



Always on my Mind

A relationship storytelling game powered by Wolfgang Warsch's *The Mind*
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Overview

In romance stories the outcome is a sure thing. Of course there will be hiccups along the way, but we know the characters will get it together eventually. The fun is experiencing how they get there. In games, as in life, however, things are not so certain.

Always on my Mind is a relationship storytelling game powered by Wolfgang Warsch's *The Mind*. In Warsch's curious game, players are dealt cards (from a deck numbered 1-100) which they must play to the centre of the table in ascending order *without communicating*. Staring into each other's eyes, players play their cards when they feel that the time is right. With each round the number of cards increases (one card at level 1, two at level 2, and so on...) until someone makes a misstep or the players reach level 12, at which point they win. Providing the mechanics for our game, *The Mind* combines interpersonal connection with a tension that builds as the difficulty level increases and the stakes, for the characters, become higher...

How to play

All that is needed to play is a copy of *The Mind* and 2-4 players with a shared desire to explore a relationship that might not have a happy ending. Before you read on, make sure you understand the rules of *The Mind*.

(Be)foreplay: Prelude to Happiness

At this stage, you will need to determine the genre (e.g., erotic, contemporary, western, or historical, paranormal, inspirational) and the heat rating of the story you are creating. In other words, how much detail, if any, will you share of your characters' intimate encounters. Are they 'closed door'/'fade to black' or 'on the page'? Once you've selected a genre and a heat rating that everyone is comfortable with, you might also wish to use other safety tools to frame your play. We suggest establishing lines (forbidden topics) and veils (topics that should only be referred to indirectly). We also advise the use of the X card (an agreed signal to veto content during play).

At this point you could work together to create a 12-song playlist to accompany your game (take turns picking songs on your favourite music streaming app). Constructing this soundtrack can be an enjoyable way to discuss the genre, heat, scenes and pace of the romance. What will you choose as your final song? Will it be Whitney Houston's 'I will Always Love You' or the Kings of Leon's 'Sex on Fire'?



Scenarios and Characters

Players are free to come up with their own characters and scenarios or to generate them randomly. To do so, create a deck using cards from *The Mind* numbered 1-100, shuffle them, draw cards, and consult the tables below.

Characters	
1-4	THE ANIMAL LOVER. They're a vet, activist, animal shelter volunteer, or dog walker.
5-8	THE FIERCE, WILD, INDEPENDENT, HEADSTRONG, FLIGHTY, OR ANGRY TYPE. Think Scarlett O'Hara.
9-12	THE ROYAL OR ARISTOCRAT. The Duke, Countess, or aristocratic type. A minor royal in some fictional principality, or maybe you're the king.
13-16	THE BUSINESS PERSON. Often in the qualified professions, such as real estate, publishing, law, journalism, or the corporate world (think <i>Legally Blonde</i> or <i>Bridget Jones</i>).
17-20	THE COMMITMENT-PHOBE. Can you face commitment once more, even if it might hurt?
21-24	THE PERSON NEXT DOOR. A likeable, everyday, wholesome kind of person. Family orientated.
25-28	THE DIVORCEE OR WIDOW(ER).
28-32	A MYTHIC BEING. Fairies, Father Christmas, Witches, etc.
33-36	THE PLAYER (WHO FINDS LOVE UNEXPECTEDLY). The selfish rake type who thinks they're too smart to fall in love.
37-40	THE CITY SLICKER. Often young, fun, well connected, lots of friends, parties/clubs/socialising. May rely on their urban found family. Often a little bit shambolic.
41-44	THE SMALL TOWN START-UP. Often homely and domesticated. Think cupcake bakeries, gift shops, cafes, restaurants, personal shoppers, interior designers, writers, cleaners.
45-48	THE BUSY SINGLE PARENT. They're juggling a lot of balls. Think Michelle Pfeiffer and George Clooney in <i>One Fine Day</i> .
49-52	THE SCHOLAR. A lone academic pursuing an intense research project such as in A.S Byatt's <i>Possession</i> .
52-56	THE RUNAWAY. They're escaping their old life. Maybe it's an impulsive trip out of town, or they've bought a Tuscan villa they've never set foot inside before (<i>Under the Tuscan Sun</i>). This lover is starting over somewhere new, and life will never be the same again - whether they know it yet or not.
57-60	THE ALPHA. They thrive on being in charge.
61-64	The Cinnamon Bun. This sweetheart is in touch with their emotions – devastating when combined with the nerd/geek type.
65-68	The Geeky Introvert. A nerd/geek/ academic/librarian/IT or gamer type who comes out of their shell for love.
69-72	DOCTOR OR NURSE. Competence and skill abound, but do they have room for love in their life of dedicated caring?
73-76	THE STRIVER. Often meets their opposite, THE SLACKER , such as in the movie, <i>Knocked Up</i> .
77-80	HEROIC FIREFIGHTER, LIFEBOAT VOLUNTEER, SOLDIER, CAVALRY OFFICER, KNIGHT, SOCIAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGNER. Someone brave who risks their own life or reputation to help others.
81-84	THE DROP-OUT, SLACKER OR STONER. Often meets their opposite, THE STRIVER , such as in the movie, <i>Knocked Up</i> .
85-88	GOOD WITH THEIR HANDS. Plaid shirt wearing woodworker types, farmers, potters, you choose, so long as they're crafty and skilled.
89-92	MILLIONAIRE (OR, RATHER, BILLIONAIRE THESE DAYS). Do they use their filthy-rich powers for good?
93-96	SPORTSPERSON. Disciplined and competitive, but what is their life like outside of sport?
97-100	YEEHAW! Wrangler/rancher/rodeo/cowgirl



Scenarios

1-4	FAKE RELATIONSHIP. Pretend partners, just for show. Pairs well with a 'home for the holidays with my pushy family' scenario. Careful you don't catch inconvenient feelings!
5-8	MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE. Family or bosses expect you to wed, or there's some kind of inheritance at stake if you remain single. It's contractual and feelings free. At least that's the plan.
9-12	FRIENDS TO LOVERS. Dare you tell them how you really feel and risk losing your BFF?
13-16	I'VE FORGOTTEN EVERYTHING! The amnesia trope may not be cute but it's showing no signs of going away.
17-20	SECRET (OR SURPRISE) BABY. Your problematic fave. A one-night stand or whirlwind romance ends in parting never to see each other again. Only, oops! Do you tell them? Can you even find them?
21-24	ENEMIES TO LOVERS. Your annoying colleague gets right under your skin, only you can't stop thinking about them. Are you falling for your nemesis? That's so annoying!
25-28	ONLY ONE BED. Whether you're snowed in at a cosy country inn or stranded at the airport, stressed out strangers (or friends if you prefer) are forced into closer proximity by the 'only one bed' trope. Cue reluctant offers of, 'I'll take the couch.'
28-32	ROYAL WEDDING. You're marrying aristocracy. This is a worlds collide romance, will it be a fairy tale or is that prince secretly a frog?
33-36	AGE GAP. May-September love affairs come with inbuilt insecurities. Are you brave enough to trust your heart?
37-40	FORCED PROXIMITY. Think trapped in an elevator or tasked with the same intensive work project. Love can happen anywhere your characters are thrown together.
41-44	ONLINE ROMANCE. This is all about internet dating or scrolling the apps. Or maybe you're just chatting online? Either way these lovers haven't met yet. Think <i>Sleepless in Seattle</i> or <i>You've Got Mail</i> .
45-48	TAMING A RAKE. This regency dandy needs bringing down a peg or two. Are you the one to give them a lesson in love? Think bodice ripping, the dangers of drawing room tittle-tattle, and lots and lots of brooding glances across the ballroom.
49-52	GRUMPY/SUNSHINE. Opposites attract (and they really annoy one another). This is the 'Shrek and Donkey' romance pairing. Who will soften first?
52-56	FINDING THEIR SOFT CENTRE. Your hardened or haughty lover softens with love and closer understanding. Think 'Mr Darcy'; scary on the outside, meltingly soft on the inside.
57-60	WORK ISN'T EVERYTHING. You've been working hard but neglecting your heart, until someone shows you how to slow down and appreciate the little things.
61-64	FORBIDDEN LOVE. Think <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> . Outside factors mean you can't be together. Only, you can't live without each other.
65-68	RAGS TO RICHES/CLASS DIFFERENCE. Think <i>Pretty Woman</i> or Swayze's Johnny in <i>Dirty Dancing</i> . Can a fish out of water overcome social structures and prejudices and find love? Or are you about to get rich quick and find yourself amongst the jet set?
69-72	SMALL TOWN LOVE. There's nothing keeping you here (except your childhood sweetheart, struggling family business, or adorable annual traditions you can't help getting mixed up in).
73-76	FALLING FOR MY BOSS. You really, really shouldn't, only it's getting too tempting to ignore.
77-80	SLOW BURN. Will they; won't they? These lovers are all about caution and taking their own sweet time.
81-84	MAFIA. They're dangerous. They're troubled. So why do you feel so safe? This is a 'falling in with a bad crowd' romance.
85-88	TIME TRAVEL. You live decades apart. You're perfect for each other. Think Keanu's magic mailbox in <i>The Lake House</i> or <i>Outlander's</i> standing stones portal to the past.
89-92	SECOND CHANCE. You're reuniting with the one that got away.
93-96	HOLIDAY ROMANCE. Whether it's a wintry escapade or a sunny summer break, this romance is full of seasonal cheer. Only, the holiday will be over soon. Will your love last?
97-100	HUMAN + AI/MONSTER/SHAPESHIFTER, ETC. You're falling in love. So what if they're a robot werewolf alien? It'll work, right?



Start at the End

You are now almost ready to begin. Before you do, decide as a team what you are working towards as a couple, thruple, or foursome. What does your happily-ever-after look like? Tell the story now; you might not get to later. It will also be useful to decide how you plan to narrate the story. Will it be in the first or third person? Remember, in *The Mind*, nobody speaks while the cards are being played, so this narration always happens at the end of a level. The intensity of the shared silence is why we picked *The Mind* as our engine. Once you've played the game, you'll see why.

Level 1: The Meet Cute

The first round of *Always On My Mind* is easy; with a single card each to play you should get through this with no sweat. Lay down the cards in the correct order and, revelling in your early success, each player should introduce themselves and set the opening scene. Who are you? And where is this first meeting taking place?

Levels 2-11

After each successful level, all cards having been played, one player should describe how the relationship is developing. You could use the cards on the table to help you. If the numbers are close together, and the level tricky to beat, perhaps this was a rocky scene/chapter? Swap storytellers with each level. The romance is going to be told from multiple points of view and everyone has equal billing. You'll see an example of this in our playthrough below, *Cornish Dreams*.

If things get difficult, you might lose confidence and not know when to play a card. In *Always on my Mind* these are the 'Running Scared' moments that are keeping your characters apart. Remember when in *Ten Things I Hate About You*, Patrick spurns Kat's drunken advances and hurts her feelings? That's a Running Scared moment. At these moments of high tension, you have the option to use 'Throwing Stars' to help you progress. These allow you to pause the game and discard your lowest cards face up to the table (check *The Mind*'s rules for details). If you use any Throwing Stars during a level, remember this, and make sure you describe what had you running scared, and how you overcame that obstacle, at the end of the level.

Sometimes things go wrong and you play a card out of sequence. These are dark night of the soul moments that can spell the end of the romance for good. If you've got lives in hand when you mess up you must discard one. When this happens, pause the level and have one player give an account of what went wrong. With that done, reset and continue play. If you make it to the end of the level, the other player now has the happy task of describing how you got through the darkness! When you lose your last life (and you quite probably will) describe how the relationship ends. It's not the Happily Ever After this time, but narrating the end might be fun and, of course, every ending brings with it new beginnings...

Level 12: The Happily Ever After

Seriously, you did it? You played all the way to round 12? It's possible you're psychic and almost certain that you should be in a relationship of some kind (romantic or not). Do you remember the Happily Ever After you crafted? It's time to rock it out, embellish it, and embrace the romance. Are you Just Good Friends? Are there still unrequited feelings? Is your HEA more of a Happy For Now with a rocky path ahead? It's entirely possible that your idea of a happy ending has developed into something new - if it has, embrace that.

Cornish Dreams

by Kiley Dunbar

What follows is an example of game play, featuring two-players who begin with 2 lives and 1 throwing star.

(BE)FOREPLAY

In this first round, the players determine the Genre [Contemporary Rom Com] and the Heat Rating [Closed door/'sweet']. They then decide that what their Happily Ever After will look like: meeting each other's friends and planning a future together. Long term, Silva gets their dream cottage. Bronz gets their dream web-design job.



LEVEL ONE: THE MEET CUTE

Silva: *'All I Have To Do Is Dream' (The Everly Brothers)*

Bronz: *'I Want it All' (Queen)*

It is an easy round with just two cards played. The players introduce their characters, Silva and Bronz.

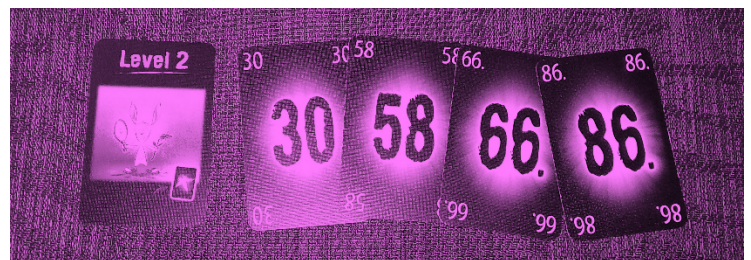
Player One: This is Silva, an old soul with a sad past. They're a motorbike courier in the City of London. They're saving up for a bolt hole by the sea in Cornwall, the goal they've set for themselves before they turn thirty-five (which will be at the end of the year). They have nearly enough money, soon they'll be out of here. One day Silva is surprised to find the surly secretary at the trendy web design start-up (one of their drop-off regulars) has been replaced with P2 who signs for Silva's package, and they start chatting. Bronz asks Silva out for coffee. A little astonished, Silva agrees.

Player Two: This is Bronz, an enthusiastic puppy of a person. He's twenty-three, fresh out of graduate school, and a web design intern. Today he's filling in at the front desk because the small company is short staffed. Bronz wants to be a lead web designer one day. He's recently moved to the city from a semi-rural town and is dazzled by the idea of impressing his new bosses and making it big, but he's lonely. Seeing that Silva is friendly (they're actually just relived the rude receptionist is history) he takes the plunge and asks them out on the first date he's had in London.

LEVEL TWO

'Bless the Weather' (John Martyn)

The second level goes well with all four cards played in the correct sequence. Player One describes a first date...



Player One: Silva meets Bronz at an indie coffee shop after work that night. It's snowing outside and cosy indoors. They talk for hours. Silva likes Bronz's enthusiasm and ambition. The passionate way Bronz speaks prompts Silva to share their dreams of a seaside escape. They end the night taking in an art gallery and this time it's Silva who suggests a bike ride out of the city on Saturday.



LEVEL THREE

'Bohemian Like You' (The Dandy Warhols)

Another successful round. Player two picks up the story...

Player Two: Silva takes Bronz to the seaside on Saturday. They arrive as the winter sun is setting. They walk along the pier, eat fish and chips, and hold hands for the first time. Bronz thinks he could get used to this and tells Silva so. Silva responds with a kiss. Bronz suggests they get drinks, leave the bike parked up, and find a B&B for the night.

LEVEL FOUR

'Walking On Sunshine' (Katrina and The Waves)

The players stumble in this round, playing the third card out of sequence and losing a life. With a life discarded, play continues....



Player One: Silva wakes up by the sea, happy and refreshed, but dreading heading back to the city this afternoon. They've loved the fresh air and peace and quiet. Bronz, on the other hand, is excited to get back to work. In fact, he's checking emails on his phone over breakfast. Hurt, Silva asks him if he thinks they might be too different to make this work.



Play resumes and things go well with the next four cards played correctly. It's now time for Player Two to take up the story as the relationship gets back on track...

Player Two: Bronz realises his mistake and apologises. Seeing Silva's still offended and unsure, he switches off his phone and suggests they take a long walk on the beach this morning. While on their walk, Bronz tells Silva about his parents back home. They fell on hard times a few years ago while putting him through uni. He's vowed to repay their sacrifices by becoming a top tier web designer. Hearing him speak, Silva softens and shares the reason they want to start a new life in Cornwall; their happy childhood holidays took place there, before their parents passed away. It's where Silva feels closest to them. Family means a lot to both of them. Their day by the sea ends with a new level of understanding and compassion between them and Bronz joins in with interest as Silva scrolls through Cornish cottages on their favourite property search App. They talk dreamily about how nice it would be to share a place like that.

LEVEL FIVE

'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?' (Culture Club)

The players get jittery in this round and decide to use a Throwing Star to allow them to discard their lowest cards. With this done, they manage to play two more cards before things go awry and they lose a second life. Player One picks up the story...



Player One: Silva's getting confused. They like Bronz a lot. He makes Silva feel happy and listened to and Silva wants to be with him to an alarming degree, only Silva can't take their eye off the goal they've been working towards for years. Out of the blue, a cute Cornish cottage that Silva could actually afford comes up on their property search App. Silva calls Bronz to tell him but he explains to him he's about to go into a surprise meeting with his bosses about a promotion. This looks like his big break. He's so focused Silva can't mention the cottage. In his excitement, before he hangs up, Bronz blurts out, 'I love you,' the first time either of them have said it. Silva doesn't know what to say, so pretends they haven't heard. They hang up and immediately take off on their bike to Cornwall to see their dream cottage, as well as to think over their future with Bronz.



With just one card to play the round is won easily. Player two picks up the story as things get back on track...

Player Two: Bronz got the big promotion! The details of the contract still need to be worked out but Bronz wants to celebrate becoming a fully-fledged web designer with actual clients. Bronz calls Silva. Getting no reply, he begins to worry he's scared them off by saying 'I Love You'. They know enough about Silva to check the property App and Bronz figures out where Silva's gone. He takes a cab all the way to Cornwall, blowing his week's intern pay. It'll be worth it to get to Silva and check they're OK. He finds Silva standing in the doorway of their dream cottage saying goodbye to the property agent. They fall into each other's arms and kiss, relieved to be together again. Silva tells him their plan to buy the dream cottage and Bronz promises he will visit every weekend. They talk all the way back to London about the big housewarming weekend they will hold for all their friends there. This time Silva says out loud that they're falling in love with Bronz. Everybody's happy.

LEVEL SIX

With or Without You (U2)

Level six goes badly quickly with only two cards played correctly before the sequence (and romance) ends. The players work together to tell the story of a relationship that nearly happened...



Player Two: When going over contract details with his bosses the next day, Bronz discovers his new job will be at the overseas office, scuppering his weekend escapes with Silva at their cottage. He chooses to prioritise his career (which has, so far, barely begun) even if he thought he'd fallen for Silva.

Player One: Heartbroken, but also a little relieved, Silva leaves the city for their dream cottage. There's no big party. Silva understands that they achieved their dream-cottage goal, and Bronz, still only in his twenties, must see through his career dreams too. They plan to stay in touch, even though they both know when Bronz gets on that plane he'll be too busy for romance.



Always on My Mind requires a copy of *The Mind* to play. *The Mind* is a creation and design of Wolfgang Warsch and property of Nürnberger-Spielkarten-Verlag GmbH, Forsthausstraße 3-5, 90768 Fürth-Dambach, Germany. This is not an officially licensed or approved *The Mind* product.

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