

Beholden

A solo RPG

Imagine a man who finds you perfect in every way. (It could be that your admirer is a she, or something else entirely -- base this on your romantic gender preference. That's okay. Just change all the pronouns here and proceed.)

You are a deity, normally above mortals, but the depths of his passion demand a response. You find yourself deeply ambivalent about his desire. You decide to put him through some painful trials.

Think on him. Draw his picture on a piece of paper and give him a name. Get to know his strengths, his flaws. What do you admire about him? What can't you stand? Why are you doing what you're about to do?

You convince him that you have been kidnapped by a horrible monster and that he, your hero, is the only one who can rescue you.

This is half true. You are a deity; you encompass far more than he knows. You have taken one of your darker, negative aspects, which his desire blinds him to, and bound it to flesh.

This is the monster. Draw it on your paper, and write down which of your aspects fuels it. As part of a deity, it is undefeatable.

Think about your hero's battles with this monster. Fold up the piece of paper and carry it in your pocket, but continue to think about it. Play out your hero's battles in your mind, over and over, as he tries new devices and strategies to no avail. Your monster continues to effortlessly triumph, toying with the hapless mortal.

But at some point, your monster will have to start taking your hero seriously -- he will overcome an inner problem, or perceive a weakness, or call on the power of Heart, whatever. Don't cheat and simply make this happen! It must be a natural consequence of the battles already fought.

When your monster starts taking your hero seriously, the fight will get vicious. The monster will scar him in some way (physical, emotional, mental, or otherwise). Play through this battle in your head. Write down the permanent consequences that you see your hero suffer.

After suffering this damage, the hero finds a way to triumph. Your monster is defeated -- cross it out. But since it is a part of you, this changes you, as well. The aspect that fueled your monster is now locked away.

Your hero now beholds you, for the first time, in the fullness of all your aspects. Both good and bad. He does not recognize you! You are not the vision he has

been chasing. But since he has locked away one of the things that stood in the way of that vision, there is one part of you he recognizes.

He has changed, too. Take the time to get to know him. Has he proven himself sufficiently? Do you like the person he now is? How did locking away your negative aspect change your perception of him?

Do you admit to him what you did and offer yourself to him?

If so, he ends his quest. Decide whether he accepts you. Write the epilogue.

If not, he goes off in search of his beloved, casting off the chain that bound your negative aspect. That reforms into a new monster. Get a new piece of paper. Draw the new monster on your paper, along with its aspect name. Then choose a new negative aspect and make it into a monster, too. They are both undefeatable. He must battle through both of them, suffering a new scar from both and locking away both, in order to reach you again.

Your hero now beholds you, for the second time, in the fullness of all your aspects. Both good and bad. He does not recognize you! You are not the vision he has been chasing. But since he has locked away two of the things that stood in the way of that vision, there are two parts of you he recognizes.

He has changed, too. Take the time to get to know him. Has he proven himself sufficiently? Do you like the person he now is? How did locking away your negative aspects change your perception of him?

Do you admit to him what you did and offer yourself to him?

If so, he ends his quest. Decide whether he accepts you. Write the epilogue.

If not, he goes off in search of his beloved, casting off the chains that bound your negative aspects. Those reform into new monsters. Get a new piece of paper. Draw the new monsters on your paper, along with their aspect names. Then choose a new negative aspect and make it into a monster, too. They are all undefeatable. He must battle through all of them, suffering a new scar from each and locking away each, in order to reach you again.

Continue in this manner until you decide to end his trials.

THIS IS

Long ago, the designers were debating in the winter of the Forge ...

AND SO IT WAS, that Ben Lehman wrote a solo RPG called "Beloved." He shared it. (1) It was a game about your perfect woman being held captive, and how far you would go to rescue her. Some people understood the game, and played it, and it was powerful. Some people didn't understand the game, and griped. I was in the latter group.

AND SO IT WAS, that Ron Edwards opened up the April 2011 round of the Ronnies. (2) He used the terms "amazon", "lust", "chains", "queen". Note those last two.

BUT HOPE WAS NOT YET LOST, okay never mind I'm belaboring the joke.

"Beholden" is a (____) of "Beloved". Choose your preferred term from the list: recontextualization; inversion; retelling; pastiche; critique. (I'll be damned if my brain can settle on one.) I offer it as a contribution to the dialogue over Ben's game. I must emphatically state that this is NOT a challenge to "Beloved"; the source game is powerful and I hope this adequately acknowledges that.

It is very much a product of the Ronnies, as well; written with "chains" and "queen". Chains is strong. Queen is very weak, relying on the gender assumptions of the source game and the implied turnabout thereof. Plus, due to its nature as a (____), its basic eligibility is questionable. I'm fine with that; I present it as-is.

This document was written by me, Baxil. The lion's share of the credit for "Beholden" goes to Ben Lehman; the rules are written to adhere as closely as possible to "Beloved"s current draft (3). Any faults in "Beholden" are mine.

It should be 100% playable without having first played "Beloved", though I'd be very interested to see the reaction of someone who plays both.

I want to say more about it. Let's talk.

- Baxil

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FOOTNOTES

(1): <http://www.indie-rpgs.com/forge/index.php?topic=31241.0>

(2) <http://www.indie-rpgs.com/forge/index.php?topic=31409.0>

(3): <http://www.indie-rpgs.com/forge/index.php?topic=31271.0>