

A Proper Goat

A storytelling game of farcical interjections by J. C. Holder



ZOE AND THE GOAT.

Prerequisites

Yourself, at least three friends, an index card for each player, a set of proper British manners, and two **Articles of Indication**:

- One to represent **The Ethnographer**, such as a monocle or a notepad and pencil.
- Another to represent **The Goat**, such as a fake beard, a dapper hat, or a goat plushie.

If the players wish to keep score, then **Tokens of Affection** will be required. Coins are discouraged; as **Proper British Ladies**, you and your friends would never accept something so base as *payment* from someone graced to be in your presence. Adorable baubles and tiny plastic goats are fine substitutes.

Tea and biscuits are recommended, as are fancy hats.

The Setting

You and your circle of Proper British Ladies have gathered for the weekly meeting of your **Fancy Tea Club**. Among its member, this club also includes The Goat. No one can quite remember how *a goat* was allowed into your otherwise respectable club, or why they cannot be ejected - only that all due formalities have been observed and all opportunities for appeal exhausted. You only know that the well-meaning Goat will always ruin your charming little stories in the most *exasperating* of ways.

As if The Goat's appetite for tea cups were not trouble enough, you must also strive to uphold the Fancy Tea Club's renowned reputation for unrelenting *honesty*. Everything said by its members is *surely* the truth, for Proper British Ladies would never be so crass as to *fib*. This assumption of honesty *also* applies to The Goat.

This poses quite the conundrum: For you see, The Ethnographer - a painfully eligible bachelor or bachelorette - has dropped by unexpectedly, eager to hear you and your friends describe a typical day in the life of a Proper British Lady. You will oblige them even as you, with the most subtle of flirtations, endeavor to woo them.

Setup

Sit in a circle. Everyone plays a Proper British Lady. Each player chooses a name for their Lady and the **Focus of Their Womanly Studies**, such as *Piano, Botany, Sword Fighting, or Rocket Science*. Some of these options may surprise you but, in addition to being Proper British Ladies, you are each also staunch feminists: *No* field of study is considered improper in *your* Fancy Tea Club. Each Lady jots their name and Focus down on their index card and places it in front of themselves, where others may see.

Give one player the Article of Indication for The Ethnographer. Give the player opposite them the Article of Indication for The Goat. They are now those characters. Those who possess an Article of Indication play the corresponding character instead of their Lady for the duration of its possession.

Play

The Ethnographer turns to the Lady to their left and asks them, "My dear Lady: Would you be so kind as to grace me with the story about [X]," where *X* is a perfectly typical little event in the life of a Proper British Lady. For example:

- How you won the gardening contest
- When the Prime Minister dropped by your home, but you had just run fresh out of tea
- The time you fended off that lecherous rascal in South America
- How you first met Lady Ainsworth at university

The Storyteller

The Lady so addressed takes on the role of **Storyteller** and begins her story. After about a minute or two of storytelling, a polite Lady turns and says, "But then who should show up but Lady [X] herself?" where *X* is the Lady to her left. The Lady so introduced then continues the story as the new Storyteller.

The Storyteller role continues passing to the left until the story reaches a natural conclusion, or by the second time those duties are returned to the starting Lady, at which point she wraps up the story with all due haste. It would not do to bore The Ethnographer!

Other Ladies and, especially, The Ethnographer are encouraged to ask prompting questions of the Storyteller, especially if she finds herself struggling to recall the story. However, the Storyteller is the *final authority* on events and cannot be contradicted. She is nothing but *absolutely honest*, after all. It bears noting that her stories are still expected to conform to the norms of Proper British Lady decorum and the known laws of physics.

The Ethnographer

The Ethnographer is not a Proper British Lady. When the role of Storyteller would be passed to them, it goes to the Lady on their left instead. If the players are so inclined, the Ethnographer may first give a Token of Affection to whomever they considered the most appealing, amusing, or entertaining Storyteller that round.

After a story has concluded, those who bear the Articles of Indication pass them to the players on their left. Play begins again, starting with the new Ethnographer.

The Goat

The Goat is most definitely *not* a Proper British Lady, but they *are* a bonafide member of the Fancy Tea Club. They are *also* an honest-to-God goat: wool, hooves, appetite, and all. Therefore, they have somewhat *different* beliefs about and perceptions of the world. When the role of Storyteller passes to them, it is expected that the events they *append* to the story will be, to put it politely, *utter balderdash*. The Goat has been known to describe, among other absurdities, how:

- The next Lady arrived on the scene when her spacecraft crash-landed on the topiary
- The previous Lady spontaneously developed psychic powers
- The hired help had been secretly replaced by geese
- And, Heaven forbid, the tea was served *cold*

Regardless of this particular *foible*, The Goat is nonetheless assumed to be *honest*, and everything they add is treated as God's unassailable truth. That said, The Goat is also *polite*, despite their confusion, and should not needlessly undo the hard work of or inflict insufferable frustrations upon those Storytellers to have preceded and to follow them, respectively. The Goat *honestly* believes that they are doing the Ladies a favor with their *unique interpretations* of events, however outlandish. They do, at least, understand that a Lady never lies, and will never contradict them.

Foci of Study

While a Lady is *honest*, she is also known far and wide to be *very studious*. She may employ the Focus of Her Womanly Studies in the course of telling her part of the story without arousing the suspicions of The Ethnographer. This has proven particularly useful when responding to The Goat.

Ending the Game

The game draws to a close once every player has had a turn to play The Ethnographer. If Tokens of Affection were employed, whomever received the greatest number has been voted The Most Proper of British Ladies. The greatest victory, however, is a series of hilarious stories well told.

Colophon

Version: 0.3-alpha.

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Inspired by a stupid* Facebook comment from the esteemed Grant Howitt (<http://lookrobot.co.uk/>). (*According to Grant.)

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