



The Fairy's Hart

by Marc Majcher

A game of supernatural romance for two players
Written for the 2011 Game Chef Competition

Inspired by "daughter", "forswear", "nature",
and the plays and sonnets of William Shakespeare

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Notes and feedback are greatly appreciated!

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1. Introduction

Within dark wood this fairy maiden spies
this man who sets her heart ablaze with love.
Bold and strong with raven hair and eyes
that put to shame the sparkling stars above.
She cries, O Father, let me take this one
and bury him within my ardent breast!
Says Oberon, my heart is as a stone;
to capture his, you first must pass this test.
These verses do describe the very play
which Fairy King to daughter did impart.
For he bade her to forswear powers fae,
and gave 'till dawn to snare her lover's heart.

And so begins this fairy's hunting game,
will her mark flee, or set his heart to flame?

Commentary

The game is played with two players, one taking the role of a fairy, daughter of Oberon, and one playing a man whom she comes upon in the forest. The fairy has fallen in love with this man, but Oberon will only let her have him if she can convince him to love her before the night is over, without using any of the magical powers that fairies possess.






2. Setup

The game is played by choosing each a role;
A maiden fae, and he her one true heart.
To win his mortal love is fairy's goal,
let him begin by staying them apart.
Create a deck of Jacks and Kings and Queens
and Aces from a pack of cards nearby.
Then mix these well, and six to each convenes;
On these half dozens both their fates will lie.
The final four in their own pile will sit
to discard on the fairy's left-hand side.
Now all these cards will play out bit by bit,
the scenes we see will joy or woe betide.
And let the clock be set for but an hour
to mark the time and let their romance flower.

Commentary

Take the jacks, queens, kings, and aces from a deck of cards, shuffle them together, and deal out six cards to each player. Create a discard pile from the remaining four cards, and place it to the left of the fairy's player.

Set a timer for one hour, and begin play.





3. Initial Scene


Before the starting scene, and between sighs,
the man will tell his name and why he roams
alone, declaring what holds fast his prize,
his nature being not what swain becomes.
Why ramble? Seeks he refuge from the pain
borne from heartbreak's dolorous affliction?
Or ponders he the ends of mind's domain,
works of poetry and verse and fiction?
The fairy likewise gives herself a name
befitting one of courtly place and means.
She tells the mortal's player how she came
to visit him upon the forest greens.

But mind thou, fairy, in describing full,
while lacking magics, thou seem'st plain and dull.

Commentary

To set the initial scene of the game, the man names himself, and tells why he is alone in the woods, and why there is no room for love in his heart. He may already be in love with another, or may have just been spurned by a romantic interest. It is possible that he may be on some kind of quest or a journey, or he may be a priest, or wandering monk. He may simply just enjoy dedicating his life to work, or he may love solitude for itself.

The fairy then names herself, and describes how she appears to the man, a normal and uninteresting girl in the forest, and tells what she does first to try to get his attention.



4. Resolve Cards, Fairy

The scene is set, and so do man and fae
each choose one card on which to set their start,
face down. If either chose a Queen to lay,

The fae may choose to call on seelie's art.

Now if a spell upon her prey she calls,
and King's the other card personified,
upon her frightful father's vengeance falls.

And all the love she's won is set aside.

But elseways, she may weave her glamour's fruit,
revealing how her craft has touched his soul.

Taking to her both cards, of any suit,
compelling his heart under her control.

Though, if she keeps her promise not to charm,

The tale proceeds, and signals no alarm.

Commentary

Each player now chooses a card from their hand, and places it face down in front of them. If either player has played a queen, the fairy may choose to use her magical powers, and perform some charm to enchant and ensnare the man's heart.

If she chooses to do so, and the other card is revealed to be a king, representing the King of the Fairies, her father Oberon has caught her disobeying his command. Describe how he punishes her, and put any face-up cards she had in front of her into the discard pile.

Otherwise, describe how she uses magic to trick the man into loving her a bit more, and put both of the cards face up in front of her.

Clearly, if she has no cards saved yet, or two queens are revealed, this is a likely a good time for her to use her magics.

If she chooses to not use her powers, however, nothing special happens, and play moves on.



5. Resolve Cards, Mortal

Examine now the cards the two have laid,
and count among them one or both a Knave,
so turns each Jack to acts or kind words said.

At once he takes these affections to save.
If any cards remain between the two,
the mortal must look deep within his core,
and judging if her kindness is untrue,
or if she's started to make him feel more.

Should her appeal his satisfaction meets,
the cards to mortal's left side stack are bid.

But if he is not moved by her entreats,
in front of them they're placed, with faces hid.

And now the choice is made and sorting's done.
Begin another scene, borne from this one.

Commentary


Now both cards are revealed. If either has played a jack, the man has fallen in love with the fairy a little for what he sees within her. He takes the jacks and places them face up in front of him.


If any cards remain, the man may consider the actions of the fairy, and decide if she has swayed him. His heart begins hard, and must be convinced to soften.

If he is touched by her words or actions, he may put one or both of the cards face up in a pile to his left, and describe how she has affected him. These cards may be used for or against the fairy's cause when the game ends.

Otherwise, he tells how his is unswayed by the fairy's entreaties, and puts one or both of the cards face down in front of himself.

(In the process of resolving cards, note if an ace is chosen by either player, and which card it is paired with. This will influence the obstacles presented to the lovers in the next scene.)





6. Next Scene, Obstacles

Six scenes are played, one each for every pair
of cards laid down by players man and fae.

In each she aims to further him ensnare
and trap his mortal heart by break of day.

But rover's heart is not so simply won;

his story-teller's duty is to place

impediments on her path, whereupon

she must surmount and step to gain his grace.

Perhaps he finds her lacking in allure,

or may but find her sudden presence strange,

Perhaps his pious soul he preserves pure,


or lives a placid life, defying change.

But try she must, for on this game's she set

Though he resists, she may persuade him yet.

Commentary

Each round, the man will describe new complications to the fairy's attempts to make the man love her, and she must respond appropriately. He may protest her advances, say that he is merely lost in the woods and wishes nothing but to find his way home. He may make any excuse he wishes, but he will not fall in love with this plain, dull girl. Not yet.



7. Aces and Obstacles

This tale is freely told, scenes freely played,
yet time to time, set elements come forth.

When pairs revealed show that an ace is laid,
look to its partner for the new part's worth.

If paired with Jack, impart an aspect new,
about the mortal, secrets dark and grim.

If Queen is mated, let slip nature true
of fairy's shape fantastical to him.

If King of Shadows' visage doth appear,
the lover's struggle Oberon will curse
but though his interference begets fear,
two Aces side by side do portend worse.

The mortal flees without a mere farewell,
discards his love, and Aces turned as well.

Commentary


If an ace was revealed in the previous round, the man must add something even more difficult to his story.

If an ace is revealed with a jack, the man reveals some dark secret of his own. Perhaps he is already married, or maybe he is a murderer, or has the plague.

If an ace is revealed with a queen, the man sees some of the fairy's true nature, and is terrified of her fae attributes, instead of entranced.

If an ace is revealed with a king, Oberon himself interferes in the fairy's courtship, perhaps rendering the man mute, or causing a terrible storm, or giving the man the head of a donkey or some such.

And if two aces are revealed together, the man immediately spurns the fairy, running away and renouncing any affection he has shown her. He discards the aces, along with any face-up jacks he has in front of him.




8. Continuing Play

At present, players twain have had their say.
The cards laid out, the mortal's set defense
responded to in kind by maiden fae,
and each described their proper consequence.
When one scene's done, once more begin again.
Each chooses from their hand a card to place,
As play continues they may ascertain
what secrets lie upon the other's face.
'Tis prudent that a teller makes firm choice,
but plans do not make o'er much grandiose.
'Tis best each player still must have their voice
Keep fixed in mind that story matters most.
 With each their cards, six times around they dance,
 then end the brief courtship of their romance.

Commentary

When both players have had their go for the round, the fairy and the mortal each choose cards from their hands again, resolve them as above, and narrate the outcome.

They do this six times, playing out six scenes, until they have both used all of their cards.






9. Six Scenes

The end draws near as the last cards are laid.
And once the divination therein's read,
the sylph has but one chance left to persuade
her paramour to follow her and wed.
Upon attending fairy's last design
the mortal must consider what is best.
For after this, the story will resign
and we will put this lover's tale to rest.
The couple must consider facets past
to flavor aspects put into this end.
It will not fully be clear till the last
which course the mortal's heart will choose to tend.

The time's at once for these two to decide
to find the fates that in their cards reside.

Commentary

At the end of the last scene, the fairy makes one last entreaty to her beloved, and the man may make a final response. The game then begins to come to its conclusion.





10. Mortal's Final Choice

At end, there now stands but one final chore.
The mortal's cards of love he gives to she,
who adds these to her magics of ardor,
and tallies up her passion's energy.
The final judgment time is now present.
The man takes up the cards he's set aside.
The fairy's strength he may choose to augment,
of turn them down, if her hand's o'ersupplied.
Compare to see whose stack contains the most;
If fae, to her heart his is set ablaze,
Then he will go and join the fairy host,
the two conjoined for all their future days.
If mortal fares the best, he will retreat,
as she returns home, heart spurned in defeat.


Commentary

To determine the outcome of the game, count the cards for and against love's success.

The fairy takes the man's face up jacks, if any, and adds them to her pile of cards, if any.

The man will decide whether to add the face up cards that he has set to his left (if any) to the fairy's pile, or to his stack of face down cards in front of him.

Count the cards of each; if the fairy has more, she wins the man's heart, and the blessing of her father, and they are married and live happily together. If the man has more, he rejects her completely, and she returns to the land of fairy, never to love again. Take a moment to describe the outcome, either way.





11. Breaking Ties

This count has the potential for stalemate,
half a dozen each for fae and man.
Their standing warrants we must turn to fate
to cast its lot, and end what they began.
The card beneath the ones once cast aside
will spell the ending of this tale's account.
A Queen portends the fae will be his bride,
the man's indifference did her love surmount.
An Ace drawn tells the nymph her aim's miscast,
and never will she cherish man again.
She trembles at Oberon's wrath surpassed,
for King exiles the fae to live with men.
A Jack will give the mortal one last choice,
now he may leave, or stay and all rejoice.

Commentary


If the cards are tied six against six, draw the bottom-most card from the discard pile to determine what happens next.

If the card is a queen, the fairy wins the man's heart as described above.

If it is an ace, he rejects her as above.

If the card is a king, Oberon becomes furious and banishes her from the land of fairy to live as a mortal to the end of her days.

If it is a jack, the man may decide the end of the story however he wishes, and tell the end of the tale himself.





12. When the Game Has Ended


At last this play has drawn now to its end.
We've seen but one of many paths unfold.
A story born anew you two have penned,
yet many tales do still remain untold.
If by chance you two would tell again,
reverse who plays the man and plays the fae.
And know but one more hour thou need obtain.
Oh yes! Did sixty minutes overstay?
Check now, and if you've found an hour's passed,
the mortal man awakens in a daze.
This story was a dream, now fading fast.
The players tell how fantasy portrays.
And still, in fairy kingdom reigns their king,
from whom all follies and mischief doth spring.

Commentary

When the players have finished the game, check the timer that was set at the beginning.

If an hour or more has passed, the man will awaken, and find that the entire proceedings were only a fantastic dream. The two players may narrate this ending together, as they wish.

If the players have another hour to spare, they may desire to swap roles, and play again.



Inspirations

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Breaking the Ice

Kagematsu

Game Poems



This coupling Oberon will not deny
for through strange ages, mortal love will die.

END.