The Winding Rose

You're flora kind: tough, beautiful, temperamental, with no patience for fools.

In the circus you can be performer, barker & caller, worker, and problem solver. You're always there with a smile and a cutting line.

You might play someone by cutting them quick, or by laying your hand on them. You might play a situation by twining danger around, or by withdrawing behind thorns.

(And a fine fierce beauty, you, saith the Hob, adding quickly, and no offense meant!)

The Winding Rose:
a playbook for
Under Hollow Hills

Large Print Version

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a lumpley game

The Winding Rose

To play the Winding Rose, 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 the name of a bird, a flower, a tree, and/or something in the sky, and combine them.

Examples: Lilygull, Moonburr, Willowcloud, Yarrowstart.

Your Summer & Winter Imagery

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 winter as well.

Example:

Summer	Winter
● Wildflowers in a field	○ A track through the woods
● Youthful beauty, tangled hair	○ Crooked smile
● Yellow, spring green	○ Copper
● Short skirts, bare feet	○ Kickass boots
● Queerish, sexy	○ Womanish, unapproachable

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 Winding Rose 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 has fallen in love with me for real. Who? If I ever confront you or lay my hand on you, I'm admitting that I know it, and you have a chance with me.
- One of you has guessed the secret I keep so safe. Who? But quick, don't tell me what it is, I'm keeping it from myself too. I can never confront you or waylay you.

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 Winding Rose

Name: _____

Summer & Winter

- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○
- Pronouns:

- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○
- Pronouns:

Place

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

Plays

- You can make your Winding Rose plays. To play someone, you can cut them quick; or lay your hand on them. To play a situation, you can twine danger around; or withdraw behind thorns.
- 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 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:

Bindings

- — has fallen in love with me, for real. If I ever confront them or lay my hand on them, I'm admitting that I know it, and that they have a chance with me. Who?

- — 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

Cut Them Quick

Your Roll: ___

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.

Lay Your Hand on Them

Your Roll: ___

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 themself, but must wait for you do 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.

Twine Danger Around

Your Roll: ___

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.

Withdraw Behind Thorns

Your Roll: ___

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.

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!