

Stereo Hearts

Index:

1. Introduction

1.1. Pitch

1.2. Vision

1.3. Story

2. How to Run the Game

2.1. Preparations

2.2. The Game- Timeline and Acts

2.2.1. Overview - Pre-game workshop (1 hour 45 min)

2.2.2. Stereo Hearts - playing the game (1 hour 30 min)

2.3. Practical requirements

2.4. Setting (physically)

2.5. Rules

2.6. Instructions to the gamemaster

2.7. Instructions to the players

3. About the larpwrights

4. Game materials

4.1. Handouts for the workshop

4.2. Cheatsheets for the playlists

4.3. Music overview (with links to Spotify)

Appendix

1. Introduction

1.1. Pitch

"My heart's a stereo, it beats for you so listen close, hear my thoughts in every note oh oh"

Music is your way of communicating. You try to express yourself with it. Sometimes it goes as intended and sometimes.... it just... whatever. That was not what you meant. You still try to fill in the gaps, the only way you know how.

You will be playing five unfinished characters trapped in fragments of fiction. Now you have to tell your stories through music and monologues.

A game for players who wants to experiment with a different way of expressing character and story.

This is a game for 5 players and a GM, to be played in a blackbox.

It requires a minimum of preparation for the players, since characters and metatechniques will be sorted out during a pregame workshop.

No costumes are needed, but every player needs to bring a music-playing device the size of a phone, with internet access (smart-phone, ipad mini etc.) and a set of earplugs.

1.2. Vision

Our vision with making this game is for the players to experiment with creating and telling stories with prerecorded music, and the limits that comes with it.

We also want to visualize how it is not the sender but the receiver, in any kind of role-play, that holds the power of interpretation (it is not what you think you send out that matters, but the way it is received by your co-players).

1.3. Story

The game is about an author who has gotten stuck in her writing. She has five half-written characters, all trapped in different fragments of fiction, but somehow she can't get the story together, so the characters take over and finish their stories by themselves.

The game will be played in three acts, in which the author gets less and less control over the characters. Practically this will be done with monologues and pre-recorded music as a means of driving the story forward. The game will end when the author enters the game-area, thus presenting herself on the same level as the characters with no further control over them.

2. How to Run the Game

2.1. Preparations

Preparations done well in advance:

You need a room with sufficient space to run the game. 5x5 meters wide is a preferable minimum.

If this is a blackbox, you could use five fairly big light-circles that can be merged during the act-breaks. Make sure you have all the technical stuff and knowledge to do this, or get someone who does to help you. The circles can also be done with oatmeal or rice, which can be swept away and redone during the act breaks. You can also make big circles with paper or wire. These will have to be done in advance.

At least one, but preferably two, sets of loudspeakers is also needed. Make sure you can connect a phone or mp3-player to them. Six sets of music-devices are also needed. One for the GM, and one each for the players. If they have internet-connection and Spotify, the playlists will be easy to access. Otherwise the playlists have to be downloaded and put into every device beforehand.

If the players are told to bring devices and headphones of their own this will be fairly easy. The GM should also have at least one backup-device, in case something goes wrong or if a player is without device. In the playtest some of the players had laptops to play their music from. A smaller device is preferable, but laptops are okay too.

Print out the handouts, the playlist cheatsheets, and the overview for the workshop.

Preparations to do right before the game:

If you're using oatmeal or rice: Find a broom so that you can swipe the floor in the act-breaks and after the game.

Set up the speaker-system.

Introduction and workshop.

Casting. Cast as you feel like. Or let the players decide. Do as you please!

Prepare the scene for the first act (in the break between the workshop and the game).

C. Game Walk-Through. Detailed description of the game. Let us know not just what to do but why we should do it. This walk through should include:

- What the GM needs to do to get the players ready (workshop, casting, casting advice, character creation, etc.)

- A more detailed summary of what is supposed to happen during the game, in the form of a narrative description or a set of scenes/acts.
- A description of how you know the game ends, and what to do afterwards during the debrief.
- The role of the GM during the game

2.2. The Game- Timeline and Acts

Game Structure

The game will be played in three acts with a slightly different psychical setting. The act-breaks will be used to change the setting. In every act each character will play a song each in the loudspeakers, after which the other characters have the opportunity to hold monologues. The game will begin with the players silently listening to their “character-song” in their headphones and end after the 3rd act, when the author enters the game-area and puts on a song (“Unwritten”) in the loudspeakers. Which song it is should not be told to the players beforehand.

2.2.1. Overview - Pre-game workshop (1 hour 45 min)

The pre-game workshop will be used to try out the techniques for the scenario, for deciding on physical limits for the players, choosing playlists and character-development.

1. Practical information + schedule for today (*5 min*)
2. Introduce yourself (players and facilitators) (*7 min*)
3. Walk-through of the background story (fiction) (*3 min*)
4. Climbing the silly hill! Blind animals! Make clear that it is a warm-up and icebreaker, not something that has to do with the game. Miming silly-thingy??
5. Share your "guilty pleasure" music.

Tell the other players about a song or an artist you like that you don't usually tell people, or pretend that you don't really like, a "guilty pleasure". Facilitator starts. (*3 min*)

6. Everybody shares a story about an unresolved relation (something that could have been, but for some reason didn't). It can be funny, dramatic, sad, whatever really. It is okay to lie as long as you don't tell the other players that you are lying. Give the players a few minutes to think before. Facilitator starts. (*15 min*)

7. Walk-through of game-flow and rules. Make a demonstration of the setting with the circles and explain how the technical stuff works. Make sure the players understands the interaction between themselves and the author. Decide on a hand-sign that can be used to indicate that you want to hold a monologue, or that your monologue is finished.

8. Test the method. Facilitator puts on a song, the players tries to interact during the song (as themselves) and afterwards they can hold a monologue. Walk them through it step by step. Test

the author summing up and moving the players around, both verbally and physically. (10 min)

9. Physical boundaries!

Exercise: Move around on the floor. When you get eye contact with another player start moving slowly towards each other. Stop moving when you think or feel the other person getting uncomfortable. Then break eye contact and move around again. The purpose is to try to sense other people's boundaries. Afterwards you talk it over, to see whether you sensed right. (10 min)

10. Body language

Do some body language exercises. Try to express joy, sadness, confusion. Encourage the players to interact with each other. Play with different distances, not touching the other players at all and being close to one another.

10. Character and relation- creating!

Character theme songs:

For our first run of this game, we decided on five songs for the character creation (see “4.3 Music overview - character theme songs”). Feel free to change them, but be aware of having five songs with different themes, moods, rhythms and from different artists.

Now each player receives a theme song for character-creating. They will use the song to get a feeling for who their character is. It might be a good idea for the players to take notes while doing this. Some questions that the song might answer could be: What is the mood for your character? How does your character feel about him/herself? Is your character shy or outgoing? How is the energy of your character (soft, aggressive, laid back etc)?

After this there will be a break so give the players their song and the instructions right before, and let them listen to the song in connection to the break, wherever they want to (if they want to listen to it by themselves someplace else for example). Like this the players don't have to wait for one another, since the songs are of different length. (7 min)

Some explanations about the characters and their relations:

There are three different “roles” or “functions” in the game. The Lover, The Enemy and The Friend. Each character will have both a lover, an enemy and a friend. Each character will also fill one or more of these functions for the other players. The relation might or might not be mutual. It is not important to remember what function you fill for the other characters, but you should remember who fills them for you. The functions is a way of helping relations between the characters, giving them something to play on. As is the character input (see below).

Character input examples (feel free to re-write or workshop these instead if it makes sense for

you):

1. You lost your lover for some reason. You want your lover back, but your enemy is keeping you from it. Your friend is your comfort zone.
2. You're about to lose your lover. You are stronger than your enemy. You're worried for your friend.
3. Your lover is suffocating you. You need to get close to your enemy. You are drifting apart from your friend.
4. You've left your lover. You're in love with your friend. Your enemy is creeping you out.
5. You are longing for your lover. You are comforted by your friend. Your enemy is getting close to you.

10 minute break

After the break, the players introduce their characters for one another (*15 min*)

11. Each player gets a character input sheet (*2 min*)

The relations will be based on the character input. Each player will receive a note with the input, whereby the players take a round to decide and present which one of the other players is their lover, their enemy and their friend.

To the players:

It is ok to forget which function you play for the other characters! The important thing is to remember what the other characters represent for you!

12. Walk around the room as your character, with and without music. The music is played by the GM. *How does your character react to music? Does your character like dancing? How is the body language for your character?* (*5 min*)
13. The players chooses a playlist (*3 min*)
14. Quick sum-up of game-flow and rules before game starts (*5 min*)

2.2.2. Stereo Hearts - playing the game (1 hour 30 min)

Prologue:

-Each player starts by listening to their character song in their headphones.

First Act - Defining (20-40 min)

Game starts and background-sound goes on. First "loop" begins.

-Players interact physically but cannot leave their "fragments", meaning the circles in which they start the game. (1-3 min)

Background goes silent

-A player (whoever) plays a song

This is the characters way of expressing itself. The song played can portray a feeling the character holds for another character, a general feeling the character has or something the character feels about itself.

Afterwards the other players have the opportunity to hold monologues. These monologues should be about what the character thinks the character playing the song was trying to say with it. The character playing the song cannot hold a monologue after it's own song. -This is to portray the feeling of being trapped and not being able to express oneself sufficiently. Maybe the song expresses some of what you want to say, but not all of it. Maybe it is a bit rougher and not as detailed as you would wish it to be. Maybe what the other characters get from the song doesn't correspond with what you were trying to say with it. Which is absolutely fine! Use it, play with it, go along with it. There is no right or wrong.

After the loop the author (GM) may interfere, sum up the story and move the players around. The author may also choose not to do so.

Second loop begins by the background-sound going back on. Now another player gets to play a song on the loudspeakers and the other ones can hold monologues after it.

When all five characters have played their songs and the monologues have been held, the first act is finished.

Important! The characters can choose not to hold a monologue if they wish too. This will be shown with a hand-sign, which will be workshopped before the game. This is to prevent the GM from cutting the scene before everyone have had a chance to speak, if they want to.

Act break:

The background-sound goes silent. The author talks and possibly moves the players around. Theme song goes on and the circles begin to merge.

Second Act - Searching (20-40 min)

Like the first act, only now the players are closer to each other and have more opportunities for physical interaction. The areas where the fragments overlap is shared between the players who's fragments overlap.

Act break:

The background-sound goes silent. The author talks and possibly moves the players around. Theme song goes on and the circles merge completely, turning into one big circle.

Third Act - Finding (20-40 min)

5 loops, but the author can no longer move the players around. They are free to move as they see fit.

At the end of act three the author physically enters the game-area. Everything stops. A song is played.

When the song is over the game is over.

D. Methods and Rules. Explain what the tool is and how to use it, giving actual play examples if possible. Might also include tips on how the GM should describe the tool to the player.

(E. Tips, Tricks and Hacks. Tell us about what can go wrong and how to fix it, how to scale the game up/down, adapt it to different settings, etc.)

F. Closing. A little bio for the game writers, plus contact info with an email where people who have run your game can ask lingering questions and tell you how it went!)

2.3. Practical requirements

Most importantly you need five music devices, with the possibility to connect to speakers. This can be smartphones, mp3players, Ipods etc.

If you want the players to use our playlists for this game, the playing-devices should also have access to the internet.

For every playing-device you also need a set of headphones. This needs to be the ones with earplugs, so that the characters can share their music, without others listening in.

Two sets of speakers. One to stand in the middle of the setting (center of the circles of fiction) and one for the GM to operate (for low music to pace the game and for the act break).

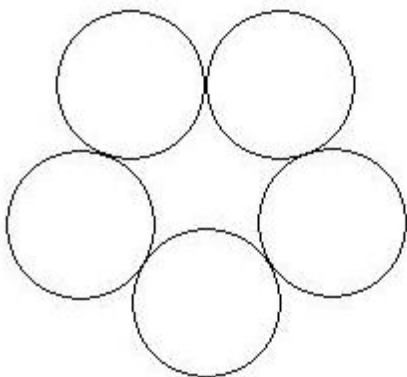
Theater-lights that can make 5 defined circles or other ways to mark the circles of fiction for the players (tape, rope, other.) In the play test we used oatmeal to make circles on the floor that merged between the acts, which worked out well. In case you use oatmeal, you also need a broom to clear the area quickly. It is not a problem to change the circles within the time frame of the act break song.

Music!

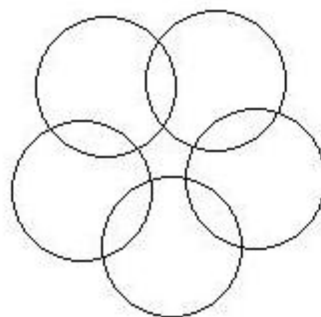
2.4. Setting (physically)

Circles of fiction:

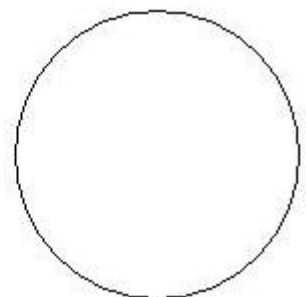
Act 1



Act 2



Act 3



2.5. Rules

The players may decide for themselves if they want to play a whole song or just parts of it. They may also start to play a song whenever they like to, even if the background-sound is on.

The purpose of the background-sound going silent is to push the game forward and reducing downtime by making someone play a song.

The players may dance and move within their boundaries as they see fit. They may singalong to any song, however, they may not speak apart from the monologues.

The players cannot hold a monologue after their own song, only after songs other players play. The idea is that the song you play is your way of expressing yourself, but afterwards you do not have any power over how it is interpreted.

2.6. Instructions to the gamemaster

When the game is running, you are playing the author of the unfinished characters. You are still trying to control them and create a story, but it's not working very well. During the game you will lose more and more control, until, in the end, the characters have taken full control over their own story.

In the first act you are not visible to the characters. You are a voice in the air who can narrate the story, and move them around as you see fit. The narrating happens when all five songs have been played and the monologues have been held. It is used as a means of summing up what has happened up until that point, thus narrating the story more clearly. **Although you are the author in the fiction, don't make up new stuff! The reason for narrating is to make it clear to the players what has happened so far, not to actually control the story.**

When narrating, try not to make the players insecure about the legitimacy of their play. If you can't figure out what is going on between the players, you just turn down the narrating. Confirm the things you've grasped from the players, and move them around if you want to "stir the pot" for them, moving them closer or further away from other characters (by making them change circle or perhaps by putting two players in one circle.) The GM has the possibility to move the players after each song.

As the game moves on, it gets harder and harder for you to understand what is going on between the players. Don't worry, they are having a lot of play, even though it doesn't appear that way!

Let the players have the song-cheating list and their character input available to sneak a peek at while the game is running.

2.7. Instructions to the players

Look at the author as an obstacle to overcome. It is not the author, but you, who drives the story forward.

Use the music as a means of self-expression, to communicate how you feel in general, how you perceive yourself or as a message to one or more of the other characters. Even though you have the choice of controlling "your" music as you wish, don't be afraid to let the whole song play out. This is not a high-drama

game. It's perfectly fine to let it take time.

The monologues following will then decide how it is interpreted and be the story-engine of the scenario. It is possible that your co-players get something different from the music than you do. Go with that if possible. You create this story together, maybe you will be inspired. **There is no right or wrong way of interpretation.** This is your story!

With every act the author will have less power over the characters, until, in the 3rd act, the author no longer holds the narrative. The game ends when the author enters the game area, puts on a song and the song is finished.

Notes from the debrief:

To consider:

Making it possible for the players to leave the circle, and with that, the game, in the 3rd act? If so, when?

This is a very body-language intensive game. Have an exercise about body language in the pre-game workshop!

More songs to choose from, to get a bigger variety in the themes and emotions of the song. All Mariah Carey songs were about love for example.

Some monologues were skipped and overseen by the GMs putting on the background-song too quickly. Decide on a sign the players can use to tell that they want to skip the monologue so that no one is overseen. A suggestion for a sign is a small sweep of the hand palm facing down.

Cut down on the info in the beginning and move some of it to the act breaks.

Be clearer about the rules!

Some players forgot that they could not hold monologues after their own songs.

The GMs should not write and talk at the same time during the info, it gets confusing. Make a handout!

3. About the larpwrights

Maria Ljung

Maria is a swede who has been larping since 2007. She has frequented and helped out with Knutepunkt conventions for some years and is in the organising group for Knutepunkt 2014 which will be held in Sweden. "Stereo Hearts" is the first game she's written.

Helene Willer Piironen

Helene is a dane who has been role-playing since 2003 and larping since 2007. In 2011 she had her debut as a producer, being part of the core organisation group of Knudepunkt in Denmark and in 2013 she co-produced the danish run of the norwegian game Just a Little Lovin'.

"Stereo Hearts" is the first game she's written.

4. Game materials

Remember to print the handouts and the cheat-sheets beforehand.

4.1. Handouts for the workshop

When you explain the circles of fiction, and how they change during the three acts, give the players the handout (appendix I).

4.2. Cheatsheets for the playlists

You will find a set of cheat-sheets for the playlists in the appendix for this document (appendix II).

These are overviews of the different playlist, so that the players can get a quick understanding of what songs the different playlists contains, and what they are about.

The players are allowed to bring the cheat-sheets with them to the game, having them lying at the edge of their circles of fiction.

4.3. Music overview (with links to Spotify)

Music for workshop exercises

Character theme songs

<http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/13rP6GoweHoppna40UwHCE>

Playlists

Adele - <http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/5oAxETC7dmwVRW2KPPUXGu>

Beyonce - <http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/15BBTP2OD8MoIMa9zbscqM>

Bonnie Tyler - <http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/7bFjnHUGiSUximjOugxgMQ>

Elton John - <http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/3nk2MUke7iRfKfwaGbUPJF>

Mariah Carey - <http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/2mbPZ7ITUPxrrqSbesr13q>

Queen - <http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/0OUd0PT0bGrkCoimh8thS7>

Roxette - <http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/6QgYlhJzpSnBYxPUBbGDtO>

Robyn - <http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/6tYnboUn2H6g92iWm8kqf5>

Whitney Houston - <http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/12853vLYoZQJbCVIY9dID9>

GM playlist (background song, actbreak and themesong)

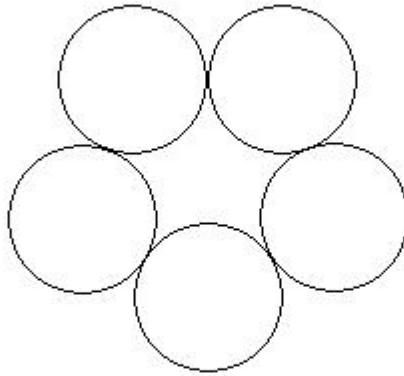
<http://open.spotify.com/user/1126531534/playlist/2wyXrNn9Oq84C12iT0ZCwx>

Appendix

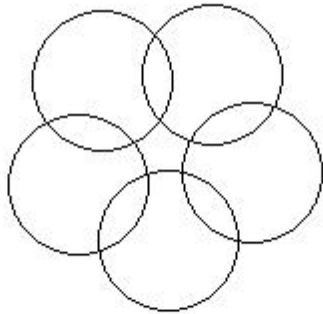
I. Circles of fiction

Circles of fiction:

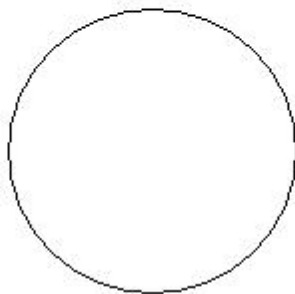
Act 1



Act 2



Act 3



II. Cheat sheets:

Robyn:

Call your girlfriend

"It's time you had the talk. Give your reasons. Say it's not her fault, but you just met somebody new"

Dancing on my own

"I'm in the corner watching you kiss her, I'm right over here, why can't you see me, oh."

Hang with me (acoustic)

"when you see me drift astray, out of touch and out of place, will you tell me to my face then I guess you can hang with me"

Be mine!

"I am helpless, sometimes wishing 's just no good, 'cause you don't see me like I wish you would, 'cause you never were and you never will be mine"

Show me love

"show me love and show me life, baby show me what it's all about, you're the one that I ever needed"

Beyonce:

Halo

"Remember those walls I've build, Baby they're tumbling down and they didn't even put up a fight, they didn't even make a sound"

I was here

"I've done everything that I wanted, and it was more than I thought it would be"

Sweet dreams

"You could be a sweet dream or a beautiful nightmare. Either way I don't wanna wake up from you"

Irreplaceable

"I can have another you by tomorrow, so don't you ever for a second get to thinking you're irreplaceable"

Love on top

"You're the one i love, you're the one i need, you're the only one i see, come on baby it's you"

Best thing I never had

"I know you want me back. It's time to face the facts that I'm the one that got away"

Bonnie Tyler:

It's a heartache

"It's not right to need someone as much as I depended on you"

Total eclipse of the heart

"I don't know what to do, I'm always in the dark. We're living in a powder keg and giving off sparks"

Holding on for a hero

"I need a hero, I'm holding on for a hero till the morning light"

Straight from the heart

"tell me we can make another start, you know I'll never go, as long as i know, it's coming straight from the heart"

Don't turn around

"just walk out that door year see if i care, go on and go now but don't turn around 'cause you're gonna see my heart breaking"

Roxette:

It must have been love

"Make believing were together, but unsheltered by your heart, but in- and outside I turn to water like a teardrop in your palm"

Listen to your heart

"I don't now where you're going and I don't know why, but listen to your heart, before you tell him goodbye"

Joyride

"she's the heart of the funfare, she's got a whistle and a private tune. And it all begins were it ends, and she all, my magic friend"

Fading like a flower

"Every time I see you, oh, I try to hide away, but when we meet it seems I can't let go, every time you leave the room I feel I'm fading like a flower"

Spending my time

"I try to call but I don't know what to tell you, I leave a kiss on your answering machine"

Wish i could fly

"I wish I could fly out in the blue, over this town following you, I'd fly over rooftops and great boulevards, to try to find out who you really are"

Queen:

Another one bites the dust

"are you ready, hey, are you ready for this? Are you hanging on the edge of your seat?"

I want to break free

"but life still goes on, I can't get used to living without, living without, living without you by my side, I don't want to live alone, hey, God knows I got to make it on my own"

Don't stop me now

"I'm a superstar leaping through the sky, like a tiger, defying the laws of gravity"

Killer queen

"To avoid complications she never kept the same address, in conversation, she smoke like a baroness"

Somebody to love

"I get down on my knees and I start to pray can anybody find me somebody to love"

The show must go on

"Inside my heart is breaking, my make-up may be flaking but my smile still stays on"

I want it all

"I'm a man with a one-tracked mind, so much to do in one lifetime, no man for compromise and wiss and wise and living life, so I'm living it all"

Crazy little thing called love

"This thing called love I just can't handle it"

Elton John:

Your song

"My gift is my song and this one's for you, and you can tell everybody that this is your song, it may be quite simple but now that it's done, I hope you don't mind"

I'm still standing

"I'm still standing, after all this time, picking up the pieces of my life without you on my mind"

Tiny dancer

"Ballerina, you must have seen her dancing in the sand, now she's in me always with me, tiny dancer in my hand"

I guess that's why they call it the blues

"Time on my hand could be time spend with you, laughing like children, living like lovers, rolling like thunder, under the covers"

Sorry seems to be the hardest word

"What do I do to make you want me, what do I've gotta do to be heard, what do I say when it's all over and sorry seems to be the hardest word?"

Don't let the sun go down on me

"I'm growing tired and time stands still before me, frozen here on the latter of my life. Too late to save myself from falling"

Whitney Houston:

How will i know

"if he really loves me. I say a prayer with every heartbeat, i fall in love whenever we meet"

My love is your love

"if I loose my fame and fortune and I'm homeless on the street and I'm sleeping in Grans Central Station, it's okay if you're sleeping with me"

I'm every woman

"Every time you feel danger or fear then instantly I will appear. I'm every woman, it's all in me, anything you want doe baby, I will do it"

I have nothing

"I have nothing if I don't have you. You see through right to the heart of me. You break down my walls with the strength of your love"

If i told you that

"now tell me how you'd feel if I told you that I had feelings for you baby, and would it be so wrong to say what's on my mind, I'm sorry I have to"

Step by step

"well there's a bridge and there's a river that I still must cross, as I'm going on my journey oh I might be lost. And there's a road I have to follow, a place I have to go. Well no-one told me just how to get there"

Adele:

Crazy for you

"and every time I'm meant to be acting sensible you drift into my head and turn me into a crumbling fool"

Melt my heart to stone

"and I hear your words that I made up, you say my name like there could be an "us", I best tidy up my head, I'm the only one in love"

First love

"Excuse me first love but we're through, I need to taste the kiss from someone new, forgive me first love but I'm tired, I'm bored to say the least"

Rolling in the deep

"the scars of your love remind me of us, they keep me thinking that we almost had it all, the scars of your love they leave me breathless, I can't help feeling we could have had it all"

Rumour has it

"rumour has it I'm the one you're leaving her for"

Take i all

"maybe I should leave to help you see nothing gets better than this and this is everything we need, so is it over, is this really it, you're giving up so easily, I thought you loved me more than this"

Someone like you

"I hate to turn up out of the blue uninvited, but I couldn't stay away I couldn't fight it, I'd hoped you'd see my face and that you'd be reminded that from me it isn't over. Never mind I'll find someone like you"

Mariah Carey:

Hero

"There's a hero if you look inside your heart, you don't have to be afraid of what you are"

Without you

"I can't live if living is without you, I can't live, I can't give anymore"

Always be my baby

"now you wanna be free, so I'm letting you fly, 'cause I know in my heart babe our love will never die"

I want to know what love is

"In my life there's been heartache and pain, I don't know if I can face it again, can't stop now, I've travelled so far to change this lonely life"

One sweet day (duet)

"and I know you're shining down on me from heaven like so many freinds we've lost along the way, and I know eventually we'll be together one sweet day"

Vision of love

"I had a vision of love and it was all that you turned out to be"

I still believe

"I have a dream that someday you and me will find ourselves in love again"