The Obvious Plays
&
Their Various Consequences

The Obvious Plays & Their Various Consequences:

a playbook for

Under Hollow Hills

Large Print Version

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a lumpley game

The Obvious Plays

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To Play a Person…

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 what goes wrong. Perhaps you've tipped your hand.

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 what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps you've revealed yourself to them instead.

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

- I do indeed draw you out, by doing —. What's the effect?

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.

- Ask them to do something for you. If they do it, you're beholden to them, in proportion, as they judge it, 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, explain something to them, or make them an invitation. Tell them what you reveal and ask them how they take it. They must answer honestly.

On a miss, ask the MC what goes wrong. They might have you choose 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst. Perhaps they rebuff you before you even have the chance to open up to them.

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 what goes wrong. Perhaps you've insulted them.

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 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.

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. If your victim is another player's character, they choose, not you.

- 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.
- You dismay them and they throw themself down and beg for mercy.

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 overplayed your position and given them the upper hand.

To Play a Situation...

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.

For these purposes, the commitments you've made to each other in the circus supersede the usual fairy laws about favors and insults. You're not beholden to anyone for calling for a line, and nobody's insulting anyone by making a suggestion. The other players and the MC should offer the best help and suggestions they can. Take them up on 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.

Use Your Trappings

Use one of your trappings whenever, however, and as often as you like. When you do, it might:

- Let you make a play that you wouldn't be able to make otherwise.
- Turn a miss into a 7–9 hit or a 7–9 hit into a 10+ hit.
- Give you an extra choice, an extra chance, a reroll, a take-back, a do-over, or dibs.
- Bring another player's character or NPC to you, or send them away.
- Prevent someone else from taking a particular action or making a play of their own.
- Start a fight, end a fight, make someone beholden, insult someone, or force someone to choose a side or declare their intentions.
- Step someone toward summer, toward winter, or, for human characters, toward their equivalent.
- Have some other novel effect, depending on the trapping's particular nature.

Quickly consult with the MC and together decide what's appropriate.

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 —, or I can —.

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

Ask the MC what happens and where you are now.

Consequences

Summer & Winter (&c.)

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.

For human beings:

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

Missing a Play

When you make a play and roll a miss, 6 or less, the play tells you what to do. In the obvious plays and in many of your playbook plays, you're to "ask the MC what goes wrong." For these plays, the MC always has the option to ignore the play's suggestion, and to choose this instead:

- Making the play well is hard. It demands energy and focus, or is otherwise stressful or tiring. You get the effects of a 7–9 hit, but step toward winter (or your equivalent).

Beholden

When someone does you a favor, you are beholden to them.

When you are beholden to someone, 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.

For human characters:

When you are beholden, 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 are recalcitrant or uneager, your debtor may consider it an insult or worse.

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.

For human characters:

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.

Fighting

When you fight with someone, you do it by confronting them, in which case you can strike and injure them if they force your hand; by drawing them out, in which case you can strike and injure them by choosing to draw them out to that effect; or by waylaying them, in which case you strike and injure them if you choose the option to do so.

For a fight on equal footing between ready opponents, they each roll to draw the other out. For NPCs, the MC rolls.

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 an easy and good choice.

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.

For human characters:

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.

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!