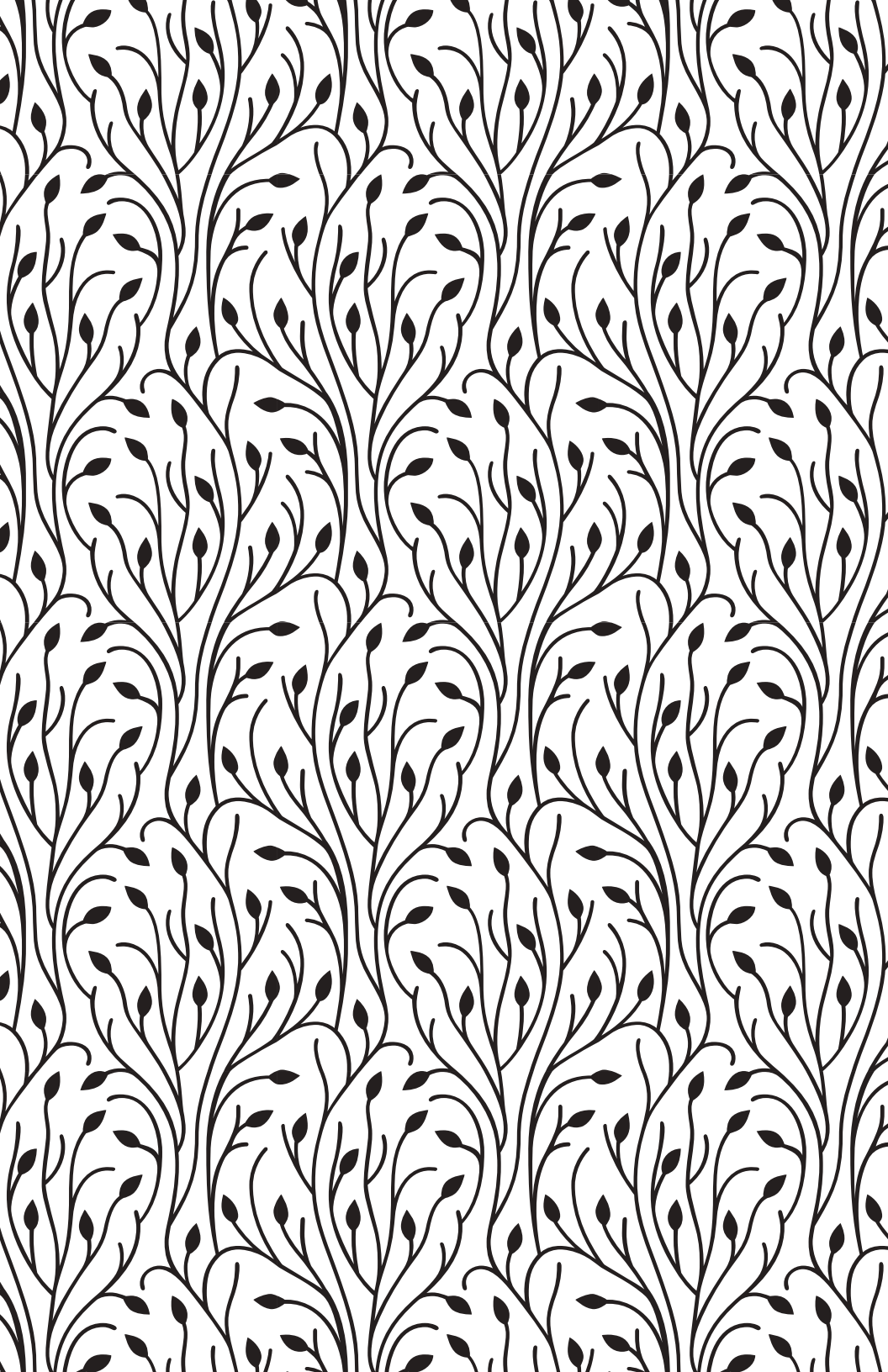


GIRL UNDERGROUND

A ROLEPLAYING GAME ABOUT
A CURIOUS GIRL IN A WONDROUS WORLD



MCMANAMON & ROSS



Girl Underground

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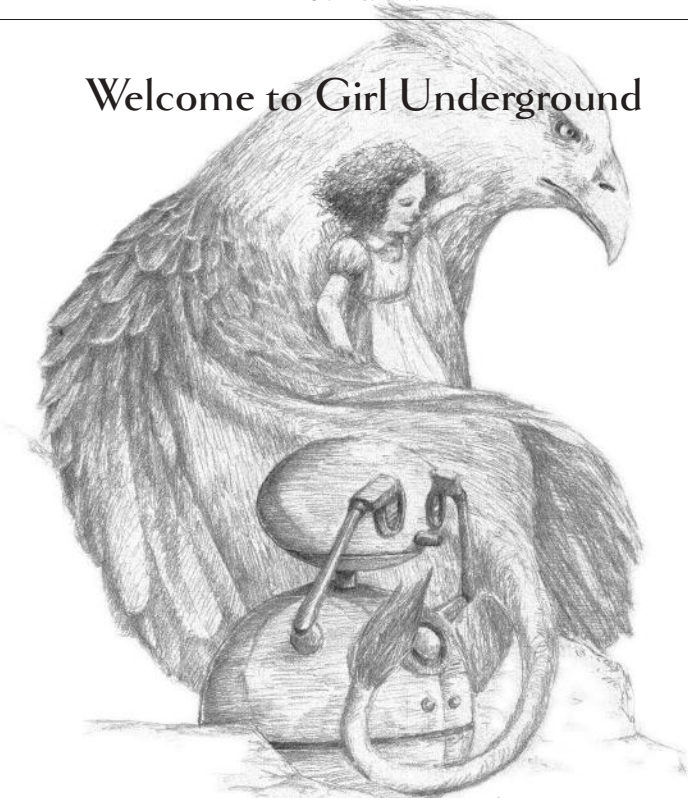
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“SERENA GETS A GRATEFUL HUG AFTER RESCUING GUNGUN.”

Welcome to Girl Underground



Inspired by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Spirited Away*, *Labyrinth*, and similar tales, *Girl Underground* helps you tell the story of a curious girl and her strange companions as they travel through a wondrous world, complete a quest, and find the way back home. Throughout the journey, the Girl learns about herself, discovers the values that are important to her, and challenges the world around her.

The Girl in this story finds herself in the “underground”—a strange place like Oz or Wonderland. The underground the Girl finds herself in is equal parts fantastic and perplexing, full of characters who operate using strange logic and speak in riddles. Thankfully, the Girl has found friends who she can rely on, and who rely on her in turn. These friends represent the archetypes found in these kinds of stories: talking animals, living statues, shapeshifting hybrids, mythical beasts, friendly giants, and adventurous children.

Because of the type of story *Girl Underground* tells, we go into it knowing the Girl will achieve her goals and make it home. What we play to find out is how she does it, and what she learns about herself while underground. The other world she finds herself in represents that space between childhood and adulthood—a strange and surprising time where she can discover who she is and what she believes.

Prepare for Adventure

What You Need to Play

Below is a recipe of ingredients for a successful game of *Girl Underground*:

- One Story Guide to run the game
- Two to four players eager for adventure
- At least two six-sided dice, but a pair for each player is ideal
- At least one pencil, but one per player is ideal
- Printed playbooks for the Girl and each of her Companions
- At least 12 index cards (8 for Beliefs/Manners and 4 for safety tools)

Being a Player

As a player in this game, you're responsible for taking on two roles: the Girl herself and one of her Companions. Everyone takes turns playing as the Girl, but the Companion you select is played by you alone. You have three main jobs as a player:

Play characters to their fullest. The Girl and Companion playbooks all come with various fears, hopes, troubles, and quirks. Let those traits inspire their decisions and mannerisms. Your character can't die, so take risks and chase your dreams.

Shine a light on other characters. You can help others shine by asking your fellow players what kind of story they want their character to have. You can then direct the action toward that end, or simply give them the space to do or say cool things.

Paint the world with strange, wondrous details. At times, the Guide or another player will ask you to populate the world with strange things to surprise and delight everyone. Be creative, be weird, and call back to existing imagery and themes.

Being the Story Guide

In some roleplaying games, the person running the game acts like an author who leads the other players through a pre-written story. This is not the case in *Girl Underground*. Instead, the *Story Guide* (or just *Guide*) acts like the director of a movie or a play. They move the spotlight around to different characters to see what story emerges as those characters explore the world.

In *Girl Underground*, the Guide has one other critical function: they are a theme engine. The Guide is responsible for introducing imagery and characters that reinforce themes around growing up and self-discovery, wrapped in layers of whimsy. Players will indicate what themes they want to explore before the game and during character creation. As a Guide, it's your job is to cue in on what they find interesting and use symbols to help tell the story. Also, as you move from scene to scene, always find opportunities to call back to things the characters have already encountered. This weaves together disparate moments and strengthens the story.

Expectations, Gender, and Safety

Girl Underground explores a lot of themes around identity and self-discovery during the Girl's adventures underground. The themes can be as heavy or as light as you like, but make sure everyone is on the same page.

Set Expectations

Before playing, the Guide should walk through the following three steps with everyone present, adjusting the descriptions as appropriate for the particular session or group:

Describe the game. Girl Underground is a game about a curious girl and her strange companions as they travel through a wondrous world.

Describe the game's structure. In this game, everyone will take turns playing the Girl, while also playing one of the Girl's Companions. The Girl will learn about herself and explore the strange world she finds herself in. She'll break the rules. She'll question how girls 'ought' to behave. She'll create her own beliefs about herself and her surroundings. She'll complete a quest and return home changed.

Describe potential tone and subject matter. This game will be PG-rated. It will be whimsical and weird, and might involve some scary imagery or mild violence, but nothing beyond that.

Ask everyone at the table if there are things they want or don't want to see in the game and keep the list where everyone can see. Finally, ask everyone for one or two things that might be going wrong underground that the Girl can overcome as a part of her quest, things like gloom, lies, greed, exclusion, theft, division, royalty, or curses.



The Girl's Gender

The Girl is someone who identifies as a girl at the start of the game, but she may not have been assigned female at birth. We refer to her as *the Girl* and use *she/her* pronouns throughout the text, but these pronouns may change during your game to reflect the story. During character creation, discuss if you want to explore gender identity in your game. This can include what gender the Girl was raised as (e.g. boy, girl, agender), what the Girl currently identifies as (e.g., girl, genderfluid, bigender), and what gender the Girl wants to explore, if applicable (e.g., boy, genderqueer, non-binary).

Safety Tools

When playing any game, always remember that people come to the table with their own experiences, traumas, and perceptions. Make a habit of requesting or seeking consent for things that may be uncomfortable. Sometimes, content enters a game that causes problems for players at the table despite everyone's best intentions. We therefore suggest using the safety toolkit *Script Change* by Brie Beau Sheldon to manage discussions around tone or content in your game. *Script Change* comes with four core safety tools.

Before the game, the Guide should write the following four labels on individual index cards: *Pause*, *Rewind*, *Fast-Forward*, *Frame-by-Frame*. The Guide should then explain that anyone can touch these cards at any time to:

Pause the game and take a break from an intense scene, or to discuss or clarify what is happening in the story.

Rewind the story back to a point before a piece of content entered the story. The group can then narrate a different course of action to avoid the thing that caused the rewind.

Fast-Forward over something they don't want to dwell on in the story, or to simply move time forward.

Frame-by-Frame through a scene they want to approach with care. This slows the story down so everyone can pause where needed and check in with each other.

The Parts of the Game

This section introduces the content, tools, and mechanics that make Girl Underground tick. The Story Guide playbook (page 28) explains each of these concepts in more detail. The Girl and Companion playbooks also contain the rules on how these mechanics work for easy reference during the game.

Playbooks

Playbooks are a special type of character sheet that includes rules that are unique to that individual role.

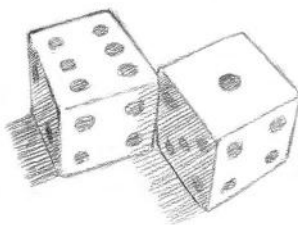
The Guide gets the Story Guide playbook with the rules and guidelines necessary for running the game. This playbook also contains handy lists and details for fleshing out the world in a pinch.

The players use the character playbooks. Each character playbook is themed to a common genre archetype (such as the Faun or the Ogre) and contains unique rules suited to that character. In the case of Girl Underground, the player playbooks are:

| *The Girl*: the hero of the story

and the Girl's Companions:

- | *The Beastie*: a talking animal
- | *The Construct*: a handmade person given life
- | *The Faun*: a half-human, half-magical being
- | *The Mythic*: a legendary flying beast
- | *The Ogre*: a friendly giant
- | *The Runaway*: a child who has made their home here



Each player will choose one of the Companion playbooks. The Girl playbook is jointly played by all the players, who take turns playing her.

Moves and Rolling Dice

This game makes use of Moves to help tell a dramatic story. Each character playbook contains special Moves they can use to try and solve problems, avoid trouble, gain an advantage, and so on. These Moves have specific triggers, such as: “Roll when you stare at someone to figure them out” or “Roll when you step in the way to defend the Girl.”

When a player describes their character doing something that triggers a Move, we turn to the dice to see how they fare. The player will roll at least two six-sided dice and look at the total to get a result. The result will indicate how successful the character's attempt was.

Results of 6 or less lead to weirdness, danger, or a setback. Someone might be at risk, either physically or emotionally, or things may get even stranger still. The Guide usually begins narrating how the situation gets more difficult or odd at this point.

Results of 7 or higher lead to success. The character gets what they want. However, if the result is a 7–9, the character also receives a complication or cost in addition to their success.

The group is in trouble. The Mask Mage is howling toward them after someone broke a rule in the Mage's Hall. The room flickers into darkness as the candles go out.

The Runaway spies an exit and hauls their friends toward it. They trigger the Move “There’s No Time for Tea” (Roll when you try to escape a dangerous situation with your friends). They roll two six-sided dice and get an 8.

On an 8, they describe how they daringly lead everyone to safety, tumbling through the exit and into the bright outdoors. However, the Guide lets them know that the Mask Mage will always remember the rude scallywags who broke their rules. They can never return.

Some Moves allow the player to roll additional dice. These situations are detailed on each character playbook. Whenever more than two dice are rolled, the player always uses the best two to get their result.

The Guide also has Moves, detailed in the Guide playbook on page 30.

Answering a Move’s Questions

You’ll notice the Moves in this game all result in questions. For the most part, these questions are for the player who rolled to answer. However, some results direct the player to pose the question to someone else. Let’s look at “Stand Tall” on the Ogre’s Playbook:

Stand Tall

Roll when you step in the way to defend the Girl.

7+

What insult or injury do you shrug off?


On a 7–9, also ask the Girl: How do I know you wanted to stand up for yourself?

6-

Ask the Guide: What bigger threat have I missed?

Here, on a 7+ the Ogre’s player would answer the question. However, on a 7–9, the Ogre also poses a question to the Girl as well. On a 6-, the Ogre’s player asks the Guide a question.

These questions create an open conversation at the table when resolving Moves. Guides and players are encouraged to ask further follow-up questions, or offer suggestions as to what they think would be fun or interesting.

 “I rolled a 7 on a ‘A Spirit in Every Thing.’ The tree I’m speaking to tells me a story, but I get to say why it’s incomplete or confusing... Oh, the tree tells me the directions, but doesn’t tell me about a danger lurking in the thick undergrowth.” — the Construct

“Interesting. What do you fear is hidden in the woods?” — Guide

“Since I’m made of wood, I dig my toes into the soil here and close my eyes. I feel tiny vibrations in my feet, almost like fearful whispers. I fear there’s something big coming our way.” — the Construct

The questions preserve as much player agency as possible when introducing complications or problems. If the question defines a particular part of a character or their perceptions, that character’s player is asked. If the question involves the world and how it reacts to the character, the question is put to the world (in this case, the Guide). Players are encouraged to set their own boundaries, complications, and troubles when answering these questions. The Guide may make Moves in response, depending on what’s happening in the story, but the player gets to begin that conversation, and name what troubles their shenanigans bring upon them.

Manners

Manners represent some of society’s controlling and absolutist rules that girls must follow. They take the form of “Young ladies must never talk back to their elders” or “Young ladies must never take up too much space”—which are unfair and very wrong. The players and the Guide come up with eight Manners they want to challenge, which are written on index cards before creating characters.

During the game, the Girl (and her Companions) will conquer these Manners to develop her own sense of values and Beliefs (see *Beliefs* next). The Guide will introduce characters or places that embody Manners—perhaps a know-it-all king, or a malicious, orderly garden which lashes out at anyone who steps off the well-defined cobblestone path.

A note of caution: Manners can bring up subject matter that could be upsetting, triggering, or unfun. Many of them touch upon feminine socialization, essentialism, and gender norms, and could be gaslighting. When choosing Manners, discuss openly which ones you don’t want in the game, and which you’re interested in challenging. Discuss generally who this Girl is or might be (the Girl playbook will draw out her specific characteristics). Collectively come to a list that lets the players explore identity and self in a fun way.

There are example Manners on page 27, but your group can always create their own. These Manners were written through our cultural experience, but if the Girl in your game is from a culture with different societal expectations, include them in your list of eight Manners. Remember to be respectful of the culture you are exploring. If someone at the table has lived experience, always listen and defer to their experience.

Beliefs

The Girl develops Beliefs about herself and the way the world works throughout her journey. Example Beliefs are “I must stand up for my friends,” or “We must explore without exploiting the world.” The Girl creates Beliefs every time she rolls the Move *Refuse to Mind Your Manners*. After the Guide and person playing the Girl answer the Move’s questions, that player flips over the Manner’s index card and writes a corresponding Belief.



“Sure, I’ll race you to the top of that tall tower. If you win, I’ll give you my most shiny object,” Kat tells Crow, who is the guarding the caged Mythic. “You’d better leave the cage key behind, though. Just in case you lose it.” Since Kat is lying about racing Crow, she’s Refusing to Mind Her Manners. She rolls two six-sided dice and gets a 10.

Kat’s player describes how the boastful Crow takes off with a caw, leaving her alone with the Mythic. Kat takes the key and opens the Mythic’s cage. Kat’s player then flips over the Manner that says “Young ladies must never tell lies.” She writes “Wits are a tool to do what’s right” on the back for her Belief.

Beliefs are powerful. They show how the Girl grows and changes, and they can overcome problems. When the Girl uses the Move *Stand Strong in Your Convictions*, she states which of her Beliefs apply to the situation. She starts with one die and adds a die for each Belief she’s using for her roll. She rolls all the dice and adds together the two highest dice to get her result.



Kat’s quest is to find Princess Radish, so Radish can usurp the wicked Crowing King. Kat finally finds her in the Hall of Ten Thousand Masks! However, Radish is lost to the Hall’s fantasy and finery—she’s wearing a fancy queen mask and is quite happy in the Hall, eating fine foods and dancing all day.

Kat must Stand Strong in Her Convictions to convince Radish that the Hall is just a false fantasy. Kat’s player uses the Beliefs “There is beauty in truth”, “Pride is a mask that thwarts self-awareness,” and “Wits are a tool to do what’s right.” She rolls four dice and gets 3, 3, 4, and 5. She adds the two highest to get her result of 9.

Kat’s player describes how she points Radish to all of the cracks in the Hall’s reality. Radish takes off her mask. However, as the mask comes away, the Hall cannot sustain the truth. It starts to crumble, the candles sputter out, and the music turns into nails on a chalkboard.



“KAT REPRIMANDS TIGER FOR TRYING TO EAT MRS. COSTLY COPPERPOT.”



The Girl



You are a 12-year-old girl. You are not of this world, and you are trying to find your way back home. Home isn't perfect—in fact, there's a lot that's hard and unfair about it—but it's still home. There are people there who love you, who miss you right now, and are wondering why you haven't yet come in for supper.

— Collectively, decide the Girl's name. —

If your family has love but no...

- ...curiosity, your name is **Kat**.
- ...money, your name is **Penny**.
- ...time, your name is **Patience**.
- ...magic, your name is **Faye**.
- ...quiet, your name is **Serena**.
- ..._____, your name is _____.

— Then take turns answering these questions. —

How do you wear your hair?

- Soft and texture like a sleepy cloud
- Long and wavy like a calm summer tide
- Straight and square like a ruler's edge
- Short and cropped like freshly cut grass
- Tangled and knotted like fraying rope
- Braided and flowing like a winding river
- _____

What is your prized possession?

- Something domestic
- Something you made
- Something natural
- Something given
- Something living
- Something stolen

Describe it: _____

How do you sound when you speak?

- Bubbly like a flowing brook
- Warm like a summer breeze
- Quick like a bolt of lightning
- Dreamy like a cotton candy cloud
- Gravelly like a country road
- Quiet like a secret thought
- _____

What is your biggest fear?

- Absence (e.g., darkness, silence, isolation)
- Rage (e.g., fire, monsters, earthquakes)
- Humiliation (e.g., bullies, imperfection, failure)
- Inability (e.g., paralysis, illness, poverty)
- Judgement (e.g., worth, decisions, perceptions)
- _____

What do you want to be when you grow up?

What is your home life like? *The Guide may ask additional questions here as well.*

— Now look at the list of Manners and collectively decide the following: —

Which Manner are you refusing to mind when you discover your door to another world?

Flip it over and write a new Belief that reflects what you already know to be true about yourself.

The Girl's Moves

You have all these moves, and can use them anytime you are portraying the Girl.

Refuse to Mind Your Manners

When you face a challenge by refusing to mind your manners, name the Manner you're rebelling against and roll two dice. Add them together to get your result.

7+ How do you overcome the challenge?
On a 7-9, also: How do you falter or go too far in the process?

6- What part of your rebellion is misunderstood by others?



Flip over the Manner and write a new Belief based on what you learned about yourself or the world in the process.



Stand Strong In Your Convictions

When you face a challenge by standing strong in your convictions, start with one die, then take an additional die for each relevant Belief and roll. Add the two highest dice to get your result.

7+ How do you overcome the challenge?
On a 7-9, also: What price does the challenge cost you?

6- What do you learn that will help you overcome the challenge next time?

Curiouser and Curiouser

When you try to get some answers about this world or its inhabitants, ask the Guide your question.

If you are willing to participate in a peculiar activity, your answer will be—surprisingly—clear and helpful.

If you are unwilling, your answer will take the form of a riddle.

Merry-go-round

When you wish to introduce your Companion to the scene, or you wish for someone else to have the spotlight, pass the Girl playbook to another player of your choosing. They are now the Girl.



When you portray the Girl, try to do the following:

DESIRE WHAT YOUR FAMILY AND HOME LACK
ACT AGAINST YOUR MANNERS AND ACT IN LINE WITH YOUR BELIEFS
BE BRAVE AND SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND GROW
ASK PROBING QUESTIONS OF EVERYONE YOU MEET
REQUEST HELP FROM YOUR COMPANIONS WHEN NEEDED

The Beastie



You are an animal. And like all *refined* animals, you use words to express yourself. With the notable exception of your ability to speak, you appear and behave as would any other animal. Sometimes that gets you into trouble, but it's never *really* your fault.

Your quick tongue offers wise guidance to the Girl and disrespect to authority figures. Authority is your focus, whether it's asserting your presence and renown, or refusing to acknowledge the status of others. You trade in stories and gossip about nobles, royalty, and those in power. Your wits and experience see you through any trap or puzzle.

— Answer these questions. —

What kind of animal are you? This is also your name.

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Armadillo | <input type="radio"/> Donkey | <input type="radio"/> Lizard | <input type="radio"/> Pig | <input type="radio"/> Tiger |
| <input type="radio"/> Bear | <input type="radio"/> Frog | <input type="radio"/> Moose | <input type="radio"/> Raccoon | <input type="radio"/> Wallaby |
| <input type="radio"/> Chicken | <input type="radio"/> Hedgehog | <input type="radio"/> Owl | <input type="radio"/> Squirrel | <input type="radio"/> _____ |

Which is most likely to get you into trouble?

- Your appetite Your curiosity Your greed Your mouth _____

What were you before you were a talking animal?

- A noble A witch's familiar A toy A regular non-talking animal _____

What do you need that this journey will give you?

- A title A silver tongue A new life A student _____

What state are you in when the Girl finds you?

- Caged Pursued Resentful pet _____

Notes

— When you portray the Beastie, try to do the following: —

GIVE THE GIRL UNPROMPTED ADVICE
ALWAYS HAVE AN ANSWER OR OPINION
SPOUT STORIES ABOUT THIS WORLD
BE RUDE TO AUTHORITY FIGURES
GIVE IN TO YOUR ANIMAL NATURE



The Beastie's Moves



You have all these moves. When a move is triggered, roll two dice and add them to get your result: 7 or higher, or 6 or lower. Results of 7–9 complicate your success. When one of the Girl's Beliefs inspires you, say which Belief and roll three dice instead of two. Add the highest two dice to get your result.

Impart Wisdom

Roll when you offer guidance to the Girl and she follows your advice.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 7+ <i>The Girl may re-roll and add 1 to the total.</i>
<i>On a 7–9, also: What truth did you neglect to share with the Girl?</i> | 6- <i>Ask the Guide: How does my advice lead directly to more trouble?</i> |
|--|---|

The Bark is Bigger

Roll when you doubt the surface appearance of a person, place, or object.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 7+ <i>Ask the Guide (or the character's player): What truth is hidden beneath the surface?</i>
<i>On a 7–9, also: How is the truth worse than the veneer?</i> | 6- <i>Ask the table: How do you dismiss my doubts?</i> |
|---|---|

A Cat May Look at a King

Roll when you are first introduced to a member of royalty.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 7+ <i>What story have you already shared with your friends about this royal?</i>
<i>On a 7–9, also: What faux pas do you make in front of the royal?</i> | 6- <i>Ask the Guide: What crime does this royal believe I am guilty of?</i> |
|--|--|

The Horse's Mouth

Roll when you name and describe someone important you know who can give you aid or advice.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 7+ <i>How do you find them and why do they owe you?</i>
<i>On a 7–9, also: How did you annoy them on your last encounter?</i> | 6- <i>What debt will they demand payment for?</i>
<i>Also, ask the Guide: How do they find me?</i> |
|---|--|

Tongue-Tied

Roll when you try to talk your way out of a problem, trap or puzzle.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 7+ <i>How did you get out of a similar situation you once found yourself in?</i>
<i>On a 7–9, also ask the table: Who gets hurt because of my chattering, and how?</i> | 6- <i>Ask the Guide: How does my talking escalate the situation?</i> |
|--|---|

The Construct



You were crafted by human hands and imbued with life through magical means. You might be a doll, toy soldier, scarecrow, robot, or something else, but whatever you are, you have been given a human form and (mostly) human behaviors.

Because of your strange creation, you have a special affinity for inanimate things. You can coax hidden knowledge from them, or hide yourself amongst them. You long to be real, and thus you pay careful attention to the longings of others and use that insight to help the Girl and your friends.

— Answer these questions. —

What material are you constructed from?

- Metal Wood Porcelain Burlap Candy
 Stone Crystal Cotton Pastry _____

What is the most human thing about you?

- Your voice Your eyes Your warmth Your tears _____

What is the most unnerving thing about you?

- Your stillness Your smile Your extra parts Your creation story _____

What do you need that this journey will give you?

- A life A family My other half My creator _____

What state are you in when the Girl finds you?

- Stuck in place On display Dismantled _____

What is your name?

- Arta Darling Fluff Lulu Treasure
 Costly Echo Jin Prism _____

Notes

— When you portray the Construct, try to do the following: —

FOLLOW THE GIRL'S LEAD

BE NAIVE

BLUR THE LINES BETWEEN ANIMATE AND INANIMATE

FIGURE OUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE REAL

TREAT YOUR BODY AS AN OBJECT



The Construct's Moves

You have all these moves. When a move is triggered, roll two dice and add them to get your result: 7 or higher, or 6 or lower. Results of 7–9 complicate your success. When one of the Girl's Beliefs inspires you, say which Belief and roll three dice instead of two. Add the highest two dice to get your result.

A Heart Not Judged

Roll when you encourage the Girl with your humanity.

7+ *The Girl may re-roll and add 1 to the total.*
On a 7–9, also: How does this make you question your humanity?

6- How do you remind everyone that you are a thing?

Mirror, Mirror

Roll when you stare at someone to figure them out.

7+ *Ask them: What is your heart's desire?*
On a 7–9, also: What secret thing do they see in you when they stare back?

6- *Ask them: What leverage do you have over me now?*

Just Stuff

Roll when you suffer incredible damage.

7+ *Ask the table: How do you repair me?*
On a 7–9, also: How have you been changed by your damage and repair?

6- *Ask the Guide: What expensive, rare, or elusive thing is needed to repair me?*

A Spirit in Every Thing

Roll when you try to converse with something normally inanimate.

7+ What story does it tell me?
On a 7–9, also: Why does the story feel incomplete or confusing?

6- *It talks to the Girl instead.* What explanation do you give for why it won't talk to you?

Statuesque

Roll when you try to hide yourself or your friends by staying still and motionless.

7+ *Ask the Guide: What advantage does my hiding get us?*
On a 7–9, also ask the Guide: Who is put at risk by my inaction?

6- What commotion do you cause?

The Faun



Your body lives between two worlds: human and... something else. Maybe your other half is a beast, making you something like a centaur or mermaid. Or maybe you are attuned to something more elemental, like a genie or shade.

You are a being of transformational change, from your ability to grant wishes to the sharing of your shapeshifting abilities. You also find a way to turn nearly any event into a revelry, and use that talent to useful ends.

Answer these questions.

What is your other half?

- Cloud Fire Horse Shadow Stone Wolf
 Fish Goat Plant Snake Water _____

What do you find it hard to resist?

- A lovely singing voice Luxurious clothes A chance to show off _____

What do you wish you could transform into?

- A grown-up A normal child A majestic beast A part of the earth _____

What do you need that this journey will give you?

- Control over your other half A chance to make amends Your own wish granted
 A complete transformation A real reason to celebrate _____

What state are you in when the Girl finds you?

- Exhausted from revelries Pelted with rotten fruit In a sideshow act _____

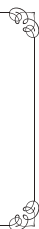
What is your name?

- Arielle Ember Ifan Nylisa Rhian Sepu
 Asteria Hans Jiah Nyx Saga _____

Notes

When you portray the Faun, try to do the following:

LOOK AT THINGS FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE
MAKE THINGS—ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS THINGS—FUN
GET CARRIED AWAY
FEEL THINGS DEEPLY AND PASSIONATELY
PUSH THE GIRL TO TRY NEW THINGS





The Faun's Moves



You have all these moves. When a move is triggered, roll two dice and add them to get your result: 7 or higher, or 6 or lower. Results of 7–9 complicate your success. When one of the Girl's Beliefs inspires you, say which Belief and roll three dice instead of two. Add the highest two dice to get your result.

As You Wish

Roll when you offer to grant a wish for the Girl and she accepts.

7+ *The Girl may re-roll and add 1 to the total.*
On a 7–9, ask the Girl: How does the wish leave you wanting more?

6- *Ask the Girl: How does your wish unexpectedly misfire?*

Forest Chorus

Roll when you recall a song or rhyme about the place you're currently in.

7+ How does your song transform the environment?
On a 7–9, also ask the Guide: what was the next verse which I had forgotten?

6- *Ask the Guide: How does my song twist the environment against us?*

Release the Beast

Roll when you let your other half take over.

7+ What one strange thing can you now do?
On a 7–9, also: How does it get out of your control?

6- *Ask the Guide: What does my other half want to do instead?*

Second Nature

Roll when you offer a bit of your shapeshifting magic to someone and they accept.

7+ *Ask them: What form do you take?*
On a 7–9, also ask them: What bit of yourself do you give me in trade?

6- *Ask them: What form are you stuck in?*

Wild Rumpus

Roll when you sing, dance, or otherwise engage in boisterous merrymaking.

7+ Who joins your revelry and what help do they offer?
On a 7–9, also ask the Guide: What do they ask in return?

6- *Ask the Guide: Who shows up to shut down the party?*

The Mythic

You are a rare being of legend and fantasy: a dragon, pegasus, phoenix, or some other great majestic flying beast. You are also the last of your kind, and it is your duty to carry on their traditions.

You have great power, and there is real wisdom in the legends of your people. You have a special talent for commanding and inspiring others, though sometimes that means making a genuine sacrifice.

Answer these questions.

What about your form impresses people the most?

- Your regal plumage Your glorious wings Your proud antlers
 Your mighty scales Your majestic colours _____

As the last of your kind, how do you remember your kin?

- With respect With sorrow With guilt With hope _____

What must you protect at all costs?

- Your kin's legacy The magic of this land Peace and harmony
 The lost and lonely Your honour _____

What do you need that this journey will give you?

- One like me The truth Repentance To do good _____

What state are you in when the Girl finds you?

- Crashing On fire Chained Injured _____

What is your name?

- Aura Eryniess Keiki Nathaksha Valkaire
 Druti Izalos Lamai Pyrion _____

Notes

When you portray the Mythic, try to do the following:

HONOR YOUR KIN
INSPIRE THE GIRL
MAKE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE
FEEL HEAVY WITH NOSTALGIA
STAND—OR FLY—ABOVE IT ALL



The Mythic's Moves



You have all these moves. When a move is triggered, roll two dice and add them to get your result: 7 or higher, or 6 or lower. Results of 7–9 complicate your success. When one of the Girl's Beliefs inspires you, say which Belief and roll three dice instead of two. Add the highest two dice to get your result.

Courage, Dear Heart

Roll when you tell a story to inspire the Girl's courage.

7+

The Girl may re-roll and add 1 to the total.
On a 7–9, also: What grim detail did you keep to yourself?

6-

Ask the table: What is this malaise that you feel?

Back to Yesterday

Roll when you share your kin's legends to make sense of the world.

7+

How does your story predict what happens next?
On a 7–9, also: How do you remind everyone of your kin's demise?

6-

What part of the story did you not share because it portends a grim future?

Behold Majesty

Roll when you command an audience with your presence.

7+

How does the audience remain fixated on you?
On a 7–9, also: What do you destroy to make your presence known?

6-

Ask the Guide: Whose ire do I draw?

Life is Sacrifice

Roll when you put all your might and magic into protecting what matters most to you.

7+

How do you overcome the threat or challenge to what you hold dear?
On a 7–9, also: What unexpected effect do your efforts have on you?

6-

How does your success also lead to your end?

From The Ashes

Roll when you return at just the right time after sacrificing yourself.

7+

How does your inspiring return command the situation?
On a 7–9, also: What about you is changed or different?

6-

Ask the Guide: How does my return escalate the situation?

The Ogre



Your people are giants in this land, towering over the Girl at three or four times her size. You may be covered with fur, or adorned with horns, but you are more human than beast, even if you don't speak much.

Your size and the space you take up pushes you to bounce between feeling powerful and feeling ashamed. You know how to use your unique position in the world to protect the Girl and stand up for her, but sometimes you go too far and inadvertently keep her from being able to advocate for herself.

— Answer these questions. —

Other than your size, what do others first notice about you?

- Your prominent horns Your craggy flesh Your beastly musk
 Your strangely-colored fur Your manner of dress _____

How do you try to make yourself seem smaller than you are?

- You're very quiet You step delicately You hide behind things _____

What were you teased about as a child?

- Your clumsiness Your family Your cowardice Your tenderness _____

What do you need that this journey will give you?

- A voice An adventure Understanding Respect _____

What state are you in when the Girl finds you?

- Judged Feared Tricked into labor _____

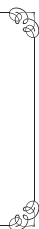
What is your name?

- Brizo Gungun Kruk Mondo Titan
 Eulia Hukso Lumba Orin _____

Notes

— When you portray the Ogre, try to do the following: —

LOOK UP TO THE GIRL
MAKE YOURSELF SMALL
BRING YOUR SIZE INTO IT
BE BRAVE WHEN IT COUNTS
DO SOMETHING EMBARRASSING





The Ogre's Moves



You have all these moves. When a move is triggered, roll two dice and add them to get your result: 7 or higher, or 6 or lower. Results of 7–9 complicate your success. When one of the Girl's Beliefs inspires you, say which Belief and roll three dice instead of two. Add the highest two dice to get your result.

Gentle Giant

Roll when you help the Girl create space for her voice and actions.

7+ *The Girl may re-roll and add 1 to the total. On a 7–9, also: Who do you scare in the process?*

6- *Ask the Girl: How did I embarrass you?*

Center of Attention

Roll when you attempt to draw attention away from the Girl.

7+ How do you keep the attention focused squarely on you?
On a 7–9, also: How does their attention make you uneasy?

6- How do you accidentally draw attention toward the Girl?

Make Room

Roll when you are in cramped quarters, stuck or otherwise imprisoned.

7+ How do you break free or create an opening?
On a 7–9, also: How do you embarrass yourself in the process?

6- *Ask the table: Who or what is left behind or broken during the escape?*

Move Mountains

Roll when you need the elements to come to your aid.

7+ How do the elements help you?
On a 7–9, also ask the Guide: What do the elements demand of me?

6- *Ask the Guide: How do the elements get out of my control?*

Stand Tall

Roll when you step in the way to defend the Girl.

7+ What insult or injury do you shrug off?
On a 7–9, also ask the Girl: How do I know you wanted to stand up for yourself?

6- *Ask the Guide: What bigger threat have I missed?*

The Runaway

You ran away from home and found a door to another world. But you decided to stay, and now this your home. It's scary and lonely at times, but at least you're free to explore and be yourself.

You are used to being in scary situations, and you use that experience to help the Girl be brave when she can or escape when she must. Your time exploring the world has given you great stories to tell and has honed your senses so you can find people or treasure no matter how well hidden they are.

— Answer these questions. —

What were you running away from?

- Boredom Bullies Nightmares Parents Yourself _____

What part of you has been changed by your time here?

- Your eyes Your shadow Your reflection Your diet _____

What part of the world are you dying to explore?

- The thickest forest The darkest cave The highest mountain _____

What do you need that this journey will give you?

- Bragging rights Great treasure Fame A place to call home _____

What state are you in when the Girl finds you?

- Not lost, just misplaced Alone in a crowd Trapped by your fears
 Craving adventure Wild and hungry _____

What is your name?

- Amelia Bima Gunju Malaya Wild Thing
 Badger Captain Lotta Skipper _____

Notes

— When you portray the Runaway, try to do the following: —

LET DANGER EXCITE YOU
PROVIDE EXPERTISE IN A CRISIS
FEAR WHAT YOU RUN FROM
TREAT EVEN MUNDANE THINGS AS TREASURE
REVEL IN YOUR PAST ADVENTURES



The Runaway's Moves



You have all these moves. When a move is triggered, roll two dice and add them to get your result: 7 or higher, or 6 or lower. Results of 7–9 complicate your success. When one of the Girl's Beliefs inspires you, say which Belief and roll three dice instead of two. Add the highest two dice to get your result.

Free From What You Fear

Roll when you find yourself in a dark or scary situation, and tell the Girl how it's going to be okay.

7+ *The Girl may re-roll and add 1 to the total.*
On a 7–9, also: What do you fear will happen?

6- *Ask the Guide: Why is the situation even scarier than it seems?*

It Was Thiiiiii Big

Roll when you meet someone important and tell them of your magnificent adventures.

7+ *Ask the Guide: What story do they divulge of this location?*
On a 7–9, also ask another companion: What part of their story is untrue?

6- *Ask the Guide: How have they already heard of me, and why do they think I'm a scallywag?*

Run Wild

Roll when you name someone you're looking for and use your senses to track them.

7+ How do your senses lead you straight to them?
On a 7–9, also: Why are you wary or afraid of them?

6- *Ask the Guide: How do my senses lead me astray?*

There's No Time For Tea

Roll when you try to escape a dangerous situation with your friends.

7+ How do you lead everyone to sanctuary or freedom?
On a 7–9, also ask the Guide: How do the people here remember me?

6- *Ask the Guide: What deeper trouble do I lead everyone into?*

Wearied Traveller

Roll when you seek a location's secrets and hidden treasures.

7+ What do you find and how do you discover it?
On a 7–9, also ask the Guide: What is keeping me from recovering it?

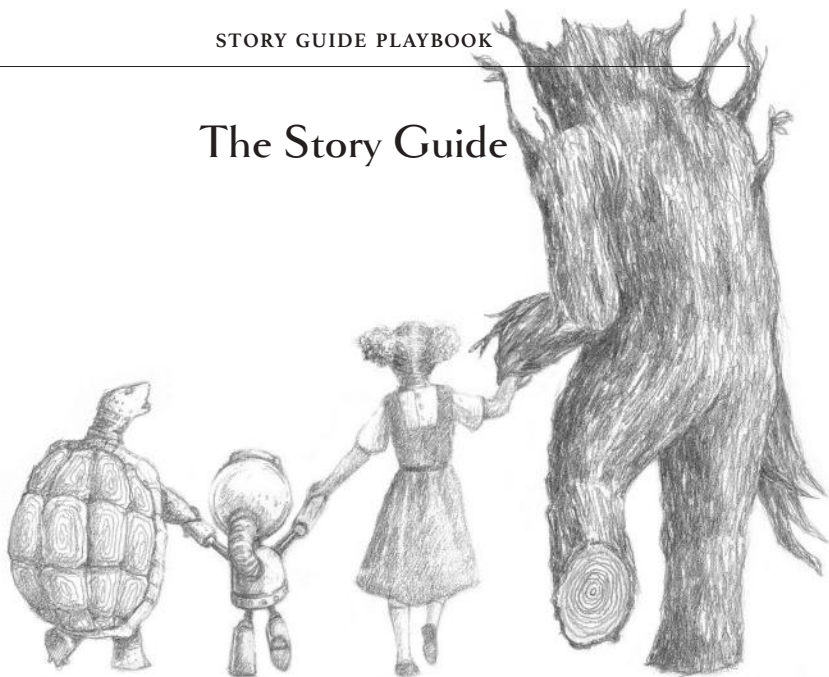
6- *Ask the Guide: What do I find instead of the treasure?*

List of Manners

Society expects the Girl to mind her manners, but that's not always the best way to make a difference. Choose eight of these Manners for your game, or create your own.

- Young ladies must always be grateful for what they are given.
 - Young ladies must always be humble.
- Young ladies must always be quiet and patient.
- Young ladies must always enjoy pinks and florals.
 - Young ladies must always follow instructions.
 - Young ladies must always go by 'she.'
- Young ladies must always keep a smile on their face.
- Young ladies must always keep their feelings to themselves.
 - Young ladies must always look before they leap.
- Young ladies must always put others' needs before their own.
 - Young ladies must always respect others' opinions.
- Young ladies must always wear clothes suited for young ladies.
 - Young ladies must never acknowledge imperfections.
 - Young ladies must never act like boys.
 - Young ladies must never be ridiculous or silly.
 - Young ladies must never be ugly.
 - Young ladies must never befriend monsters.
 - Young ladies must never brag or show off.
 - Young ladies must never cheat.
- Young ladies must never complain about their duties.
 - Young ladies must never go into dark places.
 - Young ladies must never hurt other people.
 - Young ladies must never make demands.
 - Young ladies must never put others in their place.
- Young ladies must never question their place in society.
 - Young ladies must never show anger.
- Young ladies must never soil their hands or clothes.
 - Young ladies must never speak in riddles.
- Young ladies must never take up too much space.
- Young ladies must never talk back to their elders.
 - Young ladies must never tell lies.
- Young ladies must never try on other genders.
 - Young ladies must never vex others.

The Story Guide



You are the Story Guide. It's your responsibility to lead the Girl and her Companions through the world. You play all the characters they meet and present the challenges that arise. You're also there to help reinforce the themes and symbolism of the genre.

Girl Underground is a game that demands a lot of creativity and improvisation. As the Guide, most of that work could fall to you. That means acting as a storyteller, weaving many disparate story threads together, and finding the symbolism in the chaos. But the burden doesn't have to fall solely on you. Many players are very happy to provide fuel for the creative fire. Take that and run with it. The trick is posing open-ended questions to them that encourage a giving response when you need creative help.

Put leading questions to your players to find out what intrigues, terrifies, and excites them. Incorporate their answers into the world to make it rich with collaborative details. This technique is particularly useful when you come to a new Location. Ask players questions to flesh out the space around them so everyone can picture the Location in their minds. These questions take the pressure off of you and get the players interested and invested in the world around them.

Some examples of leading questions include:

- What about this place is truly impossible?
- What about this place reminds you of home?
- How do you know time moves differently here?
- How does this place remind you of your deepest fears?
- What unusual scents do you catch on the air?

Your Principles

Your principles set goalposts for telling a good story, so always keep these in mind.

Make the world wondrous and dangerous. Whenever you describe what something looks like, consider adding one quirky or dreamy detail. Draw inspiration from the Locations and the character playbooks. Suggest something ominous underneath the surface if it suits your tone. Danger creates opportunities for the Girl to take action.

Make your characters quirky and memorable. The Locations should give you plenty of quirky, thematic characters. If you need to create a character on the fly, give three details about how they look, smell, or sound, and create one unique way of embodying them at the table (voice, habits, catchphrases). Tie them to themes where possible.

Create situations where Manners are relevant. The game and its themes move forward when the Girl takes action. So create challenges, villains, and situations where the Girl can stand up to one of the Manners. Present one to two Manners per Location, so the Girl has about three to six Beliefs she can use when facing her final challenge.

Create problems that play into the Girl's Beliefs. As the Girl develops Beliefs, create problems that let her use her values to change the world. If she believes that "There is beauty in truth," create problems based on lies or falsity. When she faces her final challenge, try and create a situation that could speak to three or four Beliefs.

Lead the way through the underground. The Guide knows which Locations are in play, so give hints of future Locations or characters. When a Location feels fully explored, lead the players to the next one. You can fictionally lead them there, or simply say: "On your way, you stumble across a Teahouse. What about it smells welcoming and cozy?"

Reincorporate elements to reinforce theme. Use the answers from the "Setting Expectations" conversation to drive the sorts of images and themes you present. Call back to those images and themes where you can. If a player introduces an image that excites the table, call back to it in a later Location.

Be a fan of the Girl and her Companions. Be excited when the Girl overcomes a challenge or learns about herself. Cheer when her Companions step in when she needs support. Introduce characters who can help the Girl grow and find confidence in herself.

Show your Moves through the fiction. When you make a Move, simply describe what it looks like. Avoid saying "I'm going to put you in a bad spot." Just describe how the situation presents itself. The exception is when you're new to the game. You may want to explain what you're doing to keep everyone on the same page. It's okay to say, "Let's bring all of you together," if you're not sure how to clearly arrive at that result.

Your Moves

Your Moves help you nudge the story along by creating interesting situations or problems. When a player rolls 6-, when the perfect moment strikes, or when they look to you to see what happens next, choose from among the following:

- Separate them or bring them together.
- Put them in a bad spot.
- Make the world even weirder.
- Incapacitate (but never kill) them.
- Threaten (but never kill) them.
- Take something away from them.
- Turn their Move back on them.
- Give them exactly what they want, but twist it.
- Tease future dangers.
- Say what the stakes are and let them decide.
- Ask them a pointed question and build on the answer.

— *Results of six or lower* —

A 6- dice result usually doesn't mean the Girl or a Companion failed or wasn't good enough. A 6- can mean the situation changed unexpectedly, luck wasn't on their side, or the problem is different than first anticipated. Sometimes they still succeed, but there is a different challenge or setback, or they get what they want but too much of it or not enough of it. If you're stuck on what to do when a player rolls a 6-, you can always make the situation weird and strange.

Your Locations

The underground is a strange, nonsensical place full of idiosyncratic pockets of activity. One of the best ways to reinforce the theme is through a weird Location. Here are 12 setting Locations, as well as related characters, props, and questions that you and the players might strive to answer while there.

You don't need to use everything listed in a Location, and you can use elements here in multiple ways. Start with trying to find a Location that reinforces the themes your players are interested in exploring. Keep the list of troubles in mind to connect the various Locations. Once a Location has been introduced, use the props to help describe it, but always expand on the list. Ignore elements that don't make sense, and ask the other players for additional environmental details. The list of questions can serve as a jumping off point for things the Girl and her Companions might try to learn or uncover. You can present questions as-is, or just keep them in mind as the players explore the Location. Each Location's characters have a list of things they might be doing at any moment, but feel free to embody them in other ways.

THE ADVENTURER'S TOMB

This place suits **curious girls** and companions who
are aspiring explorers • rebel against exploitative adventuring • are missing something

Characters

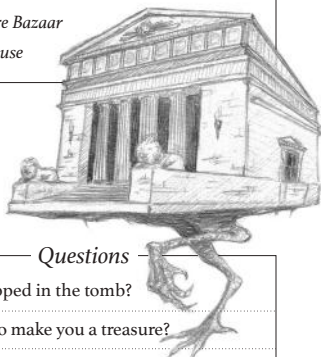
Pontik, a librarian (any pronouns)
<i>Protecting</i>
<i>Chastising</i>
<i>Denying</i>
Francis Lightfeather, an adventurer (he/him)
<i>Bragging about treasures he donated</i>
<i>Showing off his Adventurer's "Library"</i>
<i>Fluffing his feathers</i>
Verey, a treasure (they/them)
<i>Searching for their other half</i>
<i>Shining gloriously</i>
<i>Acknowledging their uniqueness</i>

Props

Glorious treasures coated in dust
Fantastical worn maps behind glass cases
The Tomb: a building on relentless feet ripping through forest and rivers

Troubles

Lightfeather stole the Girl's way home
PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS
• <i>The Fairy Ring</i>
• <i>The Restless Wreckage</i>
Verey's other half is trapped in the Library
PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS
• <i>The Bizarre Bazaar</i>
• <i>The Teahouse</i>



Questions

Who is trapped in the tomb?
Who tries to make you a treasure?
What do you offer to the collection?
What or who do you free from the library?

How to use this Location

The Adventurer's Tomb is great for representing exploitative adventuring, conquest, and metaphors for colonialism. Francis Lightfeather enjoys traveling to distant places and liberating rare species and objects for his great Library. He's not particularly malicious (although he could be), just ignorant of how his practices impact the places he visits.

This Location nicely contrasts to Girls who want to be explorers when they grow up. It offers a point of difference for the Girl to challenge Francis' selfish ways by pointing out you should "Take only memories, leave only footprints" and similar sentiments. Francis should brag about his fantastic "Library," while everyone else refers to it as a "Tomb."

He can also be a foil for the Girl and her Companions, wanting to keep them for his Library—like the Construct ("My! What a glorious trinket!"), the Mythic ("Oh, what a rare creature!"), or the Runaway ("I spy an adventurous heart! Join me!").

Verey's other half is stuck in the Library, and they're on a quest to find it. Interpret "other half" as you see fit, and link it to a Companion's quest if relevant, such as the Mythic or the Construct. Place Verey anywhere you need a hook or a guide to get the Girl and her Companions to the Tomb. Otherwise, the group can bump into Verey outside the Tomb.

THE BIZARRE BAZAAR

This location suits **lost girls** and companions who
value their quick wits • enjoy bustle and noise • hunger for novelty and excitement

— Characters —

Sunbrook, a trendsetter (any pronouns)
<i>Selling boutique goods Draped in their wares Smiling and laughing</i>
Slickwick, a sludge-monger (they/them)
<i>Offering gooey treats Getting too close Speaking lazily</i>
Grumblefuss, a rare art & potion dealer (she/her)
<i>Yelling not to touch the wares Fidgeting with the alignment of bottles & frames Throwing in “something extra”</i>

— Troubles —

<p>A magical item needed to save the underground is hidden somewhere here</p> <p>PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Dragon’s Den</i> • <i>The Fairy Ring</i> • <i>The Teahouse</i>
<p>Someone is selling cheap copies of the vendors’ wares for a high price</p> <p>PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Adventurer’s Tomb</i> • <i>The Hall of Ten Thousand Masks</i> • <i>The Throne of the Crowing King</i>

— Props —

<p>Crates of prickly plums, jellyroot, and other dazzling and exotic goblin fruits</p>
<p>A many-legged beast hauling squirming burlap sacks</p>
<p>Stalls stacked upon stalls, with rolling ladders leading to rickety mezzanines</p>

— Questions —

<p>What odors waft through the market?</p>
<p>When do you realize someone is missing?</p>
<p>What item are you surprised to find yourself desiring?</p>
<p>What do you trade away?</p>

— How to use this Location —

The Bizarre Bazaar is a labyrinth of precarious stalls, memorable vendors, and rare and strange goods. Some of the vendors present good early opportunities to refuse to mind Manners—such as those involving talking back to adults, lying, and being loud or messy.

Make the Bazaar lively and bustling through its community of assorted figures, matched to the characters’ backgrounds. Introduce wares made from the Construct’s material, or a royal known to the Beastie, or a map for the Runaway.

It can also be a Location used early in the session to introduce a Companion. Perhaps the Beastie or Mythic is caged for sale, or the Ogre was tricked into being the muscle for a cruel boss. In either case, the Girl won’t have much tangible to trade (except for maybe her prized possession), so try to get her to give up intangibles—like her own shadow, memory, or a tall tale—which will inevitably reappear at an important moment in the story.

The Bazaar is its own community and faces troubles from organised or hierarchical Locations like the Throne of the Crowing King, the Fairy Ring, or the Hall of Ten Thousand Masks—unfair taxes, stolen or forged goods, or any of the glooms that plague these lands.

THE DRAGON'S DEN

This location suits **adventurous girls** and companions who
lost something precious • make unconventional friends • need a confidence boost

Characters

The Dragon (<i>she/her</i>)
<i>Telling how she is the last of her kind</i>
<i>Wrapping the Girl in magic</i>
<i>Breathing smoky extravagance</i>
Tuft, the shadowy agent (<i>they/them</i>)
<i>Stealing treasure</i>
<i>Professing dedication to their boss</i>
<i>Fearing the Dragon</i>

Troubles

Someone is after the Dragon's prized treasure
PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS
• <i>The Adventurer's Tomb</i>
• <i>The Bizarre Bazaar</i>
The Dragon will grant a wish for a favor
PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS
• <i>The Restless Wreckage</i>
• <i>The Throne of the Crowing King</i>

Props

Slowly burning incense of spice and charcoal
The warm, sleepy glow of candlelight
Closed quarters stuffed with cluttered rarities

Questions

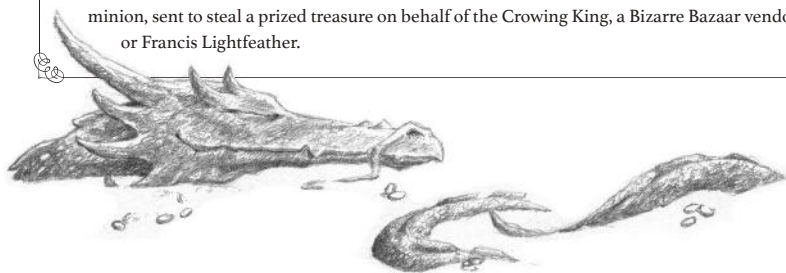
What treasures are found here?
What mundane object lies amongst the gold?
Who finds their heart's desire?
Who looks like a prized treasure?

How to use this Location

Before the group meets the Dragon, spin fearful rumours about a great, monstrous beast that lives in the den who eats young children for supper (if that's on tone with you game), and casts curses on those who cross it. However, when the Girl meets the Dragon, play her as a powerful, well-meaning, friendly soul. Treat the Dragon like an aspirational figure in the Girl's life—cooler and older, who can give the Girl a taste of adulthood.

The Dragon believes people make up stories about her because they misunderstand her. She doesn't fit into society because she's too fiery, too big, and too much of a presence, but she adores her identity. Play the Dragon toward Companions like the Ogre, the Construct, the Faun, and other characters trying to grow comfortable in their own skin. Show the Girl it's okay to claim your identity and take up space.

If Tuft enters play, they should represent the voice of people who fear the Dragon. Tuft is a useful minion, sent to steal a prized treasure on behalf of the Crowing King, a Bizarre Bazaar vendor, or Francis Lightfeather.



THE FAIRY RING

This location suits **lost girls and companions who question their place in society • need a wish fulfilled • believe in the power of words**

Characters

The Fairy Queen (she/her)

Shapeshifting
Commanding to stay
Promising a ring

The Girl, a changeling (she/her)

Mimicking your behaviours
Questioning your memories
Trying to take your place

Troubles

The Fairy Queen wants to replace the Girl

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- The Slumbering City
- The Whispering Willows

The Fairy Queen was cast out of society

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- The Hall of Ten Thousand Masks
- The Throne of the Crowing King

Props

Locks of your hair, tied with a familiar ribbon

All the ingredients needed to create the perfect girl

The gentle hum of gossamer wings

Questions

What promises do you exchange?

What magic are you given?

Who tries to take your place?

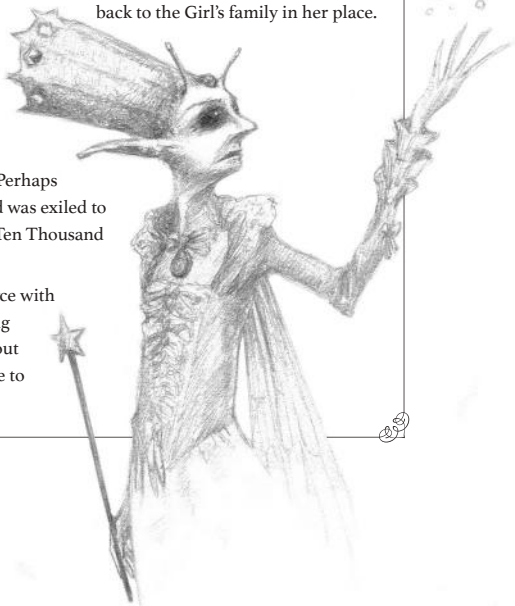
Who breaks a promise?

How to use this Location

The Fairy Ring is a place where words and promises are powerful forms of magic. Its ruler, the Fairy Queen, is a powerful spirit who has many problems—problems you can tailor to your story and tone. As the story's main antagonist in a dark game, perhaps she is a cruel, self-serving queen who wants to send a fairy version of the Girl back to the Girl's family in her place. Maybe she needs the Girl or the Girl's sibling to take their place as her own kin. You can rely on the props to bring out the eerie horror in this scenario.

Alternatively, she can be a more sympathetic antagonist as a strong force cast out of society. Perhaps she disagreed with the Crowing King's rule and was exiled to her own domain, or was a patron at the Hall of Ten Thousand Masks who broke a rule.

Either way, the Fairy Queen is a formidable force with the potential to be an ally or a villain depending on your theme and tone. She could even start out as a villain and, through the Girl's Beliefs, come to realize a different way of thinking.



THE HALL OF TEN THOUSAND MASKS

This location suits **rebellious girls and companions who want a home in high society • are questioning their identity • see through lies**

Characters	Troubles
<p>The Mask Mage (<i>he/him</i>)</p> <p><i>Presenting “neutrality”</i></p> <p><i>Offering masks</i></p> <p><i>Studying your face</i></p>	<p>The world is dulled by rigid order and rules</p> <p>PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Fairy Ring</i> • <i>The Teahouse</i>
<p>Sir December, a <i>glorious knight</i> (<i>he/him</i>)</p> <p><i>Owning a mask of legacy</i></p> <p><i>Telling self-aggrandizing stories</i></p> <p><i>Appropriating fairy tales</i></p>	<p>The Hall’s culture is taking over the world</p> <p>PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Painted Circus</i> • <i>The Whispering Willows</i>
<p>Rar the Stone (<i>he/him</i>)</p> <p><i>Never revealing emotions</i></p> <p><i>Showing off his strength</i></p> <p><i>Applying cool logic to everything</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">— Props —</p> <p>A mask representing your place in society</p> <p>A blank mask filled with potential</p> <p>A mask that looks like a terrifying monster</p> <p>Food that tastes like your favorite dinner and dessert combined</p>
<p>Jacques the Octopus (<i>he/him</i>)</p> <p><i>Desiring a close friend</i></p> <p><i>Wrapping with tentacles</i></p> <p><i>Appearing from inky blackness</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">— Questions —</p> <p>What mask do you take?</p> <p>What mask do you wear?</p> <p>Who is your guide?</p> <p>What is the ceremony?</p>
<p>January, a <i>quiet usurper</i> (<i>he/him</i>)</p> <p><i>Undermining the Mask Mage</i></p> <p><i>Crafting new identities</i></p> <p><i>Being helpful and understanding</i></p>	

How to use this Location

The Hall represents patriarchal society in its own bubble of indulgence, order, hierarchy, and rules. The place will treat you well... if you abide by the role it designates you. The Hall’s contented guests have been there for so long, they live and breathe the masks they wear.

The Mask Mage should present everyone with a mask representing their role in society before entering. You can either ask players pointed questions to describe their mask, or draw from the playbook to bring out a character’s internal struggles or aspirations.

Pick one or two focal characters that suit your tone and create space for the Girl to challenge him. Each one, apart from January, represents a facet of toxic masculinity: Sir December, a white knight who takes all the credit; Rar, a being who prides his strength and denies his emotions; Jacques, assuming personal space and being pushy. If the Girl is interested in exploring a more masculine gender identity, January represents a rebel against the structures in place. He spends his time helping people find their true identity beyond the mask they’re made to wear. He seeks to usurp the Mask Mage, and create a space for positive masculinity free of masks.

❧ THE PAINTED CIRCUS ❧

This location suits **bold girls and companions** who
desire personal expression • admire strong women • want found family

— Characters —

The Ringmistress (*any pronouns*)

Being shot from a cannon
Offering tempting food and drink
Caressing a tamed animal

The Acts (*any pronouns*)

Mystifying the audience
Drawing you into a performance
Being at home and with purpose

Snootflop, a critic (*he/him*)

Trumpeting bad reviews
Complaining about things being “unnatural”
Grumbling and being judgmental

— Troubles —

Someone is poaching the Ringmistress' acts

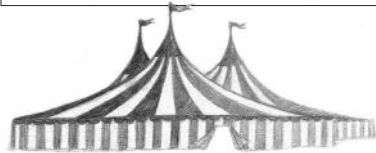
PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- *The Adventurer's Tomb*
- *The Throne of the Crowning King*

The Ringmistress' act has fallen to a curse

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- *The Fairy Ring*
- *The Slumbering City*



— Props —

Glimmering red and white striped tents
Hundreds of balloons in every hue
The mingling of sweat with buttered popcorn, and perfume with grease paint

— Questions —

Who runs the circus?
What acts are displayed on their posters?
Who attends the circus?
What tempts the Girl to join the circus?

— How to use this Location —

The Painted Circus can represent so many things in so many games, being a place of adventure, found family, and strong women. Consider weaving in the Painted Circus if the Girl has a teacher, parent, or other adult in her life that inspires her, or she wants to be an adventurer, artist, or performer when she grows up.

Found family can be a welcome relief for those who seek community and support outside of the family they were born into. People at the Circus treat their fellows with love and care. If the Girl or Companions are seeking a home, family, or understanding, they may find hope here. However, sometimes found family is misunderstood; Snootflop is a good villain to challenge the Circus' values. He finds the collection of unique oddballs all very unsettling and unnatural. Perhaps he is working with the poacher, or had something to do with the curse that struck the Circus.

Feel free to present the Ringmistress as genderfluid or non-binary, using whichever pronouns you feel appropriate—especially when exploring themes around gender expression and identity. The Ringmistress represents someone who leads their own domain outside of this world's structures and constructs, rebelling against the status quo. She welcomes found family and embraces the unique weirdos, spotting their beauty and strength where others might not.

THE RESTLESS WRECKAGE

This location suits **questing** girls and companions who *have homes that lack time or calm • need a ride somewhere • are running from something*

Characters

The Pilot (*any pronouns*)

Always moving forward
Never sleeping
Decaying or crumbling or falling apart

The Figurehead (*any pronouns*)

Wondering where they came from
Made of familiar material
Sharing stories of previous voyages

Troubles

The ship would go, but refuses to face its past

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- *The Dragon's Den*
- *The Fairy Ring*

The ship has lost its joy of adventure

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- *The Hall of Ten Thousand Masks*
- *The Slumbering City*

Props

Unwanted memories circling below
 Air heavy with salt, sweat, and regret
 A gentle metronomic rocking, never stopping

Questions

What do you find inside?
 Where are you carried?
 What has made a home here?
 What regret do you hold close?

How to use this Location

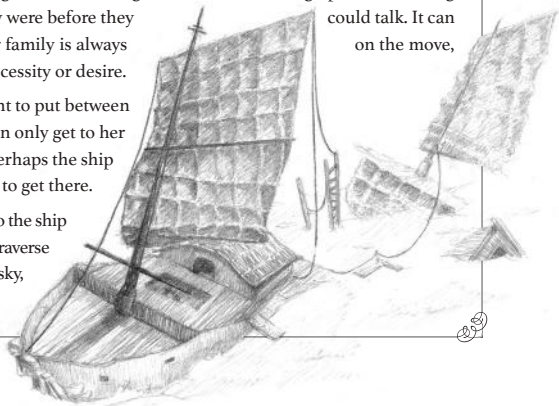
The Restless Wreckage has been on the move for longer than the Pilot or Figurehead can remember—running from something in their past. The boat is a collection of patch-jobs, made from various materials (if the Construct is in play, use their materials) to the point where the Figurehead forgets what they looked like. The ship is in constant movement, never docking at port for long, on routine trips around the world.

It represents themes around running from your problems or constant movement forward to forget the past. This location is ideal for the Girl or Companions who escaped bullies or problems from their home life. Ask the Girl what parts of her home life she sees in or on the ship; push on what the Runaway is running from; use the Ogre's childhood to bring up their troubling past; remind the Beastie of what they were before they also represent the Girl's family if her family is always traveling to different places out of necessity or desire.

Narratively, this location is convenient to put between the Girl and her goal. Perhaps she can only get to her final destination using this ship, or perhaps the ship is the only one who remembers how to get there.

Remember, this is a land of wonders, so the ship doesn't need to be waterbound. It can traverse whatever spaces are appropriate—the sky, sunbeams, dreams, or nightmares.

could talk. It can
on the move,



❧ THE SLUMBERING CITY ❧

This location suits **weary girls and companions who fear the dark and the quiet • need a safe place to rest • want to save the day**

— Characters —

The Toothy Ones (*any pronouns*)

Building trinkets
Swimming under floorboards
Laying traps

The Up-Too-Lates, children (*any pronouns*)

Hiding under beds and in closets
Whooping and hollering after the Toothy Ones
Stealing sweets

— Troubles —

The city is under a sleeping curse

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- *The Fairy Ring*
- *The Throne of the Crowing King*

A nightmare is keeping the children awake

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- *The Dragon's Den*
- *The Wolfwood*

— Props —

A trail of teeth like breadcrumbs
A grumbling, in your belly and elsewhere
The sickly scent of sweet syrup and hot buttered rum

— Questions —

Whose bed do you claim?
What happens at midnight?
Why are the adults asleep?
Who stalks the dreams?

— How to use this Location —

While pleasant and charming at a distance, this city suffers from whatever plagues this world. Describe the City as inviting and welcoming at the outset: dozy cottages with warm light illuminating the windows, delicious scents in the air, beds with the softest down pillows.

Slowly weave in the City's problems as suits your game's tone and narrative. For a very dark game, perhaps the Wolf of Wolfwood plagues the town. For a lighter game, perhaps the Fairy Queen cursed the City to eternal sleep after they broke a promise, or the Crowing King stole the City's sleep so he could rest peacefully.

Helping the town could take on many different solutions depending on your story. Maybe the Girl needs to convince the Fairy Queen to relieve the City's curse. Perhaps the City requires a potent brew from the Teahouse to wake them up. Maybe the Girl needs to best the Crowing King to take back the City's sleep.

Either way, this location pairs well with many problems and antagonists. Use the City to embody or illustrate the problems that face this fantastical land. Use its residents to express of lament what it suffers, so the Girl can help find a solution.



THE TEAHOUSE

This location suits **curious girls and companions** who
want to try new things • have questions about who they are • are in need of a little magic

— Characters —

Panya, the mixer (they/them)
<i>Offering many beverage samples</i>
<i>Eager to answer your questions</i>
<i>Trading in oddities and stories from other places</i>
Chaco, a patron (shifting pronouns)
<i>Drinking transformative drinks</i>
<i>Questioning and exploring</i>
<i>Trying new things</i>

— Troubles —

The mixer needs a new apprentice
PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Fairy Ring</i> • <i>The Painted Circus</i>
A special drink requires rare ingredients
PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Bizarre Bazaar</i> • <i>The Dragon's Den</i>

— Props —

Jars containing impossibly colored liquids
Alchemical mixes to grant your heart's desire
Floating scented candles that complement the drinks served drip their wax in the air

— Questions —

Who frequents the Teahouse?
What fine brews are available to try?
Does the mixer take payment? If so, what?
Whose futures are told in the tea leaves?

— How to use this Location —

The Teahouse is a safe, friendly haven to explore and question yourself and the world around you. Panya enjoys offering samples, and will trade stories, problems, and doubts in exchange. They will listen to the truths you spill as you enjoy a cup, and will give guidance if requested.

This could be a good pit-stop on the Girl's quest, or a destination on the way to acquire rare ingredients. Consider placing it after a tough, challenging, or scary location so the characters can rest. Ask the table what scents draw them in or relax their weary bones, or what gentle sounds lull them into a sense of safety and calm, like water pouring or strange-sounding wind chimes.

While at the Teahouse, provide everyone opportunities to try various drinks and sweets to suit their needs. Offer tea, coffee, hot chocolate, or a fantasy beverage. Do the Companions want a drink that changes their physical form, perhaps one to show them answers, one to overcome their fears, or one that grants some strange power? Give them a taste, a sample for the road, or a recipe containing ingredients found further on their journey.

This location particularly suits the Girl or Companions who question their identity. The figures here are non-binary and genderfluid, embracing and inspiring constant change and exploration. Perhaps the Girl and her Companions stay at the Teahouse for a while as apprentices to live and learn with Panya and Chaco as they explore their identities.

This location dabbles in transformation, so agency and consent between you and your players is important. Always seek a player's consent to alter their character if there is a complication or consequence around consuming transformative beverages. Think carefully before going down this route, as imposing change or an identity on another person can be a traumatic experience.

THE THRONE OF THE CROWING KING

This location suits **equitable** girls and companions who
value fairness and justness • want to topple the powers that be • have something valuable

Characters

The Crowing King (*he/him*)

Accusing the Girl
Bragging
Polishing stolen jewels and medals

The Corvids (*any pronouns*)

Carrying out the King's deeds
Glittering like jewels in the light
Making bets and dares

Troubles

The King boasts about besting a powerful foe

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- *The Dragon's Den*
- *The Fairy Ring*

The world suffers the King's lies and thievery

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- *The Bizarre Bazaar*
- *The Slumbering City*

Props

A castle protected the thickest thorns
 Violet-black feathers and glinting gold
 Two crowns, one on the King's head

Questions

What boasts does the King make?
 Who does the King have his beady eye on?
 What has the King unrightfully taken?
 Who suffers under the King's reign?

How to use this Location

The Crowing King is a wicked, tricky figure focused on himself, his status, and his wealth. He and his minions sneakily steal all sorts from the world's subjects. Always look to what the Girl's home lacks when considering what he stole—it may be time, valuable objects, knowledge, calm, or other concepts to enforce his oppressive structures (like acceptance, creativity, or luck). Perhaps the underground is plagued with lies, chaos, or non-linear time, thanks to the King. Perhaps the King stole all the world's sleep for himself so he could slumber peacefully.

His boasts are always at the expense of someone else. Perhaps the King bet his castle that he could slay the last Dragon (when the Dragon is, in reality, a friendly soul).

Perhaps the King bragged that he could outwit the fickle Fairy Queen (when all she cares about is maintaining balance and peace). Whatever the boast, cast him as the villain at the end of the day.

Companions like the Construct, Beastie, and Mystic representing objects or status complement the Crowing King. The Construct would make a fantastic treasure, and the Mythic a great rare pet, while the Beastie would make a fantastic adviser.



THE WHISPERING WILLOWS

This location suits **uncertain** girls and companions who
dabble in truth and lies • are afraid of isolation • are always misunderstood

Characters

The Unkind Breeze (any pronouns)

Whispering your darkest secrets and fears

Undermining your words

Changing meaning like seasons

The Heart of the Willows (any pronouns)

Hiding dangers

Hiding treasure

Hiding answers

Troubles

Dark visions in the corner of your eye

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- *The Slumbering City*
- *The Wolfwood*

Mists of deceit hiding what you seek

PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS

- *The Bizarre Bazaar*
- *The Hall of Ten Thousand Masks*

Props

Walls and carpets of willow leaves

A breeze that knows your name and more

A tingling in your ears and a prickle in your gut

Questions

What untrue stories are whispered here?

What truth is held within the lies?

Why do the willows weep?

Who made the willows twisted?

How to use this Location

The Whispering Willows is a good location to put between the Girl and her ultimate goal. It's also a good location to hide sought answers and treasure. Does she need to get to the Crowning King's throne? He's insulated himself with a forest of lies and deceit. Does the Teahouse need drops of salt-spun amber for a tea to take the Girl home? It's hidden at the Heart of the Willows.

If you're playing a darker game, the Whispering Willows represent the nasty internalised voices in the Girl's head, and the people in her life who undermine her judgment. Use the Girl's and the Companions' fears to make them uncomfortable. You can put this in the form of a question: "Which of your deepest fears does the breeze whisper into your ears? Which of your most shameful secrets stick in your mind?" Always let your players name what they're afraid of, and incorporate their response into the world around them.

If you're playing a lighter game, take the focus off of shame and insecurity. Ask more general questions like, "What lies about you do the willows' leaves whisper?" and make the forest give wrong directions, wrong advice, and mistrustful guidance. Make the forest so heavy with fog that it's impossible to navigate unless the Girl tries to see through the thick mist to the truth. Present the same landmark to suggest that the group is going around in circles.

Either way, create opportunities for the Girl and her Companions to overcome these lies. Look to the Girl's Manners and Beliefs to see where you can deliver these lies as a threat for her to challenge and overcome.

❧ THE WOLFWOOD ❧

This location suits **brave girls and companions who**
fear darkness, rage, and monsters • enjoy a good hunt • hold family close to their heart

— Characters —

The Wolf (he/him)
<i>Hiding his hunger</i>
<i>Showing his strength</i>
<i>Demanding his due</i>
Gram, the hunter (she/her)
<i>Smoking her pipe</i>
<i>Masking her exhaustion</i>
<i>Remaining ever vigilant</i>

— Troubles —

Gram senses someone is lost in the wood
PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Painted Circus</i> • <i>The Whispering Willows</i>
Gram is weary after a lifetime of hunting
PAIRS WELL WITH THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Restless Wreckage</i> • <i>The Slumbering City</i>

— Props —

A tattered cloak, red with something
A woodchopper's axe, buried in a stump
Beams of moonlight breaking through the treeline

— Questions —

When do you know you're being watched?
What stories are whispered about the wood?
Who is lost in the wood?
What do you hunt?

— How to use this Location —

The Wolfwood is a dark-toned location that evokes the danger and monstrosity of Red Riding Hood-like tales. In this Wood, Gram and the Wolf are locked in a never-ending hunt for each other. When Gram finds out how to take down the Wolf, she can rest. Gram's hands are lined with age, her hair a striking silver, her face scarred from protecting others from the Wolf. She's tough, but kind. The Wolf hides in the shadows and preys upon those who wander near the woods, his charm and smiles belying his appetite.

The Wolfwood is a useful threat you can attach to the Whispering Willows and the Slumbering City—potential hunting grounds for the Wolf. It also pairs well with the Restless Wreckage, since both are locked into states of cycles and constant movement and represent past and present. Much like the Wreckage, Gram is stuck in a routine of defeating the wolf, but never quite being able to end the story.

Tie the Girl's background to the Wolf and the things she fears back home. Does the Girl have a bully? Ask her how they and the Wolf are one in the same. If a mean girl in class has a distinctive laugh, have the Wolf bark or howl in the same manner. Does the Girl fear darkness or silence? Have the Wolf manifest as a more abstract concept, like shadows that prick as sharp as teeth, or a creeping mist that sticks in your throat and steals your voice.

If the Girl's home life places a heavy emphasis on family, loop touches of home into the Wolfwood. Does the Girl have an older maternal figure she looks up to? Ask the Girl what similarities Gram shares with that person. Do the Girl's parents struggle tirelessly in their day jobs? Evoke that same sense of family commitment, love, and sacrifice.

The Game

Here is a checklist of things to do when you run through the game, along with some guidance on about how long each step should take. Find an example game and get additional tips at girlunderground.org/learn

Set Expectations and Tone — 15 min: Share the game’s premise using the directions under “Set Expectations.” Discuss the tone and themes you’re interested in exploring. Make sure everyone has a voice in this discussion.

Safety tools — 5 min: Explain the safety tools for this game. Encourage players to seek consent and ask, “Is it alright if...?” before making decisions that affect another Companion or the Girl.

The Girl — 15 min: Go through the Girl playbook and answer all the questions as a group. We usually have all the players answer questions round-robin style, but allow players to throw the question to the group or ask for suggestions if they’re having a hard time coming up with an answer. Get contributions and buy-in from everyone. End by asking which Manner the Girl has always battled with and set that Manner aside. This is the first Manner she breaks.

When the players are answering “What is your home life like?” keep asking additional questions until you feel you have a good understanding of the Girl. Five or so is usually a good number. If you’re stuck, here are some suggested questions you can put to players:

- What do you like to do for fun?
- Who do you look up to the most at school or at home?
- What do you hide from your parents?
- What do you have to share with your sibling(s)?
- What did you do to make your room truly yours?
- What is your favorite subject in school?
- Who bullies you after school?
- Who is your best friend, and why?
- What chore do you hate doing?
- Where do you hide when it gets too much?
- What do your parent(s) do for work?
- What do you like about home?



Finding the Door — 10 min: The first scene should be about the Girl finding her door to the underground. Lead up to it by describing a bit of the Girl’s home life, focusing on her hopes and fears. Ask questions to the players about what the Girl would do or how she feels. Collectively, write a new Belief in response to the Manner that the Girl breaks in order to find her door.

Select Companions — 10 min: Each player picks their Companion and fills in the playbook. When everyone is ready, ask each player to give a quick summary of their character. Finish by asking each player what state their Companion is in when the Girl finds them, and if they had any specific ideas about their Companion's introduction.

Take a break and pick Locations — 10 min: It's probably been an hour since you started playing. Now is a great time to take a short break. As a Guide, now is also a good time to consider Locations. Think about the Girl, the themes, what plagues the underground, and the Companions when deciding. Pick Locations that slot into the players' answers and bring out the themes everyone is interested in exploring. We find that each Location takes 30–45 minutes; so three or so works for a single session.

Pick one Location to be your final destination (usually with a villain, a way home, a challenge, or an object). Foreshadow this final Location early in the game however you see fit—perhaps someone gives the Girl a quest, bemoans an oppressive ruler, or confesses to the Girl that there's only one way home.

Introduction to the underground — 5 min: After the break, drop right into the underground. Use imagery from the Locations to describe the Girl's first impression of the strange land, and ask additional questions of the players to help describe the scene. End by introducing visible signs of the things plaguing the underground.

Introduction of Companions and Quest — 10 min/Companion: Starting in whatever order the Guide decides, introduce the Companions one by one. This should happen via short scenes of the Girl journeying underground and meeting a Companion. The Companion should share a bit of their story and what they're looking for. There's no wrong way to play out these scenes, but one possible way looks like this:

- Introduce the underground, asking the players questions to help paint the scene—such as by describing buildings, plants, animals, or strange things in the sky.
- Pick someone to play the Girl. Ask them what they think of all this place's wonders.
- Pick a Companion. Ask them to describe what state the Girl finds them in.
- Ask the Girl, “So, you see the Companion in this state. What do you do?”
- Let the Girl and the Companion interact. If one of them triggers a Move, point it out. If appropriate, jump into the scene with a character of your own. When the interaction feels complete, conclude the scene and move on to the next Companion.

Move the Girl as needed so that everyone has a chance to play her and can be involved in the scenes. After meeting all of the Companions, continue on the journey.

Have an Adventure — 30 min/Location: Guide the group on their journey underground. You can lead them to each Location—asking them what they see and who they encounter along the way—or place them at the Location and ask them questions to flesh out the surroundings (“What is the fashion like upon first glance? What landmark do you notice on your way into the City?”). Always start a Location by

describing what it looks like (drawing from player input) and ask the group “What do you do?” Follow what the group is interested in exploring. Present characters, challenges, and opportunities, pulling from the Location as needed. When it feels like you’ve explored all there is to this Location, go onto the next one.

The Final Confrontation — 30 min: The final Location should embody everything that plagues the underground, and will usually present some antagonist the Girl must challenge. Let the Girl and her Companions explore the Location, perhaps facing obstacles as they closes in on their goal. Present the final confrontation or challenge to the Girl so she can Stand Strong in Her Convictions.

The Journey Home — 10 min: The completion of the quest should lead directly to the Girl discovering how she can get back home. The Journey Home is best done in vignettes. Ask the players questions describing how the Girl is triumphant, how the underground is relieved of its burdens, or what has changed because of her quest, and how she finds the door home. These questions should provide some closure to the adventure. Each player should provide some narration to this scene. Here are some example questions:

- How do the underground’s inhabitants celebrate the Crowing King’s dethroning?
- How do we know the curse is lifted when the Girl returns to the Slumbering City?
- What stories are told about the Girl after she defeats the Wolf of Wolfwood?
- How does the underground welcome the return of its Dragons?
- Where does the Restless Wreckage find a home?

Companion Epilogues — 5 min/player: Ask each player what final thing the Girl says to their Companion, and what their Companion does in turn. They might also describe the role that their Companion now takes underground, or how having met the Girl has changed them and helped them grow.

Girl Epilogue and Reflection — 5 min/player: Each player should take one of the Girl’s Beliefs and narrate a short scene showing how the Girl uses that Belief in her real life outside the underground, either immediately or much later in her life. After everyone has shared a scene, thank everyone and discuss any thoughts on the game as a whole.

Debrief — 15 min: Girl Underground has the potential to touch upon some emotional themes. Ask if people would like to stay for 10 minutes to debrief and discuss the game. Remind them that they are not obligated to stay for the Debrief. Take a short break so people can distance themselves from their character role.

Round-robin style, have each player say one thing they really enjoyed about the game (a cool scene, something another player did, etc.). Go around again, and let people share one thing that impacted them (if they feel comfortable). Let the conversation open into a general discussion about the themes touched upon today, and how they reflect our real lives. When everyone is ready to leave, thank everyone again.

Example of Play: Creating the Girl

This example based on an actual session shows the Story Guide and three players—Leandro, Sabine, and Sam—as they start the game and create the character of the Girl.

Guide: Today we are playing Girl Underground, which is a game in the vein of *Labyrinth*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Spirited Away*, and other stories where a girl gets swept away into a magical world, only to encounter strange friends and creatures, and find her way back home.

First things first, we are using Script Change as our safety tool, so if you ever feel uncomfortable, have questions or concerns, or just want to take a little break you can say “pause,” and we can rewind or fast-forward as needed. Girl Underground is a PG-rated game, so I don’t think we’ll hit too much dark stuff here though it’s always a possibility.

The game will run for about four hours. We will try to take five-minute breaks on the hour, but this is also an open table game, so if at anytime you want to get up and move, or if something comes up at home you need to deal with, or don’t feel like playing at the moment, feel free to step away.

The way that the game works is that there are essentially four characters, so you will each play an individual Companion of the Girl who we will meet, and then you will all be collectively be portraying the Girl herself. We’re going to start the game just by talking about who this Girl is, what her life is like, and why it is that she might find this strange portal to another world.

Let’s open with what we know about the Girl so far: You are a 12-year-old girl. You are not of this world, and you are trying to find your way back home. Home isn’t perfect—in fact, there’s a lot that’s hard and unfair about it—but it’s still home. There are people there who love you, who miss you right now, and are wondering why you haven’t yet come in for supper.

There is a series of questions on the Girl’s playbook, so I’m going to pass this around the table and we’ll fill in all of her details.

Let’s start with you, Leandro. The first question is, “Your family has love but no…” and there are five options, or you can write your own. Whichever you pick will determine our Girl’s name.

Leandro: I like “time,” so her name is “Patience.”

Guide: Sabine, the next one is for you. How do you wear your hair?

Sabine: Oh, let me look at the choices. “Tangled and knotted like a fraying rope” is good. I think she should have fiery red hair that’s always tangled.

Guide: Sam, do you want to pick the next one? How do you sound when you speak?

Sam: I like “Quiet like a secret thought.”

Guide: Nice. So Patience, our little twelve-year-old girl, has a quiet voice and wild hair. Leandro, what is your prized possession?

Leandro: I like that if her family has no time for her, she made something to keep herself occupied.

Guide: I like that. So I could see this being anything from a walking stick, to a painting, to a collage, to a little toy statue. Does anything jump out to you?

Leandro thinks for a minute, then Sabine jumps in.

Sabine: A diary? Maybe what she makes is words.

Guide: Cool. That might flow into a question that we’ll have here in just a second, but let’s answer the next one first. What is your biggest fear?

Sabine: I’m going with “humiliation.”

Guide: What about humiliation terrifies her?

Sabine: Maybe when people are laughing at her. That noise, that feeling. Yuck.

Guide: So now we have a couple of open-ended questions. This one for you, Sam. What do you want to be when you grow up? We talked a little bit about her liking writing, but she can be anything she wants to be when she grows up.

Sam: She definitely wants to be a witch.

Guide: Oh, nice. So does she think of her diary as her spellbook?

Sam: Yeah. She could be casting hexes from there on all the people who make fun of her.

Guide: Excellent. Next is “What is your home life like?” Rather than individually answering this one, I want to pass it around and you each fill out one little detail: who she lives with, where she lives, how many siblings she has, things she loves to do while she’s at home, and so on.

Leandro: I’d say she’s always moving. It’s a very transitory life that is inflicted by her family.

Guide: Is that why her family doesn’t have time?

Leandro: Yeah. I’m thinking one of her parents has a job that requires a lot of travel.

Sabine: I think it’s very austere where she is. There’s not a lot of decoration or clutter in her life because she’s always moving.

Guide: I imagine that she has little places in her house where she’s scurried away things that she’s collected on her travels.

Sabine: I like that idea.

Sam: Because she moves around a lot and her family is busy, I think there’s always been a nanny in the parental role, and that person has changed many times, and she writes letters to them.

Guide: So she’s close to her nanny, but is there any one else? Does she have any siblings, Leandro?

Leandro: No, she’s an only child.

Guide: Cool. So next we’re going to find out how she finds her door underground. The world that she goes to doesn’t need to be literally underground, and it doesn’t have to be a literal door that gets her there, but I want to play out a little scene of her life right up to the point of the door.

Leandro, are you willing to play Patience first?

Leandro: Sure.

Guide: Great. So let’s start with you waking up on a rainy Friday morning. You get up, grab your diary, stuff it in your backpack, and start walking to school. You’ve moved around a lot, so you’re still relatively new here. All week you’ve been avoiding the house of a girl who has been bullying you. Leandro, what has she been picking on you about?

Leandro: Probably for writing in my diary.

Guide: Today, for whatever reason, you didn’t try to avoid the house. Maybe you were feeling confident and decided to walk past it. Unfortunately, the girl who lives there—Anne—she sees you. You lock eyes and she says, “Don’t let your precious journal get all wet today.” What do you do, Leandro?

Leandro: I’m trying to not let it bother me. I take the high ground, put my raincoat hood up like I didn’t even hear it. But I walk just a little bit faster.

Guide: You notice that the rain starts to let up. In that moment, you hear Anne’s door slam shut and her footsteps running up behind you. Let’s pass Patience to Sabine. At this point, you’re running faster; but Anne is catching up. Are you headed directly for school, or are you trying to lose her?

Sabine: I’m going to try to lose her.

Guide: Nice. There are some woods near your school that you like to wander through to get some quiet. You veer off into the woods. It’s wet and squishy, and the ground is muddy. As you’re running through, one of your boots get stuck. You trip right into the mud. Your mind goes to your backpack and your diary. You unzip your backpack, and inside you see your diary is safe, but you also see a little lizard. It scurries out and scampers up a tree.

Sabine: Since I’m all muddy and dirty, I can’t go to school like this. So I follow the lizard.

Guide: Great. Let’s pass Patience to Sam now. Sam, the lizard goes up the tree, and you’re following it, then it just disappears. Like, it blinks out of existence. You put your hand where it disappears, and your hand also disappears. You pull it back, and it reappears. What do you do?

Sam: I pull out my diary and cast a little “spell.” I break off a branch and wave it around like a wand.

Guide: Awesome. You cast your “spell,” and to your surprise, something actually happens. You feel yourself pulled up the tree like a magnet. When your head rushes through the canopy of leaves, you look around, and everything is different. Instead of leaves and branches, you see a city...

Read the rest of the transcript of this example game at girlunderground.org/learn

Playbook Advice

The Girl: You're playing to find out how the Girl feels about her journey, and how she grows as a person. Present Manners for her to challenge, and create situations for her to assert her Beliefs. Create space for her to explore her identity. When she pines for home, show how the wonders of the underground can fulfill her dreams. When she wants to stay, turn up the danger and highlight elements that make her miss home.

The Beastie: The Beastie is all about authority and rebellion. Let their words and wit get them into—and out of—trouble. Create encounters with people who think they know better, or who are trying to deceive the Girl. The Beastie knows everyone, so let them introduce new characters or share gossip about known characters. Jump at the chance to weave contentious backstories between the Beastie and those individuals.

The Construct: The Construct represents self-identity and objectivity. They're figuring out what it means to be alive, and how society doesn't always see them that way. Introduce objects that are made of the same material to let the Construct explore their emerging identity and roots. Also introduce characters who the Construct can examine. They are also rebuildable, so if you want to increase the stakes through violence, make them bear the brunt of the damage (but remember, don't kill them).

The Faun: The Faun is transformation and wish-fulfillment. Create challenges that can only be overcome by an active imagination willing to fully explore the fairy-tale logic. Introduce parties and social gatherings to let them draw in helpful characters. Make sure the thing they can't resist makes an appearance (or two!).

The Mythic: The Mythic is free, but weighed down by nostalgia. Allow space for them to be both sad and splendid. Give them a chance sacrifice themselves in a blaze of glory, and then make an equally magnificent return. It's okay for the Mythic to be gone for a short while—their player can take on the Girl during that time—but look for challenges where the Mythic's return can get the group out of a tough spot.

The Ogre: The Ogre is the shame and self-confidence of adolescence. They should bounce between feeling powerful and feeling ashamed. Give them chances to be brave, but contain them when they take over a scene or try to do too much. Make their consequences awkward and self-conscious. Lead them into situations where they can't help but step on their friends' toes (both figuratively and literally).

The Runaway: The Runaway doesn't want to grow up, and is happy exploring the underground. They represent independence, but are also on the run from their problems. They have ways to get the group out of a scary situation, so you can push the danger a little more. Present social interactions for them to tell magnificent stories, but also give them quiet moments alone or with just one other character.

List of Names

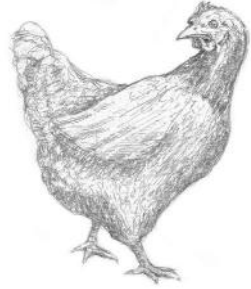
For when you need a thematic name for a new character.

Colorful

Aurora	Mena
Binah	Ochre
Coral	Ovya
Hassu	Periwinkle
Iris	Porfirio
Kali	Sapphire

Natural

Acorn	Laurel
Aren	Moth
Bramble	Nettle
Brisa	Rio
Cedar	Selena
Fawn	Tale



Regal

Amit	Lorenzo
Antoinette	Magdalena
Beena	Malia
Celina	Percival
Dardellyon	Radcliffe
Damba	Ursuline

Shadowy

Ash	Neva
Chaaya	November
Crow	Orpheon
Dunn	Spindle
Echo	Tamala
Morgan	Umber

Soft

Ahe	Gulru
Blaise	Jiniya
Blush	Lalitya
Breeze	Mridul
Cecile	Naila
Chul	Sanura



Sturdy

Anchor	March
Bryn	Montez
Cierra	Pierce
Folke	Rigg
Kiva	Salim
Latrice	Sunder

“Who in the world am I? Ah, that’s the great puzzle.”

Girl Underground is a tabletop roleplaying game about a curious girl in a wondrous world, inspired by *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, *Labyrinth*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Spirited Away*, and similar tales.

Follow a young girl’s journey of self-discovery through a whimsical fantasy land with the friends she meets along the way. Explore twisted, willowy woods filled with whisper-soft lies, or tricky fairy rings with riddling promises, all on the way to overthrow an unjust ruler and eventually find your way back home.

3-5 PLAYERS | 4 HOURS | AGES 12+



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