you can change your role model whenever you step toward summer or toward winter. Simply choose another character. Now you can't confront or waylay them, but you can confront or waylay your old role model.

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 Stick Figure

Name: _____

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

Place

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

Plays

- You can make your Stick Figure plays. To play someone, you can blurt out to them what you think is going on; or express yourself to them in capering antics. To play a situation, you can fall apart; or get to work.
- 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 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:

Bindings

- — 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 — 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

Blurt Out to Them what You Think is Going On

Your Roll: ___

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.

Express Yourself to Them in Capering Antics

Your Roll: ___

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 —.
- It's surprisingly poignant.
- It's surprisingly dramatic.
- It's surprisingly frightening.
- It's surprisingly unpleasant.
- It reminds you of —.

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.

Fall Apart

Your Roll: ___

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.

Get to Work

Your Roll: ___

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 — 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 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!