



Feathers
by Remi Perrmann

Introduction

Feathers is a game of angels, fallen into our world, wandering in unfamiliar, fragile bodies, looking for a people, places, and selves they can find comfort in. It's about being divine inside, and learning to own and love what's on the outside. It's about the connections that keep us warm, and how we become the people we want to be. Heaven is lost to them, never to return, but there are undreamed of joys and tragedies to be found among the flock here below.

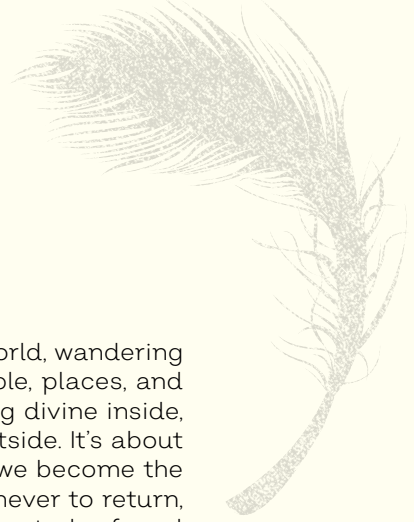
In case it isn't clear: this game is deeply queer, and is a pretty transparent metaphor for being transgender. You're not here to wallow in misery, even though the characters are likely to hurt and get hurt along the way. This story, just like ours, is ultimately an optimistic one.

Content warnings: themes of dysphoria, implied self-harm, unhealthy relationship dynamics

Any questions, contact me on my Twitter @cali_keftiu

This game has a theme song, if you go for that sorta thing: Mother Mother's *Get Up*. Make me real happy by listening to it together before you play.

The game is one of *Belonging Outside Belonging*, a system by Avery Alder.



Thanks to:

Avery Alder, for making the bones this game lives on, but also for being a kind, genuine soul and one of my greatest inspirations.

Meguey Baker, for making beautiful, evocative things, and for giving me killer feedback and a big shot of confidence both.

Nausicaã Enriquez, for being a dear friend, huge help through the entire process of making this dream a reality, and for writing *The Rebel*.

Evangeline Ingram, for giving me the idea behind *The Homemade Deities* and solving several big nasty snarls along the way.

Jay Iles, for the beautiful dark magic that is layout, and for all her clever designs.



Mechanics

Before play starts, it's important to discuss comfort zones, boundaries, and triggers. I strongly suggest using a safety tool like Script Change or the X-Card; **Feathers** is an emotional game and an intimate one, and things can hit close to home.

The main mechanic of the game is simple; play is a conversation, with roleplaying in the fiction free-flowing as it comes. Everyone plays their character, but is also welcome to play as the supporting cast (created as needed, especially for Situations, or pulled from the lists on each Role) as the need arises. Think cinematically, rather than as a continuous narrative; frame scenes and cut to the important parts.

MOVES

Each playbook has a list of Moves, little bits of prepackaged narrative, and you do them by simply doing them in the narrative.

Regular Moves can be made whenever you like.

Weak Moves are moment of fallibility or bad luck, where your character looks bad or succumbs to their worst habits, and generate a Token when they're made.

Strong Moves are moments where your character steps into the spotlight, acting as their best self or defying their worst, and require a Token to be spent in order to be made.

Situation Moves can be done freely.

Some Moves are phrased as questions, in italics; the answers to these are known to the characters innately, solved through clues in the fiction or just revelation, rather than actually asked and answered out loud in-character.



Setting Up

ROLES

Begin by distributing the Roles. Here are your options:

THE LOVER

You fell from a perfect chorus, a lonely soul trying to find something to belong to again. All that remains is the heart beating in your chest, full of love and starving for more. You take your refuge in the arms of others, and you know the real thing is out there, waiting.

THE DANCER

You fell into a world full of miracles and rhythms all its own. There's a secret you know, and can't wait to show it to everyone, if only they'd let their walls down. You're here to take things a little less seriously, and help everybody else do the same.

THE DREAMER

You fell so hard you shattered, and now you're trying to make someone new out of the pieces you find. A broken vessel, a blank slate, a chance to be what you've always wanted. You have a dream, and you can't wait to see them in the mirror.

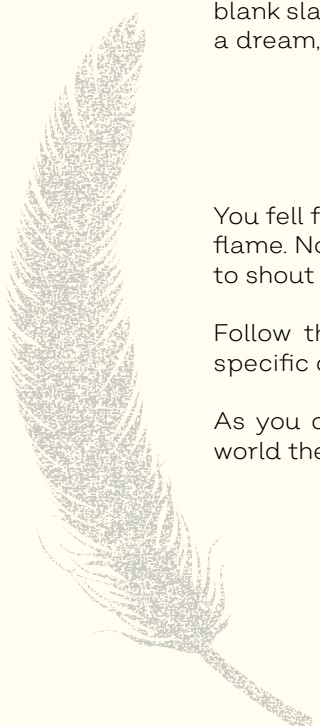
THE REBEL

by Nausicaä Enriquez

You fell from heaven like a shooting star, all hurt and rage and flame. None of this is fair or right, and you finally have a voice to shout with. You burn bright with heartbreak.

Follow the choice options for names, looks, and playbook-specific decisions. You have all the Moves listed.

As you create your characters, talk to each other about the world they live in and the people they share it with.





QUESTIONS

Answer these questions as a group, and if that discussion prompts more, feel free to answer those too; you're supposed to be setting a stage you'll want to play on.

Do the angels already know one another, or think they're alone in this?

Is our story in a small town, a sprawling city, or somewhere else?

What time of year is it?

Are we playing what comes naturally, or imposing some sort of narrative time limit (a single day leading up to a party that night, the week leading up to a holiday, etc)?

SITUATIONS

Lay the Situations on the table; they're all in play.

The first time someone picks them up, they choose Desires from the list, and play them accordingly.

Situations will be passed around as different players pick them up and put them down according to the instructions on the sheets, playing setting elements and supporting cast as fits the fiction.

Situations they can always be set down if you simply no longer want to play them.

You can only ever hold one Situation at once.

ENJOY!

The Lover

You fell from a perfect chorus, a lonely soul trying to find something to belong to again. All that remains is the heart beating in your chest, full of love and starving for more. You take your refuge in the arms of others, and you know the real thing is out there, waiting.

CHOOSE A NAME

Cass, Izzy, Kira, Remi

CHOOSE A LOOK

sleepless eyes, teary eyes, passionate eyes, bright eyes, naive eyes

high scars, stick-and-poke tattoos, wrist scars, elaborate tattoos, scars only a lover could find

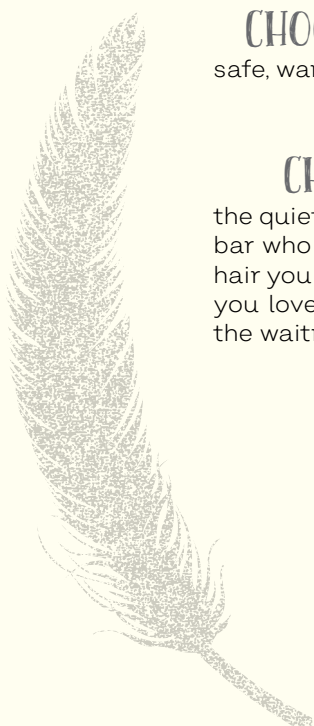
Tell us what your wings looked like.

CHOOSE WHAT YOU REALLY WANT TO FEEL

safe, wanted, beautiful, whole, claimed, remembered

CHOOSE 2 PEOPLE YOU'VE FALLEN FOR

the quiet tattoo artist who somehow gets it, the cute guy at the bar who almost believes your story, the sad girl with the dyed hair you ran out on in the middle of the night, the photographer you love to pose for, the painter whose work makes you cry, the waitress who always has stories to tell





CHOOSE ONE TO ASK LEFT

Why don't you want us to get closer?

What happened that time I kissed you?

TIPS

Don't be shy with your love. Fall for people like you don't remember what heartbreak is.

Push other character's boundaries, but be mindful of other player's.

Make your character fallible and relatable.

STRONG MOVES

- Let yourself be loved.
- Ditch your anxieties.
- Fall out of love.
- Dry their tears.
- Steal a moment, apart from the world.
- Ask, "What do you love?"

REGULAR MOVES

- Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable.
- Fall in love.
- Speak to romantic ideals.
- Let yourself be held.
- Reassure with a gesture of intimacy.
- Ask, "What do I mean to you?"

WEAK MOVES

- Tell someone kind lies.
- Make it about you.
- Think you're closer to someone than you are.
- Cave to your lover's wishes.
- Beg to be touched.
- Ask, "What do you want from me?"

The Dancer

You fell from Heaven and into a world full of miracles and rhythms all its own. There's a secret you know, and can't wait to show it to everyone, if only they'd let their walls down a little. You're here to let loose, take things a little less seriously, and help everybody else do the same.

CHOOSE A NAME

Sunny, Felix, Penny, Beau

CHOOSE A LOOK

toothy grin, ready smile, cute little smirk, shy smile, lights up my whole face

flowing fabrics, comfy outfit, out-of-season outfit, clashing patterns, the boots are what matters

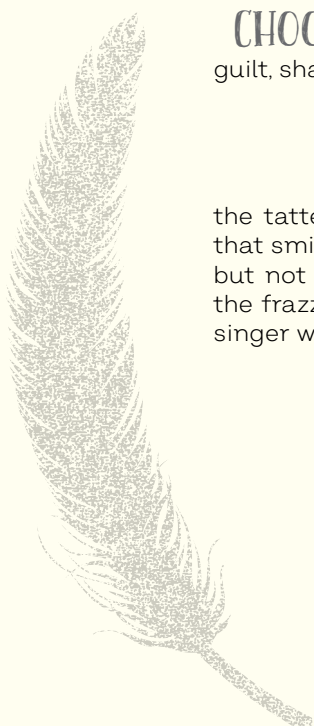
Tell us what your wings looked like.

CHOOSE WHAT YOU WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND

guilt, shame, anger, fear, yesterday

CHOOSE 2 PEOPLE YOU BELIEVE IN

the tatted-up enby you like to dance with, the witchy chick that smiled at you once, the punk who told you their life story but not their name, the queer teen with the rocky home life, the frazzled single dad you keep running into, the lonely folk singer with the shaky hands





CHOOSE ONE TO ASK LEFT

What silly, stupid thing did I talk you into doing with me?

What didn't I take seriously enough?

TIPS

See and speak to the beautiful nonsense of the world.

You can be whimsical and light without dodging all heavy emotions or being a class clown.

Make your character fallible and relatable

STRONG MOVES

- Get everyone's attention.
- Help someone let go.
- Attach beautiful meaning to coincidence.
- Let something slide right off you.
- Be heard as genuine.
- Ask, "What's holding you back?"

REGULAR MOVES

- Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable.
- Sing or dance or just let loose.
- Tell them to do something risky.
- Say something genuine.
- Make someone laugh.
- Ask, "How can I cheer you up?"

WEAK MOVES

- Act awkward.
- Come across as aloof.
- Share something unbelievable.
- Underestimate someone's hurt.
- Lose your nerve.
- Ask, "What am I not seeing?"

The Dreamer

You fell so hard you shattered, and now you're trying to make someone new out of the pieces you find. A broken vessel, a blank slate, a chance to be what you've always wanted. You have a dream, and you can't wait to see them in the mirror.

CHOOSE A NAME

Regina, Alex, Glory, Lukas

CHOOSE A LOOK

trembling hands, bloodied knuckles, busy hands, tattooed hands, ink-stained hands

jingly things, simple piercings, too many rings, elegant piercings, accessories you can fuss with

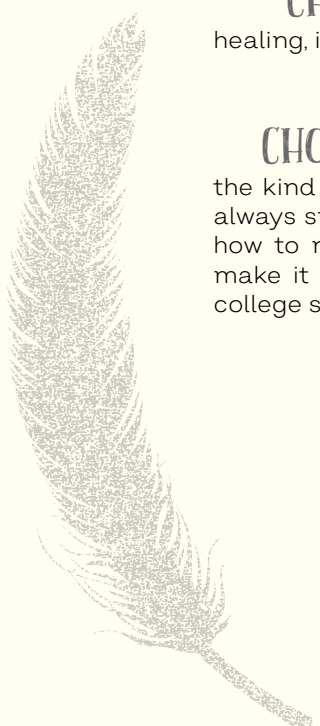
Tell us what your wings looked like.

CHOOSE WHAT YOU DREAM OF DOING

healing, inspiring, understanding, protecting, uplifting

CHOOSE 2 PEOPLE YOU WANT TO BE LIKE

the kind old soul at the New Age shop, the tired author who always smokes with his morning coffee, the waiter who knows how to really listen to people, the actress who deserves to make it big, the widow who cooks for all the local kids, the college student who wants to be an angel





CHOOSE ONE TO ASK LEFT

What lesson did you try to teach me?

How did I overstep your boundaries?

TIPS

See something beautiful in everyone.

Try and build a self you can be happy as.

Make your character fallible and relatable.

STRONG MOVES

- Stand for what you believe in.
- Create something beautiful and new.
- Know yourself for a moment.
- Share someone's passion.
- Be gentle, like you want others to be.
- Ask, "What means the world to you?"

REGULAR MOVES

- Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable.
- Reach out for help.
- Do a little something, together.
- Share what you think.
- Try something new.
- Ask, "Who do you want to be?"

WEAK MOVES

- Hide your feelings.
- Say what they want to hear.
- Look to someone else for the answer.
- Confess your despair.
- Get overwhelmed.
- Ask, "Who do you want me to be?"

The Rebel

By Nausicaä Enriquez

You fell from heaven like a shooting star, all hurt and rage and flame. None of this is fair or right, and you finally have a voice to shout with. You burn bright with heartbreak.

CHOOSE A NAME

Amos, Dawn, Erin, Jackie

CHOOSE A LOOK

bitter voice, resonant voice, dispassionate voice, shaky voice, quiet voice

armor of jokes, aura of terror, cloak of despair, house of stories, naked heart

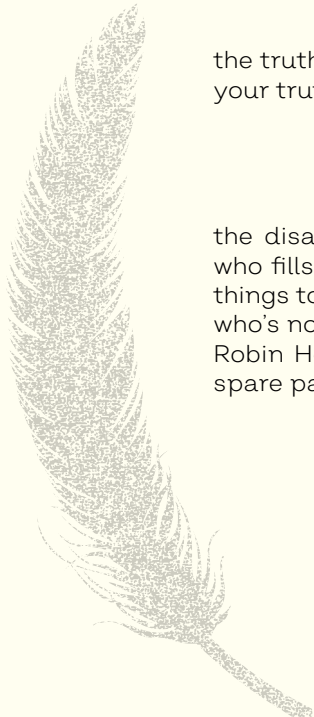
Tell us what your wings looked like.

CHOOSE WHAT YOU NEED TO SAY

the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, a better truth, your truth

CHOOSE 2 FELLOW REBELS

the disabled person who doesn't speak verbally, the tagger who fills the city with watching eyes, the teen who has better things to do than win awards for their parents, the queer elder who's not gonna let this happen again, the hacker trying to be Robin Hood, the-right-to-repair activist with pockets full of spare parts





CHOOSE ONE TO ASK LEFT

How do I scare you?

How did I ignore you?

STRONG MOVES

- Act to protect the innocent.
- Create a better truth.
- Cut your losses and find a better place.
- Tell the truth, inspiring positive change.
- Ask, "Who is responsible?"
- Ask, "How can I make it better?"

REGULAR MOVES

- Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable.
- Confess your hurt to a friend.
- Doubt your perceptions.
- Maintain your own beliefs.
- Speak to ideals of agency.
- Ask, "What is unjust here?"

WEAK MOVES

- Hurt or terrify someone with your wrath.
- Keep trying to fix something that can't be repaired.
- Lash out to defend yourself.
- Tell the truth despite the consequences.
- Ask, "How will you make it better?"

YOU ALSO PLAY THE
VIBRANT FLOCK

We're not alone, for better or worse; the world is full of people, all with their own heartbreaks and victories and vivid colors. To be an angel among the flock is strange, humbling... and to not be alone, for the first time.

It's the hardest thing in the world to reach out.

CIRCLE 2 DESIRES:

a celebration of our differences, to prove we were here, stories to trade, family, to create something new, forgiveness, voices to sing alongside, to make an impact

TIPS:

- Show people that need the angels as much as the angels need them.
- Remember that people are beautiful and flawed and worth celebrating.
- Ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give.

PICK UP WHEN:

Someone lets down their walls and risks letting another into their life, if just for a moment.

GIVE AWAY WHEN:

You realize you can't do this alone, and that's okay.

MOVES:

- Give a normal person a name, a story, and a chance.
- Have someone fuck up in a very human way.
- Believe.
- After each move, ask "what do you do?"





YOU ALSO PLAY THE

IMPERFECT VESSEL

Our stories are written in the imperfections on our skin, no matter how much they ache. Now clad in too-solid flesh, the angels dream of lost glories; brilliant wings, beautiful eyes, blinding flame...

It's you.

CIRCLE 2 DESIRES:

to be reclaimed as a canvas, the myriad pains and annoyances of life, to be nothing like the old, incredible highs and awful lows of sound and smell and taste, to be on display, vulnerable intimacy

TIPS:

- Remember that your job is not to make everyone miserable.
- Less is more; being overbearing won't work half as well as a fleeting look or feeling.
- Ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give.

PICK UP WHEN:

An angel's new body becomes the focus, or characters become physically intimate.

GIVE AWAY WHEN:

Your body is in the spotlight, shivering.

MOVES:

- Remind them what they've lost.
- Help them love what they have now, gently.
- Give them a chance to make this thing their own.
- After each move, ask "what do you do?"

YOU ALSO PLAY THE
SANCTUARY ROOST

We all share that craving for a space to call our own, some little refuge of thin walls and familiar comforts away from all the hurt and noise of the world. Heaven was a sense of perfect belonging, but the angels only now find a place of their own.

Home.

CIRCLE 2 DESIRES:

respite from the world beyond, to be shared with others, rest and recovery, to be shamelessly unique, no prying eyes, a place to be vulnerable

TIPS:

- Make places you'd want to curl up in.
- Remember that just a few details can make a space feel real.
- Ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give.

PICK UP WHEN:

People share their spaces, cramped and lovely, with someone.

Give away when:

You're made welcome, or you make a place your own.

MOVES:

- Present an object with a story behind it, waiting to be told.
- Remind us who isn't here.
- Show us what they're safe from.
- After each move, ask "what do you do?"





YOU ALSO PLAY THE

HANDMADE DEITIES

The perfect order of heaven is gone, gone for good. All that remains is what people have always had: stories and faith.

Believe in each other.

CIRCLE 2 DESIRES:

to share rituals big and small, the wonders of the natural world, inherited stories, making up something new together, an excuse to be close, comfort when nothing makes sense

TIPS:

- Be genuine, even with small superstitions and little rituals.
- Show the love and warmth that people get from and put into what they hold close.
- Ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give.

PICK UP WHEN:

Someone shares their faith, seeks it out, or feels truly alone.

GIVE AWAY WHEN:

You look above for guidance, or long for a simpler before.

MOVES:

- Share something dear and genuine.
- Invite someone in.
- Give a sign, a small one, so easy to dismiss as coincidence.
- After each move, ask “what do you do?”