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*sweet * peony*
life in simple moments



sweet * peony



sweet*peony is a two-player game where players tell the story of a character or object through a series of short vignettes, each framed through the lens of either Joy or Sorrow. This game explores the ups and downs that come naturally in life, whether over the course of a day, a month, or a lifetime.

What you will need:

- A deck of cards
- Pen and paper or other methods of keeping notes

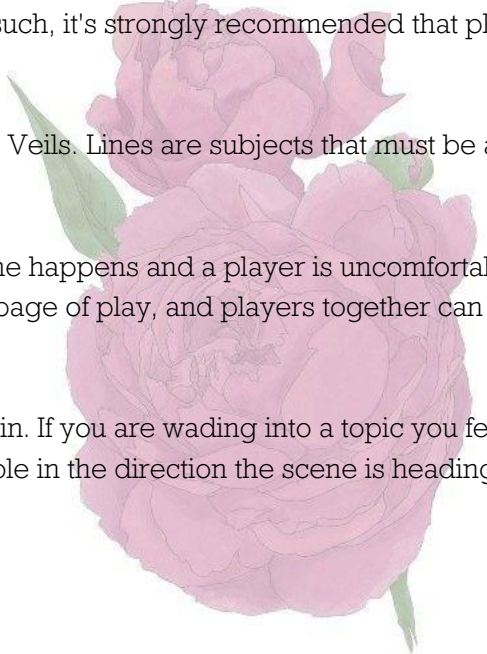
Safety:

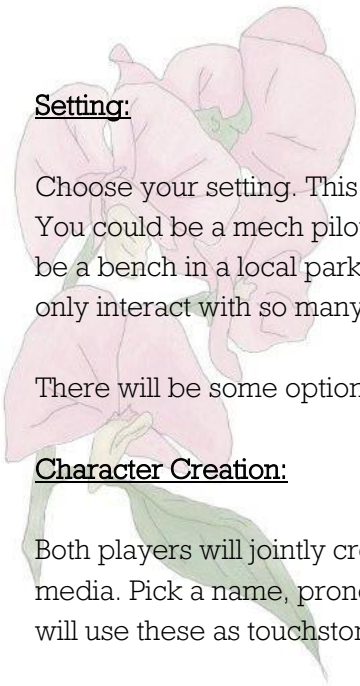
This is a game about strong emotions, particularly ones that can have negative experiences attached to them. A player's comfort and safety is more important than any story. As such, it's strongly recommended that players use a safety mechanism to ensure the comfort of everyone playing.

I recommend starting with a list of Lines and Veils. Lines are subjects that must be avoided. Veils can be alluded to but not shown directly.

I also recommend using the X card. If a scene happens and a player is uncomfortable, they can say or type in chat the X Card. Playing the X card must result in an immediate stoppage of play, and players together can work out how the scene is either changed or scrapped entirely.

My final recommendation is simply a check in. If you are wading into a topic you feel will be uncomfortable, don't hesitate to confirm with the other player that they are comfortable in the direction the scene is heading.





Setting:

Choose your setting. This game is meant to be able to function in any genre. You can be a barista in a coffee shop in modern day NYC. You could be a mech pilot in a galaxy far from our own. You could be a fae living in the Seelie court deep in the swamp. You could even be a bench in a local park. Spend as much or as little time on the setting as you'd like, just keep in mind that your character will likely only interact with so many parts.

There will be some optional question prompts in Additional Resources on page 4 to help build your setting.

Character Creation:

Both players will jointly create one character. This can be a brand-new character, or even a character from another game or piece of media. Pick a name, pronouns, and a description for your character. Think of three adjectives that best summarize your character; you will use these as touchstones for narrating vignettes. You can add as many or as few extra details as you'd like.

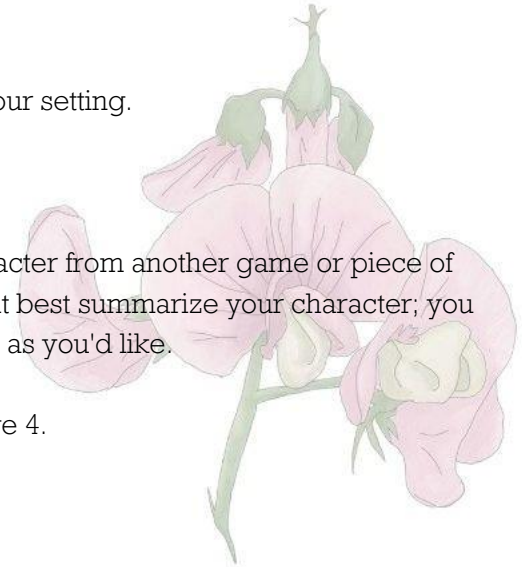
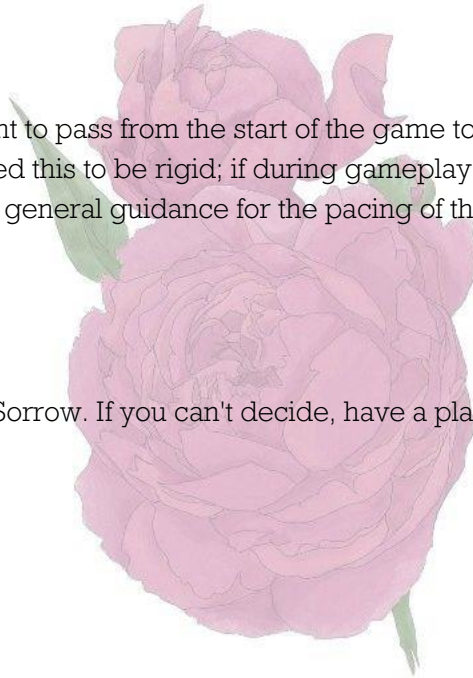
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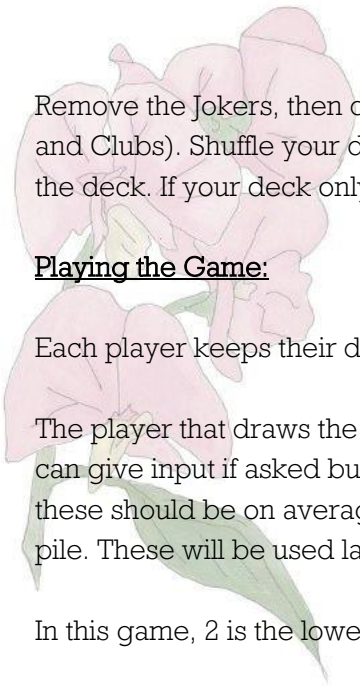
Timeframe:

Determine how much time in fiction you want to pass from the start of the game to the end. It can be in days, weeks, months, years, or even across an entire lifetime. You don't need this to be rigid; if during gameplay it feels more natural go with a shorter or longer timeline that's okay. This is intended to give general guidance for the pacing of the game's narrative, and how much time could potentially pass between vignettes.

Preparing for the Game:

Decide who will play Joy and who will play Sorrow. If you can't decide, have a player flip a coin. If they get heads, they are Joy, if they get tails, they are Sorrow.





Remove the Jokers, then divide the deck by suit. Joy gets the Red suits (Hearts and Diamonds) and Sorrow gets the Black suits (Spades and Clubs). Shuffle your decks and place face down. Each player is then dealt two Jokers, which are kept face up and not shuffled into the deck. If your deck only has 2 jokers total, deal each player one.

Playing the Game:

Each player keeps their decks face down. At the same time, each player will draw and place the top card from their deck face up.

The player that draws the highest card will narrate a vignette of the character framed by the emotion they are playing. The other player can give input if asked but should not contribute outside of that. A vignette can be as long or as short as you want, but keep in mind these should be on average only a few minutes long. After the scene, the winner of the round adds the two cards played to their discard pile. These will be used later to determine the ending.

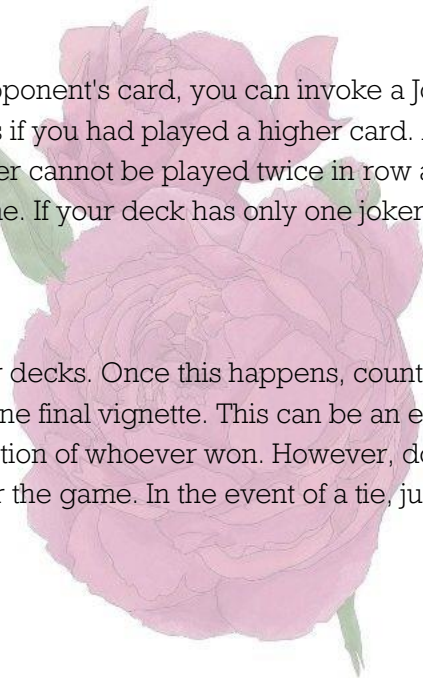
In this game, 2 is the lowest value card, and Aces are the highest.

In the event of a draw where the cards match, co-narrate a vignette that is melancholy or bittersweet. Afterwards, each player claims one of the cards for their discard pile.

If you play your card and it is lower than your opponent's card, you can invoke a Joker. By invoking a Joker you automatically win the round, narrate a vignette, and claim the cards as if you had played a higher card. After invoking a Joker, flip it face down; it can no longer be used for the rest of the game. The Joker cannot be played twice in row and cannot be used to break ties. The Joker is never counted towards your total at the end of the game. If your deck has only one joker, only flip it after you use it a second time.

Ending the Game:

The game ends when both players exhaust their decks. Once this happens, count how many cards you have in your respective discard piles. Whoever has the most cards will narrate one final vignette. This can be an ending to the story, or even an epilogue detailing what happens after the end and is framed by the emotion of whoever won. However, don't think of this final vignette as a character ending; this is just the final emotion we see from them for the game. In the event of a tie, just like in gameplay, co-narrate a melancholy or bittersweet ending/epilogue.



Additional Resources and Ideas:

Setting Questions:

These optional questions can help guide worldbuilding. Ideally, they should only be answered in a few sentences at most.

- Is the setting Realistic or Fantasy?
- What does technology look like?
- Is there magic? If so, what does it look like?
- Is your story taking place in an urban, suburban, rural, or wilderness environment? Will you travel between these?

Character Creation Ideas:

These optional questions can help guide character creation. Ideally, they should only be answered in a few sentences at most.

Character:

- Does your character have family?
- Who are your character's friends?
- Does your character have a job?
- What are your character's hobbies?

Object:

- What are you made of?
- Are you sturdy?
- Are you natural or were you made?
- How old are you?

Alternative Gameplay:

If you are looking for a quicker game you can optionally deal only one red suit to Joy, one Black suit to Sorrow, and only one Joker to each player. This will reduce the total number of vignettes from 26 to 13.

Acknowledgements:

HUGE thanks to Adela for not only playtesting sweet*peony several times but also creating all of the gorgeous art for the game. Also, thank you to Weston for creating the Sad Game Jam, I would never have thought about a game like this if it weren't for you!