





# A Crown of Dandelions

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*I have an old picture from Jessie's birthday. You can't see her face, but look - that's her favourite dress. Her hair. That's her hand, stained yellow with dandelions. You can see a little bit of her flower crown, just on the edge of the frame.*

*I miss her.*

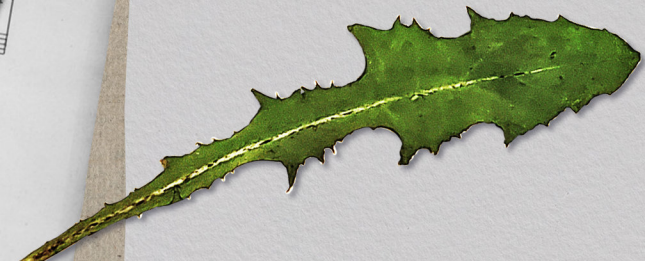
ANDELION.

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Op. 26, No. 1



A Crown of Dandelions is a live action storytelling game played outside.

Everyone is here to make dandelion crowns, because today is Jessie's birthday, and that's what she would have done.





# TO NE

The tone of your story depends on the season you play it in. Look at the field. How do the flowers bloom?

If most of the flowers are still buds, Jessie's passing was recent. Silences are sharp places where Jessie might have spoken. It's hard to focus on her life instead of her death, but we try.

If the field is in full, beautiful bloom, today is a good day to remember. Stories are bright and fond.

If most flowers have gone to seed, it's been a long time since Jessie left. Memories are faded, and the stories you share might be missing details. You can work together to remember her, filling in details where others forget.



Play

When you gather flowers, talk about who Jessie was. Her little habits, her hobbies, her dreams, things she used to say, things she loved (or hated).

If it's been a while since you found a good flower, talk about her death instead.

When you weave flowers, talk about your relationship with Jessie. Consider memories in tableau: glimpses of life, rather than full stories.

If a stem breaks, share something that fell apart without her.



When you finish your crown, place it on your head and tell your most personal story about Jessie. Everyone should stop gathering or weaving to listen, though people are welcome to ask questions.

Once you're finished, you can stay to listen or drift away to think about her privately. Consider taking a picture - Jessie was always the one to do it when she was here.



*Some people may gather while others weave. Some folks might drift back and forth, picking and weaving and picking again. Some people may join late or finish early. That's alright. We don't always have people for as long as we'd like to.*

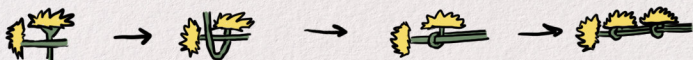
## Making Crowns

*Only one person needs to know how to make the crowns before you start. Showing people how to weave feels intimate, which sets a good tone for play.*

Gather the dandelions. Pick them near the base of the plant, so there's a nice long stem attached to the flower.

Make a cross with two dandelions, their flowerheads just poking past the point of intersection.

Wrap the stem of one dandelion around the other, then point its wrapped stem in parallel to the straight stem of the other dandelion.



Add a new flower, placing it perpendicular to the first two stems.

Repeat the process of wrapping and adding until you have a woven bundle of flowers a little longer than your forearm.

Twist the length of flowers into a circle so the ends meet. Tuck the stem end into the flower end, wrapping when necessary.

Place your crown on your head. Share your story.

*For a longer game, consider making wreaths instead of crowns. When you finish a wreath, set it somewhere that feels distinct from its surroundings: a stump, a rock, a bare patch of earth. Then tell your story.*





## Post-script: On Dandelions

Dandelions have a complicated story. In North America, they're an invasive species. They're also useful food for some pollinators, eminently edible, and the basis for a handful of folk rituals. Spread a seed, make a wish.

This game uses dandelions because they are tenacious. If you play *A Crown of Dandelions* with a dozen people, there will still be dandelions next year. Their taproots run deep into the earth. Most folks wouldn't miss them if they were gone.

If you're a resourceful, enterprising sort of person, feel free to harvest the whole dandelion. Leaves can be used as salad greens; flowers can be made into wines and jellies; roots can be roasted and used as a coffee substitute. Just give yourself some extra time to play out the harvest version of this game, and maybe bring some gloves and a spade.



Avoid eating dandelions if you're pregnant, or allergic to their pollen.

If dandelions don't make sense in your neck of the woods, you can play this game with any plant that has flexible stalks. Grass crowns are lovely; I like to make them from plantain and clover in the summertime. Just take care to pick only plants that are safe for skin and wouldn't hurt native flora populations or someone's garden.



### Acknowledgements

For Erin. For John.

Designed and formatted by [Kurt Refling](#).

This game was written for the 2024 Golden Cobra Challenge. Thank you to the working committee, judges, and other organisers. It feels good to finally submit something to a design challenge that has inspired me for years.

### Image credits, in order of appearance

- P1- Gentleman on the Summer Meadow, Richard Mauch, 1921
- P1- Sunset Girl, Aziz Acharki, Date Unknown
- P1- The Dandelion, E. P. Erskine, Joseph Planner, 1894
- P1- Woman Holding Free Stock Image, Lisa Fotios, Date Unknown
- P1- Seed, Standard Cyclopaedia of Horticulture, L. H. Bailey, 1917
- P1- Seeds, The Child's Book of Nature, Worthington Hooker, 1886
- P1- Calyx, How Plants Grow, A Simple Introduction to Structural Botany, Asa Gray, 1858
- P2- A Dandelion and a moth, Johann Cristoph Bayer, 1750
- P2- Tone, There Dwells Within the Heart of a Tone, Thomas Story, 1866
- P2- Dandelion Seeds, William Henry Fox Talbot, 1858
- P3- Caspari Bauhini Pinax Theatri botanici, Caspar Bauhin, 1671
- P3- Letter M, Prinsarnes blomsteralfabet, Ottilia Adelborg, 1892
- P4- Tallpiece with Dandelion Seedheads, Outing, Volume XXXIV, 1899
- P4- [Child with dandelion], Las Maravillas Del Cielo, Roque Gálvez y Encinar, 1876

Thank you also to [Syaf Rizal](#) for the font *Bitcheese*, and to [TextureLabs](#) for at least a dozen textures. All other non-font assets created for this project. Special thanks to Mom & Dad for finding a yellow dandelion in October (and microwaving it).