



MY SHADOWED HEART

A Sword Queen Game
By Jamila R. Nedjadi

It's been a long time since we've spoken to each other. The last time we were physically together, there were no words. Just a chasm between us, stretching wide and dark, swallowing every good intention or hopeful thought. The words I tried to string together never quite became a sentence. At best, they were just enough to tie to each other, and I used these words as a rope, letting myself down into that chasm. You never tried to follow me.

It's been a long time. But then the call came. They needed my help, they said. You did, I suppose. They said they were close to losing you. They said there was barely anything left. **They said you had gotten sick, you were becoming one of THE FORGOTTEN. Everyone you loved and who loved you, their memories of you eaten away by the disease.**

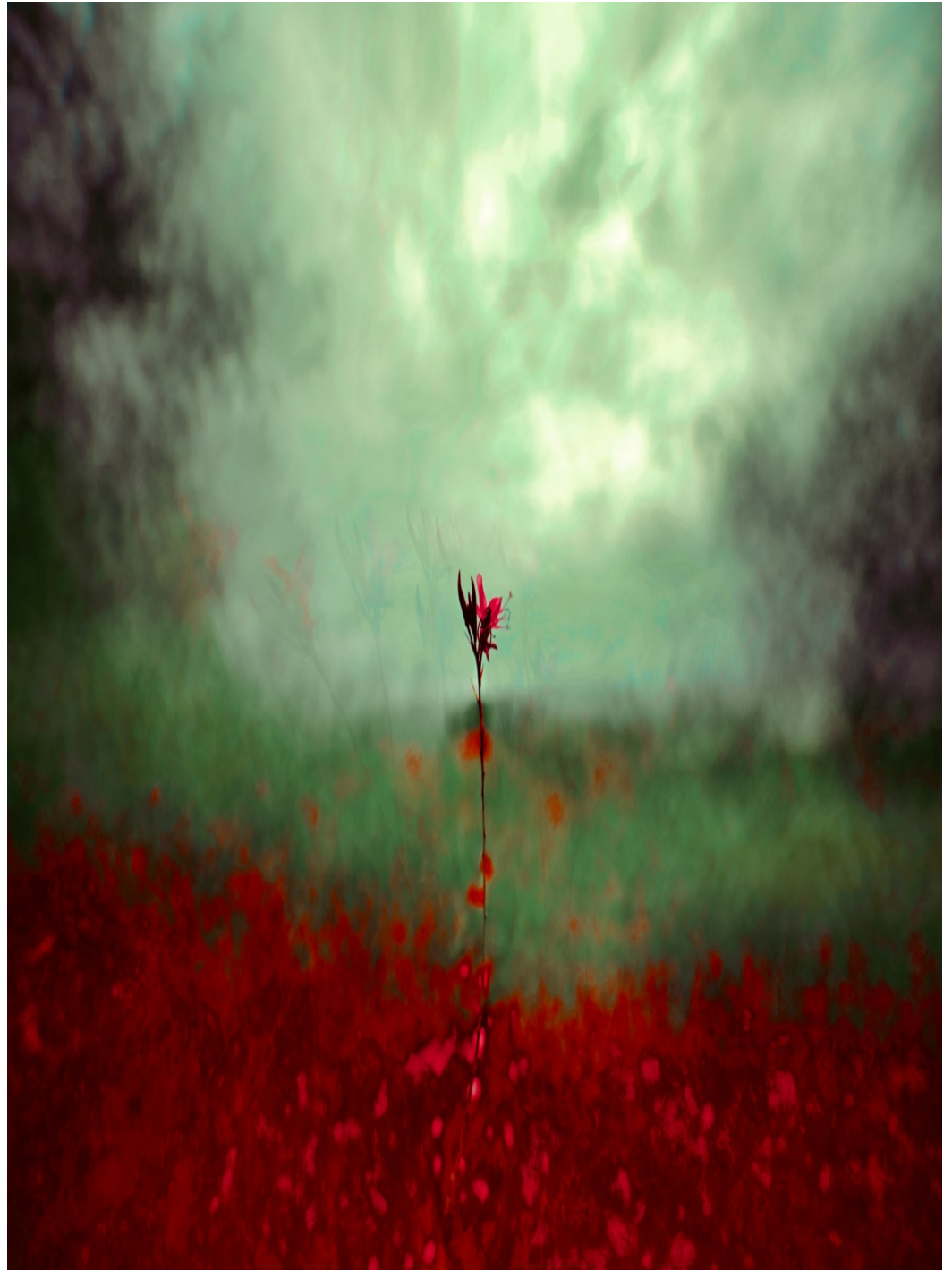
Even now you were FADING, the only thing even keeping what remains of you here, is me. My MEMORIES of you.

Should I have been surprised? That no matter how much I tried to forget you, a shadow of you was left in my heart?

They were crying. Begging. Please. Help.

Yes, I said. Yes. Of course I'd help.

Of course I'd let go of these last MEMORIES of you, if it was enough to save you. Recreate you. Help you find your way back to this world. Help everyone else remember you, and your love for them. (And I could finally forget you, and not feel bad for doing so)



PLAYING THE GAME

To play My Shadowed Heart, you will need:

- A copy of this game (digital or printed)
- A tarot deck (a physical deck or a digital app, there are free tarot apps available)
- 1-2 hours
- My Shadowed Heart has the potential to be a very emotional game. Take breaks if you need to. Stop playing the game if it's for the best. Watch a funny video. Process things. Talk to someone. Journal about it. Do whatever is best for you.
- Optionally: music, to set the mood. Something reflective, a little sad maybe. The spotify playlist "[Creepy Covers](#)" is a nice one.
- Optionally: a means of recording the game, if you would like to revisit it (physical notes, audio recording, etc)
- My Shadowed Heart is meant to be a solo experience, but if you so wish, you could play with others and agree to play the same character and their story, building the narrative collaboratively.

Remember:

- Once a card is drawn, do not return it to the deck.
- Draw a card face down.
- You may spread the tarot deck and draw cards from anywhere, or simply draw from the top of the deck as needed.
- Resist the urge to think "I don't know what this card means" when you first draw a card. Just relax, you've got this!

To begin playing:

1. **Take a look at your tarot deck.** Take as much time as you'd like, going over the cards and studying its imagery. You can use any deck you like: but picking a deck that has imagery that inspires your creativity makes a big difference.
2. **Prepare the cards.** Place the cards face down, and shuffle them gently. Take a few deep breaths to clear your mind, if you like.
3. **Give yourself a chance to be intuitively creative.** You may refer to learntarot.com if you wish to, but let's try tapping into your intuition first. Here are some guide questions to help:
 - ◆ What do I feel is going on in the image in this card?
 - ◆ If I could speak to anyone or anything in this card, what would they say? What would they sound like?
 - ◆ What symbols or colors call out to me? What do I immediately associate them with?
 - ◆ If I treat this card like a still image from a scene, what do I feel happened just before this image? What will happen after?
 - ◆ When I pull a new card, how do I feel it complements or contradicts a previous card? What is the hidden story between the cards?
 - ◆ What archetypes am I reminded of? What stories come to mind, what characters? How can this inspire my answer?

WHO AM I TO YOU? AM I STILL THAT PERSON?

Who have I told myself I am? Who am I really?

Draw Five Cards

To create your character for this story, draw five cards from the deck. Assign them to any of the Truths of your character. There may be something you have in mind, but listen to your gut. Let the cards fall where they may. Don't think too hard, go with your first instinctual response. Sometimes it helps to speak out loud, the words will have an easier time flowing that way.

Assign the five cards to any of the following questions. Spaces have been provided if you'd like to write your answers here.

- Who my character **thinks they are**
- How **other people see** my character
- What my character thinks **their goals in life** are
- What they **actually want to achieve** in life
- The **unchangeable and unshakable Truth** of who they really are

Create any other important details after this. Their name and pronouns perhaps, their physical experience, how they carry themselves.



WHO WERE YOU TO ME?

Who were you to me? Why is it so hard to let go?

Draw Five Cards

To create the person who remains in your character's heart, draw five cards from the deck. We will refer to this person as "THE BELOVED". Assign the cards to Truths about THE BELOVED. How do the cards speak to you? How is the story unfolding? What common symbols or themes are present in the five cards? What is at odds with each other?

Assign the five cards to any of the following questions. Spaces have been provided if you'd like to write your answers here.

- The relationship between THE BELOVED and my character.
- The height of the relationship: at its most beautiful
- The low of the relationship: at its most ugly
- How the two came close to overcoming their obstacles
- What ultimately shattered the relationship beyond repair

Create any other important details after this. THE BELOVED'S name and pronouns perhaps, their physical experience, how they carry themselves.



WHAT REMAINS BETWEEN US?

What Memories Carry the Most of You In My Heart?


Draw Six Cards

The core of this story-game will revolve around **three memories**. The relationship between your character and THE BELOVED is complex and many more memories are tied between them. The sum of these memories will potentially recreate THE BELOVED and save them from becoming one of THE FORGOTTEN. But these three memories are special. They carry the important themes and core components of your relationship and THE BELOVED'S identity. **Keep these cards in view for the rest of the game.**

Look at the six cards you've drawn. What cards feel natural to pair with each other? Some of the pairs may complement each other. Some of them may contradict each other. Don't think too hard about it. The cards will know where they want to be placed (meaning, your intuition knows what to do, follow its lead)

Let your mind relax. What images or ideas pop into your mind? How does the memory play out naturally, like a scene in a movie? Is this memory long and complex, with many moving parts and distinct movements and emotions? Or is the memory more dream-like, strangely segmented, impressionistic and vague? Or something in between?

Name each memory. You can use a phrase, a single word, a focus. Such as "The Locket", "The Argument", "Lady In Red", "A Doorway".



*What strange and nebulous borders exist
between our memories and our dreams?
Does the difference matter?*

OUR

MEMORIES

The First Memory

Memory Name:

Card pair:

Impressions of this memory:

Strongest emotions present:

- ◆ What this memory reveals about my character:
- ◆ What this memory reveals about THE BELOVED:

The Second Memory

Memory Name:

Card pair:

Impressions of this memory:

Strongest emotions present:

- ◆ What this memory reveals about my character:
- ◆ What this memory reveals about THE BELOVED:

The Third Memory

Memory Name:

Card pair:

Impressions of this memory:

Strongest emotions present:

- ◆ What this memory reveals about my character:
- ◆ What this memory reveals about THE BELOVED:

What Ties These Memories Together?

Draw One Card

Lay this card down and look at it for a while. How does it relate to the other card pairs representing the memories? Are there some cards it resonates with? Some cards it pushes against?

Choose one:

- ◆ **Lies and Secrets** hold these Memories together.
- ◆ **Truth and Revelations** hold these Memories together.

Questions to Consider:

Who is lying? What secrets are known or unknown to your character?
Who is telling the Truth? What is the outcome of this truth? How much is relative? How much is absolute? Does it really matter?

THIS IS HOW I LET YOU GO

Your character has just received the call. They have agreed to the procedure that will potentially save the life of THE BELOVED.

Am I Truly Ready To Let You Go?

Draw Five Cards

These five cards tell a chronological story. Place them in whatever order makes sense to your intuition. The cards may outline the following information, or they may speak to something else entirely.

- **How my character feels on their way to the procedure.** Are they completely aware of what they are feeling?
- **What the strange and surreal procedure is like.** Is it unique and obtuse technology? A mystical or spiritual approach? A surprising mix of the two?
- **Someone or something tries to stop the procedure.** Is it internal? External? Deliberate, or seemingly random?
- **A moment of regret.** Your character was so sure, but some form of doubt remains. What does doubt say? How does the character deal with it?
- **A sliver of a memory is unearthed.** A flash of something. Buried by the weight of time and the heart. What is it? How does your character feel about it?

There will always be doubt. The question is, do we treat this voice as more valid than our own?



ONE LAST CONVERSATION

(ONE LAST)

Something unprecedented happens. During the procedure, THE BELOVED comes to your character. Perhaps it happens through the mind, maybe it's not really them and simply an aspect of your character's psyche. Or they could be there, physically, with your character now. Maybe it remains unclear, ambiguous, dream-like. But only you can see them.

Why Are You Here? Why Now? After all this time?

Draw Six Cards

THE BELOVED comes to you bearing messages. Look at the cards you've drawn. How do they feel? What themes, symbols, colors, are common? What contradicts or clashes against each other? When THE BELOVED speaks to you, are they coherent, calm, and loving? Or are they angry, argumentative, self-contradicting? An unexpected mix of both?


Take the six cards you've just drawn and pair them with the previous six memory cards. You'll have four cards for each memory now: two cards to represent the original memory as understood by your character. Two cards to represent the new messages THE BELOVED shares with you.

Is This All You Have To Say To Me?

Draw Two Cards

Assign the two cards to the following:

- **Your character reaches an epiphany.** Does this revelation bring calm, peace, empowerment? Or regret and painful realization?
- **Your character says what has remained unsaid.** Why couldn't they find the words before this moment?



Confrontations, real or imagined, reveal the strongest and most resilient truths.

THIS IS MY SHADOWED HEART

Everything begins coming to the light. There is no turning back now. There is only this door that opens to the unknown truths hiding in your heart. It pulls you towards it, its gravity similar to the most loving gaze.

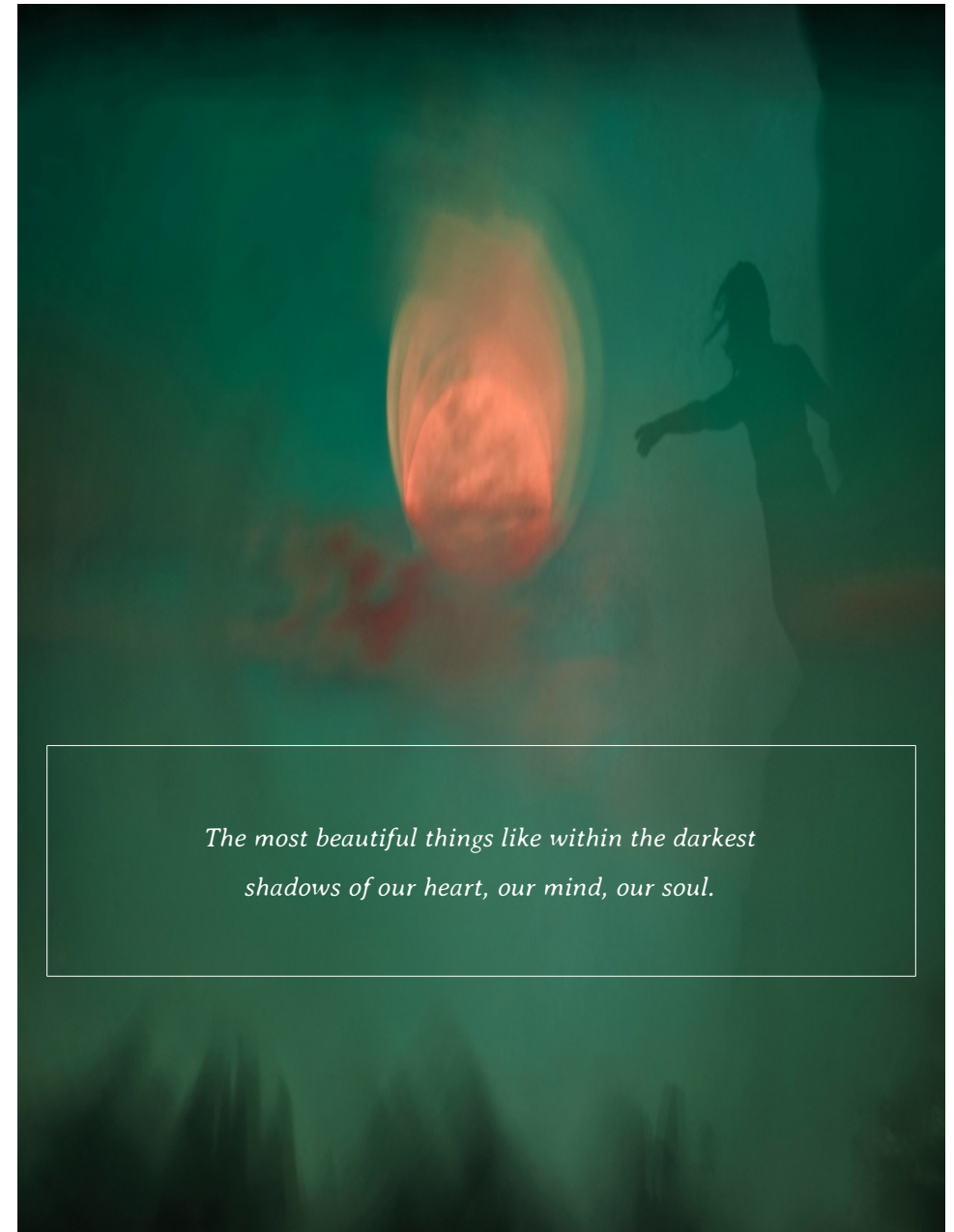
What Shadows Remain in my Heart? What do they wish to teach me?

Draw Three Cards

Refer to the twelve previous cards representing the memories, and THE BELOVED'S message about them. Now look at the three new cards you've drawn, and assign them to the following questions. You'll find the answer to these questions in these three new cards. Trust the truths that reveal themselves through the symbols in these images. You may attach these truths to a specific memory, or it may speak of the general themes you have unearthed.

- ◆ **This memory shows a perceived weakness** your character has been running from. How is this weakness false? What true strength lies within the weakness?
- ◆ **This memory shows a perceived shame** your character has been running from. How does this shame control their actions? What bright and shining desire lies within this false shame?
- ◆ **This memory shows a perceived disappointment** your character has been holding on to. When they let go, what grateful truth reveals itself? What did they truly want, all this time?

As your character realizes this, the memories begin to fade. Will the epiphanies fade with them? Will your character attempt to hold on? Will they let go and trust in their newfound strength?



The most beautiful things lie within the darkest shadows of our heart, our mind, our soul.

WAS ALL THIS INEVITABLE?

This is the moment when reality crystallizes, and the possibilities form.

How does Fate intervene? How does it reveal what I truly desire?

Draw Three Cards

These three cards describe if your character holds on to their memories, dooming THE BELOVED to the fading. Or if the memories are given freely, healing THE BELOVED and bringing them back to this world.


Or...something else, entirely. Assign each card to one of the three

original memories. Look at the other cards that support it, the messages from THE BELOVED and the shadows from your heart. Trust your intuition. The cards will fall where they may. The story reaches its climactic conclusion. Look at each assigned card and ask:

- Does my character hold on to this memory?
- Does my character let go of this memory?
- Does an outside force intervene?

Describe here, perhaps whispering it under your breath, or allowing the imagery and narrative to blossom in your mind.

- If the memory is held on to: how does it compromise the procedure? If all or most of the memories are held on to, does THE BELOVED fade? Do they say or do any one last thing?
- If the memory is let go of: how does it ease the procedure? If all or most of the memories are let go of, how does THE BELOVED return? Do they express their gratitude or resentment?
- If an outside force intervenes: what happens? Does this compromise or ease the procedure?



Is Fate truly an outside force, controlling our actions? Or is it the manifestation of our desires, divorced from what we consciously perceive and accept about the world?

IT IS DONE

The story is whatever it needs be. Take this time to reflect. You will have drawn thirty-three cards over the course of the game. Take the cards and look through them again. Does anything new reveal itself?

Choose three cards that exemplify the story the best. From here, build your epilogue. What happens to your character after what they've been through? Does their life change significantly after the procedure? Or do they fade back into the way things used to be? Is change permanent or fleeting? Is the newfound strength borrowed or simply the beginning?

Set aside the thirty-three cards you drew. If you were using a standard tarot deck, forty-five cards were untouched. **Look at these forty-five untouched cards.** Briefly look through them, considering their imagery, symbolism, themes, emotions. How could this story-game have turned out differently? What could have your character been instead, how could their epilogue play out differently?

Or would the same conclusions have been reached? How much of this story was up to your character, and how much were they beholden to?

Does it matter?

The story is done. Thank you for playing. Set aside the cards. Take one last moment to say goodbye to your character and their story. **Wish them well.** They live on, in some fashion, somewhere, in some way. They're doing the best they can. Your wish will help them along their travels.



CREDITS

Thank you [Justin Joyce](#) for hosting the [Me, Myself, And My RPG Game Jam](#) (#AloneGameJam)

Many thanks to Matthew Arcilla, my partner in all things.

This game builds upon similar themes of memory and relationships in a lot of my games, but its sister game is truly [INTERIM](#). If you'd like a more structured approach, play with others, and use a standard playing card deck instead, you could check it out too!

Photography from unsplash.com. All these dreamy, experimental photographs are by JR KORPA! <https://unsplash.com/@korpa>

Writing, Design and Layout by Jamila R. Nedjadi; Fonts used are Averia Serif & Fliped.

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JAMILA R. NEDJADI

My Shadowed Heart is a story-game that reflects my experiences as a tarot reader. I've read the tarot for almost twenty years now, and have read the cards for other people often. Many times people come to me, thinking the cards and Fate will offer them closure, healing, a second chance.

More often than not, the cards simply show them what they've been hiding from, or what they refuse to see. Their own power, their strength, their beauty. The tarot, in its truest form, is just a mirror that shines brightly.

This story-game also embodies the idea of "shadow work" a self-reflective and self-empowering practice based on Carl Jung's theories of "shadow" and "light" within the psyche. The light is simply parts of ourselves we are aware of, or perceive to be true. Our shadows, often initially as seen as things we don't like about ourselves, actually hide within them our unknown strengths.

This game is just a game. But I hope it helps, somehow.

SWORD QUEEN GAMES

[MY SHADOWED HEART](#) is very much a work in progress. This is version 1.0 as of April 25, 2019.

To follow my journey and to keep track of what games I make, please feel free to follow me: [Itchio](#): <https://temporalhiccup.itch.io/>
[Twitter](#): @temporalhiccup

If you'd like to support my dream of becoming a professional TTRPG Designer/Artist, please consider donating or purchasing my games through itchio.

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Many thanks to my patrons, especially **Floo** my first King of Swords among my patrons!