



Storyleaves

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What Is This?

A way to make a little story, about the size of a story-poem, or a fairy tale, or the summary of a TV episode ... in an hour or so. It might have a sad ending ... it might have a happy ending ... you won't know until you play.

And it's also a game - if you play it well you can maybe make things end well.

Stuff

For this game, I use paper (or a word processor), pen or pencil, and a stack of blank flash or index cards.

If you play this, please post your stories or ask questions on the [Jamie's RPGs Google Community](#).

Setup

First I consider what setting and genre I want. It's probably a setting I've been thinking about writing about for some time but never gotten around to.

Then I make the starting story deck: I do some brainstorming. I come up with ideas for *Characters*, *Places*, *Events*, *Items*, *Aspects* and *Details* that fit the setting and genre I'm imagining. The majority of them are tropes or clichés; some of them are unique surprises.

Each one I write on a card. I also number each card.

I am sometimes tempted to get overly specific, but it's best to break down my specific ideas into parts and put them on separate cards. That way they will remix in play and create things I didn't even think of. Instead of "Character: Nazi Scientist" I do "Character: Nazi" and "Character: Scientist". Then in play I might end up with some surprising things, like a Nazi American in my WWII story. (Which is like Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night* ... man, it is so hard to be original.)

As I'm brainstorming, I'll make piles of the different types. The character stack should be about twice as high as the other stacks.

Details can be particularly fun: they help define the mood of my story. They could be a sensory motif (blood, moonlight, neon, a cross, a fan, clouds, sunlight, wood smoke, dandelions on the wind); a cinematic look (sweeping vista, murky lighting, close-up shot, slow motion); even mood music. A lot of dark details will weave a dark fictive

dream; light and bright colors detail a bright happy-to-be-here place.

Sometimes it's hard to tell what's a Detail and what's an Aspect - they're both often adjectives. It doesn't really matter, but I imagine aspects to be plot-affecting (he's strong, and he might use that strength to achieve something) whereas details would be more for color (he's silver, and that's cool, but it's not going to have repercussions.)

Example: WWII fantasy

- 1) Character: soldier
- 2) Character: rabbi
- 3) Character: scientist
- 4) Character: angel
- 5) Character: American
- 6) Character: paratrooper
- 7) Character: Nazi
- 8) Character: golem
- 9) Character: resistance fighter
- 10) Event: firefight
- 11) Event: experiment
- 12) Event: occult ritual
- 13) Event: airborne assault
- 14) Detail: chiaroscuro
- 15) Detail: searchlights
- 16) Detail: swastika
- 17) Detail: moonlight
- 18) Detail: dripping blood
- 19) Detail: the sound of boots marching
- 20) Aspect: cool under fire
- 21) Aspect: religious
- 22) Aspect: inhuman
- 23) Aspect: loyal
- 24) Item: stone gargyle
- 25) Item: bomber
- 26) Item: machine gun
- 27) Item: wireless radio
- 28) Place: forest
- 29) Place: France
- 30) Place: Germany
- 31) Place: castle

- 32) Place: Antiaircraft gun emplacement
- 33) Place: village
- 34) Place: farm

Though the examples clump different kinds of elements together, it doesn't have to be that way. It's fine to just write down whatever element comes to me as it comes to me. What number a card has doesn't really matter, because a high-numbered card will be good in some situations but bad in others.

Example: High-School Drama

- 1) Character: Nerd
- 2) Character: Jock
- 3) Character: Cheerleader
- 4) Character: Burnout
- 5) Character: Freshman
- 6) Character: Senior
- 7) Character: Weird kid
- 8) Character: Musician
- 9) Character: Teacher
- 10) Character: Principal
- 11) Character: Drug dealer
- 12) Character: Rich kid
- 13) Character: Bully
- 14) Character: student body president
- 15) Place: Home Room
- 16) Place: Class
- 17) Place: Gym
- 18) Place: Football Field
- 19) Place: Under the Bleachers
- 20) Place: Behind Shop Class
- 21) Place: Cafeteria
- 22) Place: Home
- 23) Place: Computer Room
- 24) Place: Fast Food Join
- 25) Event: Pregnancy
- 26) Event: Football Game
- 27) Event: Hazing Ritual
- 28) Event: Prom
- 29) Event: Locker Check
- 30) Event: Geek Game
- 31) Event: Pep Rally
- 32) Event: Smoke break
- 33) Event: Sex
- 34) Event: Lunch break
- 35) Event: Free period
- 36) Item: Bag of cocaine
- 37) Item: Pipe
- 38) Item: Carton of cigarettes
- 39) Item: Six pack of beer
- 40) Item: smartphone
- 41) Item: guitar
- 42) Item: football
- 43) Item: textbook
- 44) Item: role-playing game
- 45) Aspect: horny
- 46) Aspect: minority
- 47) Aspect: has a stutter
- 48) Aspect: handicapped
- 49) Aspect: hot
- 50) Aspect: promiscuous
- 51) Aspect: lonely
- 52) Aspect: friendless
- 53) Detail: the roar of the crowd
- 54) Detail: wet grass
- 55) Detail: stadium lights
- 56) Detail: the smell of marijuana
- 57) Detail: the smell of urine
- 58) Detail: bunsen burners
- 59) Detail: scattered leaves on the breeze
- 60) Detail: sunny afternoon
- 61) Detail: student body government posters
- 62) Detail: tracked mud

Stock Story Elements:

If I'm having trouble coming up with story elements, here are some nearly-universal ones that I can add in:

- Character: Brother
- Character: Sister
- Character: Father
- Character: Mother
- Character: Daughter
- Character: Son
- Character: Best Friend
- Place: Home
- Place: Work (but make this specific: where might someone in this story work)
- Place: Hangout (again, specific: where would someone in this story hang out?)
- Place: Jail
- Event: Birth
- Event: Death
- Event: Marriage
- Event: Injury
- Event: Illness
- Item: Weapon
- Item: Treasure
- Item: Diary
- Aspect: Strong
- Aspect: Fast
- Aspect: Smart
- Aspect: Wise
- Aspect: Nimble
- Aspect: Beautiful
- Aspect: Charming
- Aspect: Loving
- Aspect: Mad

But Details really need to be story-specific. If I'm stuck, I can steal them from a book with the same setting and feel I'm going for, flipping to random pages and writing down salient details.

Reshuffle Cards

Then I create some "RESHUFFLE" cards. These are just cards with "RESHUFFLE" written on them. I make one for every 18 (still honing in on this number. 1 card in a 40 card deck isn't enough. 3 cards is too much.) cards I have in the deck. These are cards that, when I hit them in the deck, I reshuffle the discard pile back into the deck. But I don't put the RESHUFFLES in yet; I save them for a bit.

The Starting Situation

I shuffle the deck.

I deal cards from the deck face up in front of me until I have 5 characters out. (This could mean a lot of cards on the table - that's okay.) Orientation can matter for aspects - I leave them upside-down if they're upside-down. I pick my three favorite characters. I choose one to be the Protagonist; I choose one to be the Antagonist; and one to be the Beloved. (Beloved doesn't necessarily mean beloved in the *eros* sense - it just means that there is an important relationship between the Protagonist and the Beloved; the Protagonist cares about the Beloved. Could be family, friend, mentor, or something else.)

The Protagonist has three resources: the Protagonist's character Facet, the Beloved's character Facet, and something the Protagonist and the Beloved share. I

choose a card for each from the ones on the table.

The Antagonist has three resources: the Antagonist's character Facet; something the Antagonist and Protagonist share; and something the Antagonist and Beloved share. I choose a card for each.

Then I decide what the cards mean.

If a character has another character for a facet: this could mean the first character has multiple roles (a fighter and a wizard), or it could mean the second (minor) character is important to the first character somehow - family, lover, secret desire, good friend, boss, sidekick.

If a character is shared - this is an indirect relationship. The related main characters do not necessarily know each other, but they both have important relationships to the new minor character.

If I add an aspect to a character, that's an aspect of the character. If I add an aspect to a relationship, it's an aspect they both share, and therefore could be a bond between them.

If I add an event to a character, it's a defining event in their life. If I add an event to a relationship, it's a defining event of the relationship - possibly how they met, or possibly something that is now stressing the relationship.

If I add a place to a character, it's a place that's uniquely theirs. Possibly their home or a place they get away to. If I add a place to a relationship, it's a place important to the relationship - where they met, a place they regularly hang out at...

If I add an item to a character, it's their item, or an item they're looking for. If I add an item to a relationship, it could be an item they share, or an item one has and the other wants, or an item they both want.

If I add a detail to a character, it's that character's description. If I add a detail to a relationship, it somehow describes the relationship. When this character comes into the scene, or this relationship is mentioned, we'll probably see the detail as a recurring motif or memory hook.

I often let a reversed card have a reversed meaning. I almost always do this with Aspects: strong reversed is weak, giant reversed is small, etcetera. But sometimes it works with other cards as well. "In space" reversed could be "on the ground". "Human" reversed could be "Inhuman." But I don't force it - if I think "in space" is cooler than "on the ground", I stick with "in space."

I give everyone a name...or maybe some of them are already distinct enough without a name, and I simply call them "the cowboy", "the banshee", "the queen"...

I write the first paragraph of the story explaining the situation.

Example, Celtic Myth

I deal out some cards until five characters are on the table, and choose:

Queen of the Village; Gryphon; and Banshee.

For the protagonist resources:
The Queen's facet is Stone Knotwork. The Gryphon's facet is The Stars. Their shared facet is The Forest.

For the antagonist resources:

The Antagonist's facet is Glowing, Red Coals. The shared facet with the Queen is Black Iron. The shared facet with the Gryphon is The Moon.

I write: (facets are italicized)

Once upon a time, there was a Queen named Titania who was one of the best *stonecarvers* in her village. She liked to ride her pet gryphon through the *forest on starry* nights. But she was not the only one who had sway over the gryphon - every full *Moon*, the *banshee* of the forest, with its *glowing, red coals* for eyes, would take over and the gryphon would be hers. Queen Titania, angry about this, once imprisoned the banshee in a *black iron* prison, but the banshee escaped.

Goals

I come up with a goal for the protagonist that involves the other characters and their facets. Then I come up with a goal for the antagonist that obstructs the protagonist. Then I write it.

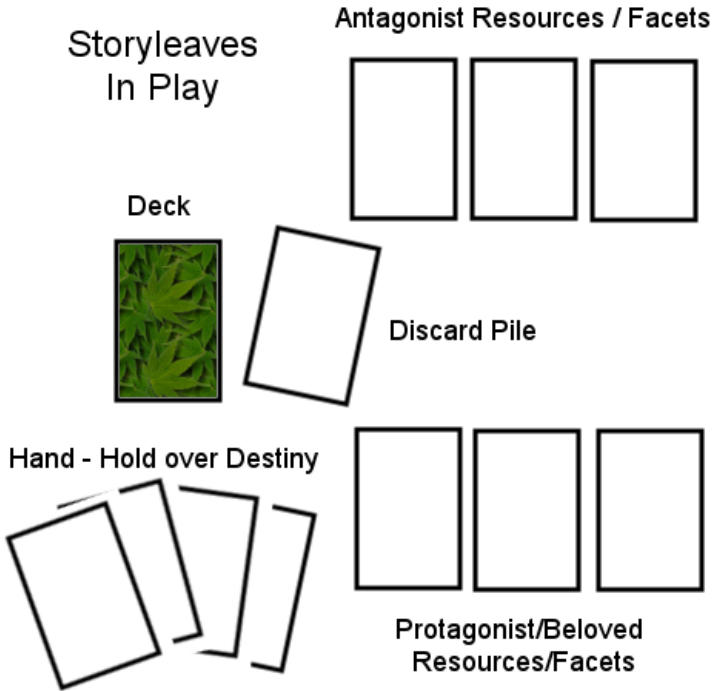
Example, continued

The banshee vowed revenge upon the Queen. And the Queen wanted nothing more than to separate the banshee from her beloved gryphon.

Preparing The Deck For Play

I shuffle the RESHUFFLES and all the cards on the table *except for the protagonist and antagonist resources* back into the deck. Even the main character cards go back into the deck - you'll only have 6 cards face up on the table. Then I deal myself five cards. Five cards, on average, give the protagonist a hard time - I will probably have to choose between several sacrifices. If I want a better shot at a happy ending, I give myself more cards. If I want a tragic ending, I give myself fewer. The number of cards represent my hold over destiny.

What Does It Look Like?



A Turn Of The Game

I play the protagonist, a bit like in a role-playing game. What do I, as the protagonist, want to do? I can:

- pursue my goal
- attack the antagonist
- wait and see what happens
- protect my beloved
- sacrifice a resource
- try to reverse a condition

No matter what I do--even if I do nothing--the antagonist will try to thwart me. I draw a card representing the antagonist's efforts. If it's lower than my card (or if I didn't play a card) the antagonist succeeds in thwarting and antagonizing me. I write how, using the contents of the card for color.

Then I get to either

- play a card from my hand in response
- sacrifice a resource with a lower number
- play the top card from the deck, unseen. If it's higher, then I take a condition. Either the protagonist is Lost, the beloved is Lost, or they are Estranged from each other.
- give in - take a condition voluntarily. In this case, I get to draw a card for my hand.

And then it's the next turn.

Pursuing my goal

I play a card from my hand, and write a sentence (or two) about how I get closer to my goal and how what was on the card related to that. I leave it open-ended, because the antagonist might find a way to prevent me from getting closer to my goal.

Example, continued:

I play Wicker Man: 41. The villagers build a wicker man and prepare to sacrifice the enemies from another tribe to the moon, so that the moon will serve them.

If I succeed (see below for how success and failure work), I am one step closer to achieving my goal. Achieving a goal requires three successful pursuit attempts. (But I can be set back by a condition.)

When pursuing my goal, lower cards win.

Attacking the antagonist

I choose a resource of the antagonist to destroy. I play a card from my hand - it must be lower than the antagonist resource I'm attacking.

Example, continued:

The banshee's relationship with the gryphon is Detail: The Moon - 32. I play Item: Sword - 14.

The queen takes her sword and threatens the goddess of the moon. 'No longer will you serve the banshee.'

If I succeed, the antagonist loses that resource. I write how that diminishes the antagonist.

If the resource is unique - if it's *the* gryphon, not *a* gryphon - I rip the resource card up (or set it aside in a separate pile, not to be returned to the deck) - it will never appear in the saga again, even in a subsequent chapter.

Destroying the antagonist does not mean you win. It's not what is truly important to you - your goal is. But it does get you: 2 free cards for your hand (because there's no longer an antagonist to stop you.)

When attacking the antagonist, higher cards win. (This is a new rule and not reflected in the examples below.)

Waiting to see what happens

I do nothing, and get to draw a card. I don't write anything (well, I can write something if I want) and go straight to the antagonist move.

When waiting-and-seeing, higher cards win. (This is a new rule and not reflected in the examples below.)

Sacrificing a resource

I discard one of my resources. I write how that resource is lost forever, and get to immediately draw 3 cards.

Example, continued:

I'm out of good cards in my hand. I decide to give up the Queen's stone knotwork talent, because I can't bring myself to destroy the forest or the Gryphon's relationship with the stars. **The moon requires a favor from the Queen. The Queen carves knotwork in the moon's honor, so nobody will forget this covenant between Queen and Moon. She carves until her fingers bleed and her hands are ruined claws – she will never be able to carve again.**

See "Attack the Antagonist" for what to do with the discarded resource.

The antagonist responds as normal. If I lose against the antagonist, I get a condition, as normal.

When sacrificing a resource, lower cards win.

Trying to reverse a condition

Conditions are explained below. I can fix them just like pursuing a goal.

Example, continued:

The Queen is lost. I play Stag: 21. Titania meets a stag on the plains and learns to ride him; he leads her back to the forest.

If the antagonist stops me, the condition is not reversed, and I get *another* condition.

When reversing a condition, lower cards win.

The Antagonist's Response

No matter what you do, the antagonist replies. (Even if they've been destroyed - this represents the forces of opposition in general.) I draw a card from the deck and play it face up in the discard pile.

If it's better than my card, the antagonist takes the advantage and blocks my card. I write how he or she used the card element to stop me.

Example, continued:

For the antagonist, I draw Wolf: 20, and write: **A wolf bars the way.**

If it's higher than my card, the antagonist is defeated - whatever I tried to do worked. I write how I succeeded, trying to use the card element as color. Then it's the next turn.

Example, continued:

Titania plays Circle of Megaliths: 16. She leads the wolf into a fairy circle where he becomes confused, and continues her journey.

I draw Gryphon: 19, for the banshee, which is higher than 16. Banshee is defeated. **She meets her gryphon friend and is found.**

If the antagonist is not defeated and has the advantage, there are four things I can do:

Answer: better card from my hand

If I have a lower card from my hand I don't mind giving up, I can do it now, writing how that element turns the tide back to my favor. It's now the antagonist's turn again, and then my turn, and this can go on until I run out of cards and have to do something drastic.

See above example.

Answer: sacrifice a resource with a better number

If I have a protagonist resource/facet I am willing to give up, I can do it now, writing how that resource is destroyed forever but turns the tide back in my favor. Rip the resource card up and throw it

out - it will never appear in the story again, even in a subsequent chapter.

Example, continued:

Banshee draws Aspect: Strong: 34. The banshee has unnatural strength - she wrests the sword from the Queen's hand and lifts the Queen off the ground by her hair.

And it's late in the game and I have only one card in my hand, Death: 40. I see that the Gryphon's facet is The Stars: 33...I sigh and play it. **The gryphon attacks the banshee and they fight - the gryphon drives the banshee off, but not before the banshee slashes the gryphon's eyes with her claws. The gryphon will never see the stars again.**

Answer: take a risk

Play the top card from the deck, unseen.

If it's higher than the antagonist's, then I lose - I take a condition. Either the protagonist is Lost, the beloved is Lost, or they are Estranged. If it's lower than the antagonist's, then the antagonist gets to draw again - if his card is higher than mine I win; if it's lower then I have to answer again. This can go on multiple times until one of us loses.

Example, continued:

Banshee draws Wolf: 20. **A wolf bars the way.**

Maybe I want to save my cards or maybe I don't have a card that low, so I take a chance and draw unseen. Maybe I get Circle of Megaliths: 16. **She leads the wolf into a fairy circle where he becomes confused, and continues her journey.**

Or maybe I get Death: 40; failure. She realizes the wolf could kill her and backs away.

Or maybe I get The Tribal Village: 17...and just can't think of why the Queen's village would help her now. I consider it a failure. **The Queen wishes her village hadn't turned against her, and, tears in her eyes, runs from the wolf.**

Answer: give in - take a condition voluntarily

In this case, I get to draw a card for my hand. I write the condition - maybe in the writing I try to find a way to show how my character decided discretion was the better part of valor.

Example, continued:

Banshee draws Druid: 6. A druid, servant of the banshee, comes to Queen Titania's village and convinces the people she is unfit to rule.

Titania has no card that low and I don't expect to be able to draw one. I give in and take Protagonist Lost. **She is ostracized and flees.**

Conditions

I can only take each condition once, even if they are reversed. Once I've taken all three the game is over, *even if some were reversed.*

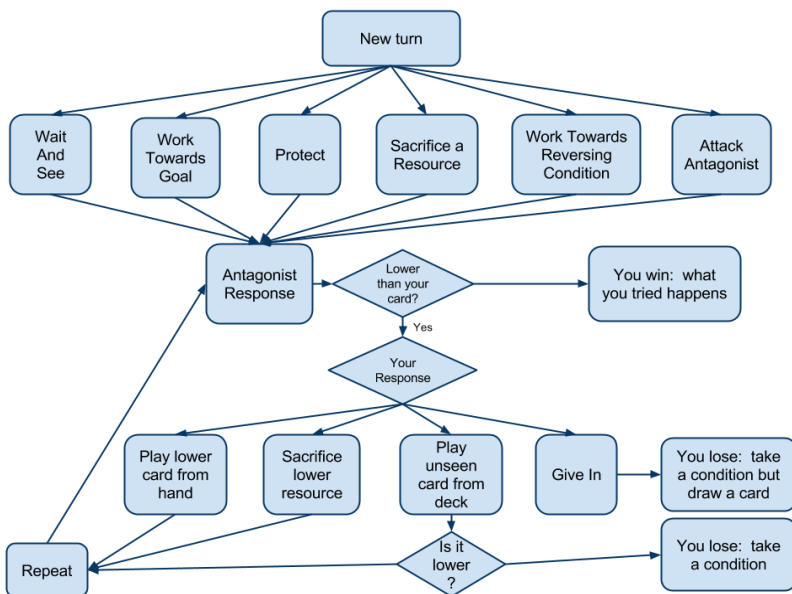
Estranged: Something has come between the protagonist and their beloved. Maybe they are angry with each other, maybe they're separated geographically or physically.

Protagonist Lost: This could mean lost geographically, lost mentally, presumed dead, or otherwise missing. Nobody who cares about you knows where you are, including the beloved.

Beloved Lost: This could mean lost geographically, lost mentally, presumed dead, or otherwise missing. Nobody who cares about them knows where they are, including the protagonist.

If a condition hasn't been reversed before the end of the game, it's permanent.

Flowchart



When Does It End:

It ends when:

I've made three steps of progress. If Lost conditions still exist at this point, they're Lost forever. So this is a happy ending or a happy-ending-but-a-price-was-paid. Or:

I take my third condition, *even if I've reversed the other two*. This is my tragic ending or my lesson-was-learned-but-the-damage-is-irreversible.

I resign. I recognize that striving can only make things worse from

here on out, and accept things as they currently stand - I will never achieve my goal.

Once it's over, I may want to use the last cards in my hand to inspire a sentence or two of epilogue. Maybe they mitigate a tragic ending.

Some Things I Can't Do:

- I don't write stuff that doesn't make sense just to use my cards. If I can't make a card fit, I'm not allowed to use it. Otherwise I'm the sort of person who cheats at solitaire. Otherwise the game is just

parlour narration. Of course, with some stories (like my celtic myth tale, below), just about anything can be made to make sense...and I can be creative about how the cards are used. Maybe I draw the antagonist's character card - at first, it might seem like it would never make sense that the antagonist would help me achieve my goal. But maybe the antagonist makes a mistake, or betrays themselves, somehow.

- When drawing for the antagonist, even if it doesn't make sense for the story, the antagonist still wins somehow. In this case, I ignore the color on the card and write whatever comes to mind.
- I don't kill the antagonist until their third resource is destroyed.
- I don't kill the protagonist or beloved unless they're Lost, and make it a "presumed dead" sort of kill, something reversible, until they're Lost Forever.

Levels of Victory:

Chinatown

The most tragic ending would be to burn some Traits and take all the conditions without reversing them, before achieving my goal and while the antagonist lives on in triumph.

The Commitments

Slightly less tragic would be to avoid burning Traits or to reverse some of the conditions.

Hamlet

Or to defeat the antagonist but to also take conditions and not achieve a goal.

The Empire Strikes Back

A bittersweet ending would be to achieve my goal but to burn some Traits and take a condition on the way there - while the antagonist remains...

Sunshine

Or maybe I defeat the antagonist, achieve my goal, but lose my self on the way.

The Dark Knight

Or lose my beloved.

Tangled

The penultimate victory would be to achieve my goal, defeat the antagonist, without keeping any conditions and burning only one trait.

The Incredibles

The ultimate victory would be to achieve my goal, defeat the antagonist, without keeping any conditions and burning no traits.

Additional Chapters:

Once I have a deck, I probably want to use it again for more stories. Maybe I add some more cards to the deck - maybe I take some out. Maybe I make the story about the same protagonist - I don't *have* to draw a new character card for her, but I make myself choose a new beloved (though possibly the same beloved comes up in the draw) and a

new antagonist. Maybe the story is a prequel. Or maybe it's just another story in the same world with completely different characters.

Extended Example

Celtic Myth

Here's The Celtic Myth story in its entirety.

The story deck:

- Character: Balor (1)
- Character: Carnun (2)
- Character: Morrigan (3)
- Character: Sidhe (4)
- Character: Banshee AKA Bean-Sidhe (5)
- Character: Druid (6)
- Character: Bard (7)
- Character: Tribal Queen (8)
- Character: Berserker (9)
- Character: Fomor (10)
- Detail: Black Iron (11)
- Item: Cauldron (12)
- Event: Sacrifice (13)
- Item: Sword (14)
- Item: Mistletoe (15)
- Place: Circle of Megaliths (16)
- Place: The Tribal Village (17)
- Place: The Underworld (18)
- Character: Gryphon (19)
- Character: Wolf (20)
- Character: Stag (21)
- Character: Eagle (22)
- Place: Forest (23)
- Place: Cave (24)
- Detail: Knotwork (25)
- Place: Peat Bog (26)
- Place: Lime Pit (27)
- Event: Birth (28)
- Event: Death (29)

- Event: Marriage (30)
- Event: Coming of Age (31)
- Detail: The Moon (32)
- Detail: The Stars (33)
- Aspect: Strong (34)
- Aspect: Giant (35)
- Aspect: Beautiful (36)
- Aspect: Father (37)
- Aspect: Returned From the Dead (38)

I deal out some cards until five characters are on the table, and choose:

Queen of the Village (protagonist); Gryphon (beloved); and Banshee (antagonist).

The protagonist resources:

The Queen's facet is Stone Knotwork. The Gryphon's facet is The Stars. Their shared facet is The Forest.

The antagonist resources:

The Antagonist's facet is Glowing, Red Coals. The shared facet with the Queen is Black Iron. The shared facet with the Gryphon is The Moon.

The Story:

Once upon a time, there was a Queen named Titania who was one of the best *stonecarvers* in her village. She liked to ride her pet gryphon through the *forest* on *starry* nights. But she was not the only one who had sway over the gryphon - every full *Moon*, the *banshee* of the forest, with its *glowing, red coals* for eyes, would take over and the gryphon would be hers. Queen Titania, angry about this, once imprisoned the banshee in a *black iron* prison, but the banshee escaped.

The banshee vowed revenge upon the Queen. And the Queen wanted nothing more than to separate the banshee from her beloved gryphon.

Turn 1:

Titania waits and sees.

Banshee draws Druid: 6. A druid, servant of the banshee, comes to Queen Titania's village and convinces the people she is unfit to rule.

Titania gives and takes Lost.

She is ostracized and flees.

Turn 2:

Titania - trying to reverse condition - plays Stag: 21. Titania meets a stag on the plains and learns to ride him; he leads her back to the forest.

Banshee draws Wolf: 20. **A wolf bars the way.**

Titania plays Circle of Megaliths: 16. She leads the wolf into a fairy circle where he becomes confused, and continues her journey.

Banshee draws Gryphon: 19. She meets her gryphon friend and is found.

Turn 3:

Titania plays Tribal Village: 17. She returns to her village on the back of the gryphon and slays the druid. The people accept her back.

Banshee draws Cave: 24, loses. In an ancient cave, Titania meets a hermit who tells her a ritual that will sever the banshee's hold on her gryphon.

Progress: 1.

Turn 4:

Titania plays Wicker Man: 41. The villagers build a wicker man and prepare to sacrifice the enemies from another tribe to the moon, so that the moon will serve them.

Banshee draws Bard: 7. The village bard says this is monstrous – their enemies don't deserve this.

Titania gives in. Titania publicly agrees with the bard. What's the condition? Let's do Estranged. The moon grows full. The gryphon leaves to be with the banshee.

Turn 5:

Titania plays Eagle: 22. Titania summons an eagle and tells him to speak to the moon on her behalf - "Release the gryphon."

Banshee draws Birth: 28. The moon agrees, just this one time. And, so the moon can speak easier with the Queen, that night a child is born in the village that would speak for the moon. They name her Lune.

Estranged reversed.

Turn 6:

Titania plays Queen: 8. When the child has grown, the Queen tells her - I am your queen, oh child. Tell the moon to no longer serve the banshee.

Banshee plays Strong: 34. The queen's will is strong. The moon will do as she says.

(Note that I write that it's Titania the Queen whose will is strong, not the Banshee's - I can work the card into the story however I want, I don't have to attach it to the Banshee.)

Progress: 2.

Turn 7:

The Queen sacrifices Knotwork. But first, the moon requires a favor from the Queen. The Queen carves knotwork in the moon's honor, so nobody will forget this covenant between Queen and Moon. She carves until her fingers bleed and her hands are ruined claws – she will never be able to carve again. (Draws Coming of Age 31 and Sword 14)

Banshee draws Carnun: 2! But that night, the wild master of the hunt rides. The gryphon flies away in terror.

Gryphon is lost. **They search for the gryphon but do not find it.** That's the third condition and the end of the game. Progress never hit 3, so the link between banshee and gryphon was not severed - the moon must not have kept its promise. So I write:

They only ever see it again on the full moon, when the banshee rides it in the night, wailing her victory.

Extended Example

Plague London

(Writer/Player: Mark Nau)

Protagonist: Ex-Soldier

P. Facet: Character:Ruffian

B. Facet: Aspect:Pious

Shares Place:Pub with B.

Beloved: Alchemist

Antagonist: Monk

A. Facet: Aspect:Learned

Shares Item:Relic with P. (P. has it, A. wants it)

Shares Place:Church with B.

London, 1348

Roger Pottin, an **ex-soldier**

returned home from campaigning in France. Now a **ruffian**, stealing from those who seem well-enough off to not bother his conscious. Is unwittingly in possession of a **relic**, the blade that slew the saint Abbo of Fleury, plunder taken from his soldiering. Meets with his brother periodically at the Blue Barrel **pub**.

His brother, Simon, a former **alchemist**. His **piety** led him to give up that profession when it was forbidden by the **church**. He then joined the London Augustine order as a mendicant monk.

Walter le Moigne, a **learned monk** in the Augustine order. Has recognized the relic that Roger carries, and desires it for his own. Is having a corrupting influence over Simon, and making him practice alchemy again.

Walter wants the blade so he can perform a powerful ritual with Simon's help. Roger wants to free Simon from Walter's influence.

1) Wait and See:

(RESHUFFLE)

(#17 Event: Collapse)

The two brothers are at the Blue Barrel one night, drinking and talking. Simon is concerned about Roger's lifestyle, and also expressing some doubt as to the things that Walter is having him research in the monastery. Simon leaves early to tend to his duties. Later, as Roger leaves, a heavy crate falls over from the second-story storage area, right atop him.

(#6, Character:Tradesman)

The silversmith who Roger was drinking with sees the crate falling down just in time to push Roger aside.

(Antagonist gets card #12)

Roger catches a glimpse of a hooded figure jump out of a second-story window.

+1 card for me for winning a wait-and-see.

2) Pursue my goal:

(#30 Aspect: Cautious)

Roger carefully tails the hooded figure through the city streets.

(#13 Event:Ritual)

The hooded figure, seeing that he is being followed, brazenly cuts through a small priory where some monks are performing Nocturns, disrupting the prayers.

(#5 Character:Knight)

A member of the Order of the Garter, who was attending the service, rushes up, grabs the hooded figure, and slams him against the wall.

(#28)

The figure twists and escapes, but Roger sees that it was Walter who tried to kill him.

Progress: 1

3) Pursue my goal:

(#40 Location:Street)

The next day, Roger is lying in wait for Walter, hidden in a narrow alley outside the Augustine grounds.

(#4 Character:Serf)

As Walter is emerging from the grounds, a serf spots Roger in hiding. He threatens and berates him, causing enough ruckus to draw Walter's attention.

(Give In)

Walter hurries back inside the compound while Roger escapes for his life.

[Beloved Lost]

Simon doesn't appear at the pub that evening.

+1 card for giving in

4) Sacrifice a resource:

(#7 Character:Ruffian)

Concerned for his brother, Roger tries to call on him at the Augustine compound, but is rebuffed. He tracks down contacts to try to find information, turning down several lucrative offers to engage in some skullduggery. He figures out that Simon is once again practicing alchemy. Roger goes to confession and renounces thievery if he can get divine help in rescuing his brother.

(#19)

I get 3 cards.

5) Pursue my goal:

(#14 Event:Fire)

The moment Roger's renunciation is uttered, alarm bells begin to sound nearby. A fire has broken out in part of the Augustine compound. Amidst the chaos, Roger tries to sneak onto the grounds.

(RESHUFFLE)

(#8 Character:Merchant)

As Roger enters the gate, a merchant grabs him. He recognizes Roger as the man who waylaid his caravan just a week ago.

(#1 Character:Nobleman)

As they scuffle, a nearby nobleman takes command, organizing a fire brigade. His guards accost both the Merchant and Roger, instructing them to heed to the noble's orders. The merchant objects, seeking justice, and is cuffed in the face for his troubles. Roger takes the opportunity to dart inside.

(#9)

Progress:2

6) Pursue my goal:

(#26 Aspect:Fearless)

One of the buildings is completely ablaze. Braving the flames, Roger enters into the smoke—filled basement.

(#36)

Progress:3. So YAY, ending, but beloved remains Lost. Oh hey oops I missed that. Ah well, no worries.

Epilogue:

(#21 Detail: Scream)

(#27 Aspect: Mad)

In the basement, Roger sees an alchemist's laboratory. Walter is standing in the middle of a pentagram, waving his arms and gibbering madly about power and saints and demons. Seeing Roger, the mad monk uncorks a beaker and begins to drink. As Roger is gathering his wits, he sees a figure emerge from the opposite corner of the room, running straight for Walter. The running figure wails "NOOOOOOOOO," runs into the pentagram, and tackles the monk. A conflagration arises in the middle of the pentagram, blinding Roger. Didn't that running figure resemble Simon? Staggering back against the unholy heat, Roger barely stumbles away from the blaze as the entire edifice collapses into itself.

Extended Example

Dark Sci-Fi

(Writer/player: u472bmt)

- (1) Place: Space
 - (2) character: captain
 - (3) place: The ship
 - (4) event: alert
 - (5) item: crystalline phlebotinum
 - (6) character: The science officer
 - (7) aspect: human
 - (8) aspect: logical
 - (9) detail: red
 - (10) place: planet
 - (11) character: alien
 - (12) item: communicator
 - (13) aspect: civilized
 - (14) detail: dark
 - (15) event: engineering problem
 - (16) character: doctor
 - (17) item: computer
 - (18) character: monster
 - (19) place: the bridge
 - (20) aspect: cheerful
 - (21) aspect: complicated
 - (22) detail: polarity
 - (23) character: crewman
 - (24) aspect: forgotten
 - (25) character: civilian
- 2 reshuffles

initially dealt:

- 9,13,21,2,11,22,8,20,12,23,24,17,
19,25,16
(2,8,9,11,12,13,16,17,19,20,21,22,
23,24 and 25)

chosen:

protagonist: Doctor who is a -
crewman-, and
is in contact (through the -
communicator-) with

beloved: Alien, who is... well... - complicated-
a creature -forgotten- by time,
much like the career of
antagonist: Captain, whose
domain is -the bridge-
the captain and the doctor
believe themselves -civilized- men of
high culture.

the Captain wants to capture the
Alien and gain fame by presenting it
to the Federal Board of Space
Exploration (dead or alive, though
dead is just so much easier)

the Doctor doesn't want the
Alien to come to harm, but wouldn't
want to end up on the other side of
the airlock either.

Prologue:

"Our story begins with a bored
doctor on a second class ship, who
spends his days reading Dostoevsky,
playing Space Checks and dreaming
of something more. And he might
just get it in... The Shady Sector"

The doctor and the Captain
playing Space Checks in the lounge.
Suddenly a proximity alert is
sounded, the object is brought on
board, but runs away before the
Captain and the doc can see it. The
crew member that brought it in is
found unconscious, but unharmed as
well as missing his PDA and
communicator. the captain is
furious.

As the captain is searching the
ship, doctor gets a mysterious
transmission, from someone he
doesn't know. It is the alien who
apologizes for knocking out the
crewman, and is horrified at the
thought of being killed and dissected.

cards dealt:
logical(8),alien(11),polarity (22),
crystalline phlebotinum (5), and
computer (17)

turn 1:
(wait and see)

The doctor continues to talk to
the alien, asking about it's
homewolrd, the things described are
quite odd, and complex, this should
impress the geeks in the audience,
but isn't integral to the plot.

(the ship (3) is drawn, by the
antagonist)

The Captain scours the the ship
in search of the Alien,

(3 is hard to beat, so I give in
and take "lost beloved". Kinda.)

and finds him in the
maintenance room. the Alien is
stunned and imprisoned. for now.

(beloved lost is gained)

(red (9) is drawn)

turn 2:
(reverse condition: polarity(22))

Doctor comes to see the alien,
who begs him, to let it out. Not
having clearance to open the brig,
doc decided to reverse the polarity of
the containment field.

(doctor (16) is drawn by the
antagonist)

After struggling with the locks
for a minute, the Doctor realizes he's
a doctor, not a polarity inventor
technician!

(I play red (9))

The Alien (who somehow figured
out human technology by now)
suggests cutting the red wire.

(dark (14) is drawn by the
antagonist)

The doctor tries to do that, and
the power is cut to the entire brig...
incuding the cell door! The Alien

escapes, expressing his gratitude in the form of ancient alien wisdom. (it is multi-talented)

(bleoved lost is... lost)

turn 3:

(press for advantage: logical (8)):

The Captain is now convinced that the Alien is a meanace and wants him killed, the doctor appeals to his scientific instincts ("it's illogical to kill a new, unknown alien!")

(engeneering problem (15) is drawn by the antagonist)

the captain is convinced that the alien should not be killed, but he did cause the problem in the brig...

(advantage:1)

turn 4:

(press for advantage: crystalline phlebotinum(5))

The Doctor takes the ship's engineer to examine the remains of what the Alien came in and (with the help from the Alien) manage to discover a new and very powerful mineral

(alert (4) is drawn by the antagonist)

However trying to use it results in an overload of a critical system, and shipwide alert is sounded as the characters try to fix the damage

(I draw a card: captain (2))

The captain himself comes to the rescue at the last moment, saving both the ship and the mineral from certain doom.

(civilian (25) is drawn by the antagonist)

The Captain can see that the problem was not with the Alien's mineral, but with the incompetent engineer, who isn't even from Starfleet, but contracted (due to cost

cutting) from some backwater planet.

(advantage: 2)

turn 5:

(press for advantage: alien (11))

As a show of good faith the alien shows himself to the crew.

(human (7) is drawn by the antagonist)

However the eldrich form of the alien scares the human crew, they do not wish it to walk among them!

(again, 7 is tough to beat, and I'm down to 1 card, so... I take lost)

Though the Alien escapes, the crew blames the Doctor (who in a way mediated between them and the alien) for it, and the captain imprisons him.

(lost is gained)

turn 6:

(I sacrifice crewman (23))

For aiding the alien in his escape (and, you know, frying the power block in the brig...), the Doctor is put before a court martial, and striped of his position as a member of the ships crew.

(cheerful (20) is drawn by the antagonist)

Though the Doctor tries to remain in high spirits, the evidence against him is insurmountable

(I sacrifice communicator(12))

The alien again comes out, this time it allows itself to be captured, but even then a careless crew member accidentally damages it's vocal apparatus. The alien is mute! The tragedy of this is not lost on the Captain.

(monster (18), planet (10), and cheerful (20) are drawn)

turn 7:

(press for advantage: planet (10))

The Doctor explains that there is a planet nearby where the Alien can be left in peace.

(science officer (6) is drawn by the antagonist)

The science officer says that this is out of the question- though the alien is mute and can not be an ambassador, he is still very important to science and should be frozen and brought to Earth

(I draw, as I'm down to my last condition: crewman(23))

The doctor tries to appeal to the crew, but gets no support- they want to be part of history by discovering a new alien.

Epilogue:

In the closing shot we see the unmoving Alien being lowered into liquid nitrogen, while the Doctor, out of uniform and flanked by 2 armed men, sorrowfully watches.

"Thus ends the tale of the Good Doctor, who lost his position and his freedom trying to defend a friend from the monstrosity of human condition in... the Shady Sector."

Design Notes

I originally intended this as a writer's block tool, where I'd write a story and use the game mechanics to help me when I got stuck. But it wasn't that fun, and writing a story still took too long, and my real hint was when I offered to trade people play on the solitaire challenge thread and nobody took me up on it.

So I retooled it for fun first, taking pages from Daniel Solis and Ron Edwards. It's definitely a game now, with some interesting choices, and it plays quick. I'm looking forward to playing it more.

Influences

Daniel Solis, Tony Lower-Basch, Joshua A. C. Newman, Jason Morningstar, Vincent Baker, Ron Edwards, Mark Nau, Nathan Paoletta, Annalise, Matthjis Holter, Archipelago II, Richard Garfield