

# The HOLLOW ROAD™



World of Darkness

CHANGELING  
THE LOST

TARGET  
© 2008





*The road was long, through maze and moor,  
To gates of glass, all too secure,  
Through which we see the damning sights  
Of true Arcadian allure.*

*Our swords are stained with blood of knights,  
Our garments torn by darkling frights,  
Our faces stained by love and hate,  
Yet we have gained these final heights.*

*We stand as one, our shoulders straight,  
So proud that we have bested Fate.  
And yet the tests have just begun,  
For we must try the looming gate.*

*We're at road's end, the race is run,  
And all our hopes may come undone  
As we stand at Faerie's door  
A thousand miles from mortal sun.*

— CARVED ON THE GATEPOST OF THE KALEIDOSCOPIIC PORTAL

This book includes:

- Discussion of storytelling a **Changeling** endgame, from epic powers to epic threats
- Rules for travel to Faerie, with many challenges and a sample story framework
- The True Fae in their full glory, including a mini-game for roleplaying their singular Arcadian existence
- New entitlements, Wyrd evolution, and more

*For use with the  
World of Darkness Rulebook*



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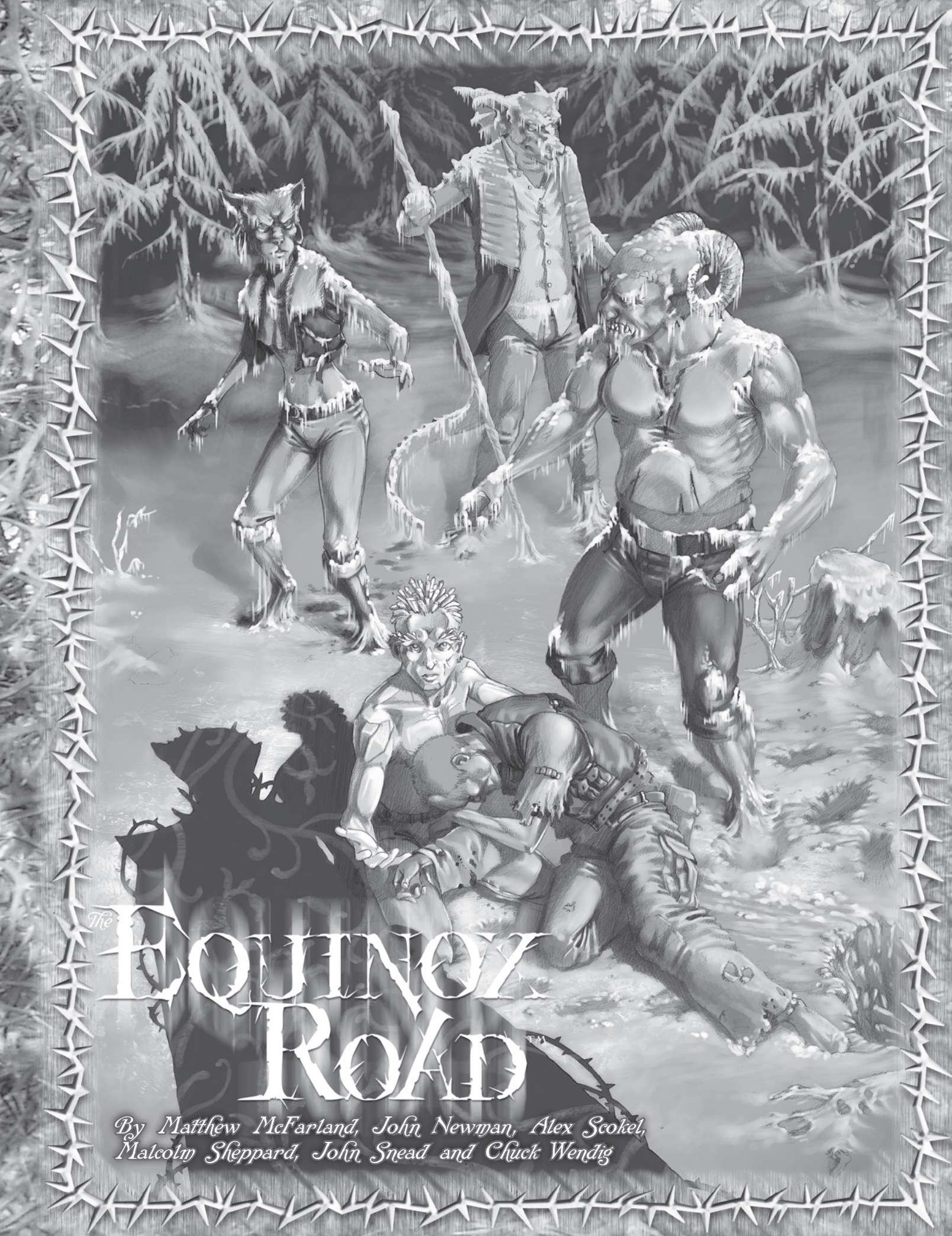
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THE LOST™

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*The*  
**FOURNOY  
ROAD**

*By Matthew McFarland, John Newman, Alex Scokel,  
Malcolm Sheppard, John Snead and Chuck Wendig*



# Prologue: *The Icicle Melts*

"Any new movies?"

He's asked this question at least seven times this afternoon. I'm not sure how his son would respond. Tom's got a temper, but he also loves his father. I've responded patiently to the first six queries. I guess there's no reason for this to be any different.

"No, Pop. No mail today. We'll probably get more Tuesday."

"OK. Could I lay down, then?"

It's only ten in the morning. He's been up for about three hours. But again, I don't know what his son would say, so I hook up the hydraulic lift, get him out of his recliner, swing him around and lower him onto the bed. Before he drifts off, he asks me if any new movies are in. This time, I ignore it.

He doesn't dream the way younger people do. His dreams are like drowning. Some part of his mind knows that it's dying, and it wants to live. I see pieces of his life — Germany while he coached soccer. Korea during the war. Languages he never really spoke. People he'd love to see again. His first wife. His second wife. His third wife, and thus his son's mother. She's out today, and that's why I'm here.

His son should be here, but he's gone away, and I'm here because I made a promise. I always keep my promises.

The stone in my pocket grows warm, and my heart quickens. I run to the living room and stand in front of the bay windows — this works better in full sunlight. I pull the stone out and look through the hole in the center, and I see something I never expected to see again.

Faerie.

• • •

We're slogging through a swamp. Most of the Hedge has Thorns that bite at you, but this portion is waist-deep water. We thought we'd caught a break from the pricking Brambles, and then the leeches grabbed us. We tried brushing them off, but more always come. It's a tithe to being off the path, I think, but there's no way around that.

Our leader has some military experience. He charted our course. He makes me walk a few paces away, but still within eyesight, because I freeze the water around me into slush. We don't know if hypothermia is a possibility here, but better not chance it.

I think about my dad. I wonder if he's noticed the difference. Probably not. He doesn't know much anymore. I hold up my hand, watching the mucky water sluice off the ice. There's a leech on the back of my arm, and the ice around it is melting.

The icicle melts. Dad's the same way. His mind is going away, slowly but surely. He's losing the ability to know where and when he is. I sympathize, Pop, I really do.

The water ends. We walk up out of the stinking mud and brush the leeches away. We do it absent-mindedly, without really looking. We're captivated by what's in front of us.

I pull out the stone. Jake's going to want to see this. Faerie.

• • •

I stand in the sunlight, staring into the stone for a while. A "while" — huh. Time's irrelevant in Faerie, so if you're looking at Faerie from Earth, whose clock are you on? I don't bother trying to figure that out. I just wish I could be there with my friend.

His father calls out from the bedroom, and I hope he doesn't need to use the toilet. That's an adventure. I pull myself away from the window, and the stone goes cold again. I walk to the bedroom door and peek in.

"Yeah?"

"What time is it?"

He obsesses over the time. Well, everything, really. It's called "perseveration."

"It's about ten in the morning, Pop."

"Why am I still in bed?" He looks around. He probably can't see me, so I step into the room.

"Because you wanted to go down for a nap. You already had breakfast and all." I look around helplessly. The room is dim. The furnishings are recent, because they just moved here. He probably has no good idea where he is. I know he doesn't know his address, maybe not even the city. I think back to an eternity in darkness, trapped on the other side of a mirror, and I feel my disguise start to slip. I catch it, and run a hand over my face to make myself look like my friend again. "You want a movie on or something?"

He thinks about this. "No, I'll watch Hallmark for a while."

I turn on the TV and hunt around for a while until I find the channel. He's crying before I leave the room. It doesn't take much. Just a face that reminds him of something he once cared about, something he could probably talk about in detail if I asked him.

But I don't ask him. I might miss some important detail that would let him catch on to my disguise. I don't want him to catch on. If he caught on, I'd have to blame the Alzheimer's when he started saying that I'm not really his son, and the thought of that lie makes me sick.

• • •

"I don't know where his place is." The others are looking at me like I'm a total idiot.

"Well," says Starla, "how are we supposed to dig out that buried guy if you don't know where he's buried?"



"Thought you knew every inch of that place," mumbles Beg. Our leader doesn't say a word, but I know he's pissed.

"I do. If we were there, I could tell you exactly where we need to go. But as I've said, I didn't escape through the ice-maze. I escaped by..."

How *did* I escape?

I look at my hand again. My fingers are melting a little. It's not painful. It never is. It always feels familiar; impermanent...That's how I must have done it.

"Melting," says the leader. He's already walking toward me. I back up. I can see heat shimmers rising off him.

"Silas, no..."

"You melted," he rumbles. He's a skinny guy, but here he's more dragon than man. His eyes glow and his voice always has thunder behind it, and his footprints are a dinosaur's. "You melted and you ran off, back into the Hedge." His gaze moves away from me and back toward the swamp. "And then you froze again, somehow."

"Met up with another Snowblood, I guess," says Beg. "Or found a cold snap in the Hedge. Or went through Siberia. Who fucking knows?" The Ogre looks over at me. I know he wouldn't eat me, not back on Earth, but here... here he's not that great, big, beer-swilling, football-loving brawler. Here he's just hunger.

Here, I'm just ice. So I don't get scared. "I melted so I could get out," I say. I let my index finger soften a little and turn my hand upside down. "I melted so I'd forget what I was. I let everything go, and just flowed away as water."

"Downhill," Silas chuckles. He points to the west, or at least, toward what looks like the setting sun. "That way. See how the ground slopes up?"

As if in response, a cold breeze hits us. The others see that as confirmation. I see it as a warning — He knows we're coming.

• • •

"If I don't come back," he said, "I want to ask you a big favor."

"OK," I said then. I knew what he wanted.

"I don't want my Dad thinking he outlived me."

I remember getting choked up at that point. My family's dead. My fetch fucking killed them all, burned down the house and murdered my uncle, my parents and my sister. My friend, though, his fetch was kind of a wuss. I don't mean that he was weak because he didn't kill, but he was just...weak. He lived in my friend's life as best he could, and when he escaped from Faerie, he caught his fetch waiting for a bus and beat his head in with a snow shovel.

There's a reason he's going back, and I'm staying here. He's driven. He's harsh as Arcadian Winter. I'm...whatever I need to be. I'm like his fetch more than anything, I guess.

But he wanted me to be him for as long as it took. His father is sick, but he's not dying tomorrow or anything. He might die of a stroke soon, sure, but it's more likely he'll hold

on for a few more years, growing steadily more out of touch with what's around him. On a good day, he remembers his granddaughter's name. On a good day, he can follow a new movie and remember it by name later. But good days are getting few and far between. He's slipping away.

It's hard for anyone to watch that. It's harder for one of us, because we know about hopelessness. We remember what it's like to be trapped someplace where the possibility of escape doesn't exist. At least, until something changes.

Something changes. Ha. To escape Arcadia, you have to change. You have to let it into you. My skin became smooth, polished glass. My name faded away, turned backwards, and disappeared like a reflection when the light goes out. I had to become a mirror image before I could get loose.

I've got this sneaking feeling, though, that to get back in to Arcadia, you've got to change even more.

I agreed to the promise, though. I even swore on it. We made a pledge, my friend and I, and I went with him the next day to meet his parents so that I could fool them. After a few hours, he left and I replaced him, and I had dinner with his folks. I helped his father to bed, talked with his mother about school and life in general. I stayed distant, and when his mother asked why, I told her I was tired. She'll be the hard one to fool if I have to keep this up for too long.

The stone gets warm again. The sunlight's gone, but I can still see if I squint.

• • •

I peer through the stone to give Jake a look. It's a frozen wasteland out here, just like I remember. Actually, it's not *quite* like I remember. The place has really gone to Hell since I left. The ice sculptures have gone wild, merging with the snow, until they're more abstract art than detailed statues. The footpaths are gone. I always kept them clear. But the slope of the ground is unmistakable. I just wonder how I stayed melted long enough to get loose.

"OK, we're here," says Silas. "Now, where's the body?"

"He's not dead," I remind him. I'm made of ice, but Silas is the unfeeling one. And the guy we're trying to find... he's important to me.

"Fine. Where is *he*, then?" Silas' feet are melting into the snow. His fire isn't primal like an Elemental's would be. His flame doesn't illuminate or burn. His is the Dragon's Fire, and it's more about power and majesty than literal fire. But that's the thing about the Hedge — sometimes a metaphor runs out of space. Sometimes the symbols crowd in on each other.

And that's why I don't stand too close to Silas. I don't want to melt, because I'm afraid of what that might mean. "This way, I think."

"You *think*?" Starla's pissed. Her ears are flattened and she's sniffing the air. I can't imagine it smells like much of anything.



"I think. It's different than when I was here. The ice is—"

"Just find it." Beg has grown short and squat since we've left the Thorns. He's looking around for something to eat, but there's nothing here. Never has been. Just my Keeper and the people he brings back and plops down in the snow.

I walk around a little, trying to get my bearings. I really don't want to bump into Him. You can't fight Him, not really. He just leads you on, lets you in the cold, lets you freeze to death. It's merciful, He thinks. Hypothermia feels good, I guess. I wouldn't know. I turned to ice before I died.

I look through the stone again before we start walking. I haven't told the others why I brought it or what it really is. They probably figure it's to help me get my bearings. They're right, just not the way they think.

Back at my parents' house, I figure Jake is looking through his stone and seeing endless winter. He asked me to show him Faerie. I warned him that my Keeper's little chunk of Hell didn't look like much, but all he ever saw of Arcadia was the inside of a mirror. He's doing me a big favor — bigger than he knows — and this is the least I can do.

• • •

"Jake?"

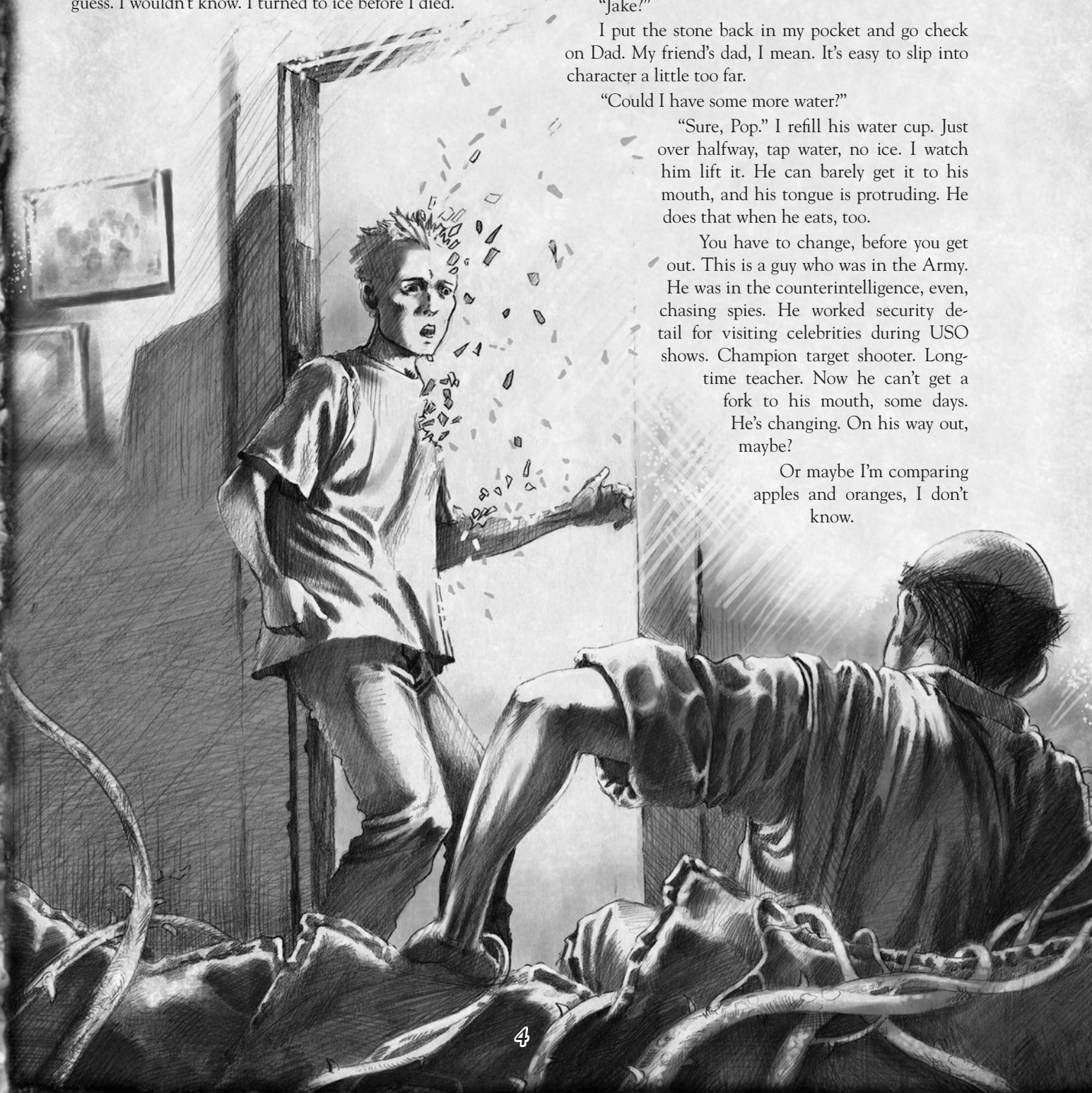
I put the stone back in my pocket and go check on Dad. My friend's dad, I mean. It's easy to slip into character a little too far.

"Could I have some more water?"

"Sure, Pop." I refill his water cup. Just over halfway, tap water, no ice. I watch him lift it. He can barely get it to his mouth, and his tongue is protruding. He does that when he eats, too.

You have to change, before you get out. This is a guy who was in the Army. He was in the counterintelligence, even, chasing spies. He worked security detail for visiting celebrities during USO shows. Champion target shooter. Long-time teacher. Now he can't get a fork to his mouth, some days. He's changing. On his way out, maybe?

Or maybe I'm comparing apples and oranges, I don't know.





"We get any movies today?"

I shake my head. It's funny, sometimes. You have to laugh, else you cry. And he knows it. I've seen him joke about it. "I could run to the video store. Or the library, I guess."

He shrugs. "That's OK." He's probably got 200 DVDs anyway. He's just latched on to the idea of new movies coming in the mail. It's something to hope for. I get that.

"Need anything else?"

"No, not now." He turns his attention back to the TV. I start walking out of the room. "When's Tom coming back?"

I stop. My hand on the doorway would start to sweat. As it is, the glass just fogs a little. "What?"

"When's Tom coming back? Soon? Maybe he'll bring some movies."

How do I handle this? "Pop, it's me. I'm Tom."

He looks at me. "No. I can see my face in you. I can see *through* Tom." I look helplessly down at myself. I dimly remember Tom telling me to change my mien like I did the first time I posed as him, make myself look like a Snowblood, but I didn't bother this time. After all, it's not anyone here can see past the Mask.

"So, he's back soon?"

What the *hell*?

• • •

We didn't bring any goddamn shovels. I can't believe we didn't think of that.

I found the place where he's buried. I know he's here, under the permafrost, and I can just about *feel* him, but there's no way to get to him. I can move the ice, but not the earth underneath it. And every second we're here tempts fate a little longer.

"Beg," I say finally. "You can do it, right?"

He smiles. "Beg?" Sick fucker. Silas, bless him, doesn't let him indulge.

"Damn it, Beg, just do it." He hasn't called down any magic, but he could. Beg gets the hint, and hits the ground with all the force he can muster. The ground cracks and I see his face for the first time in years. He still looks the same as the day we were taken. Now he'd better still be alive.

I pull him up and cradle him in my arms. I want so badly to talk to him, but I don't let it show. I keep the icicle intact. I can't melt now, not even a little.

He's still breathing. Years in the ice of Faerie, and he's still breathing. Of course he is. It's not like time really exists here.

"He doesn't look like anything special," mutters Beg.

"Yeah," sneers Starla. "Doesn't even look fae."

Silas' eyes glisten a bit, and then he hisses. "No, he doesn't." He grabs for the frozen man's shirt. "That's not a Mask. He's still *human*." Silas' words crackle like a dying fire. Smoke rises up from his mouth. The dragon's wrath isn't far from the surface, and if he loses control, he'll kill me. "What have you done, Wintry Tom?"

The blizzard kicks up then, and their faces are lost in the snow: something huge tramps behind them, touching their flesh, freezing them solid. The Snowblind Beast — my Keeper — must have felt Silas' heat. I thought he might.

"You," He says. I clutch my father tighter.

"I've brought—" my voice cracks. "I've brought you—"

"Yes?" The sound is enough to keep me from melting forever. Back on Earth, I'd get annoyed when I melt. Right now, I miss it.

"I've brought a hunter to chase vermin." Starla, I'm so sorry. But you're a bitch. You're a spoiled brat, and you always were, even in Faerie.

"Good," He says. "And the second?"

"A pit to fill with the trimmings from your statues." I know what you did to those people, Beg. I know how you made them plead before you bit off their fucking fingers. So I'm sorry, but you belong here.

"Yes." He sounds happy. That makes it worse. "And the third?"

"A light," I whisper, but the sound carries through the wind. I wonder if Silas can hear me. "A light to prevent the others from escaping." I'd never have gotten the others to go along with this, if not for Silas.

"And in return?"

"I want three favors."

"Name them," He snarls. He hates giving anything up. He gave up His sight once, and never got it back.

"I want to be allowed to leave your realm. I want my father to leave with me. And I want safe passage back to a clear path through the Thorns." That last one's pushing it, but it's not going to do my Dad any good to get out of Faerie if he's just going to lose his soul on the way back.

"Done," the Snowblind Beast says. The blizzard parts and I see a path. I sling Dad over my shoulder. I know better than to look back.

When I get home, I still have to deal with Dad's fetch. I have to deal with why Dad is suddenly healthy again, and eight years younger, to boot. I'll have to tell Jake why I lied to him and what I did to the others, and I hope he understands. I'll probably have to tell Mom the truth, and I'm terrified to do that.

I look through the stone again to let Jake know I'm on my way.



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## *THE Changeling: The Lost LINE*

**Autumn Nightmares**

**Winter Masques**

Rites of Spring

Lords of Summer

*The Equinox Road*



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# *The* EQUINOX ROAD™

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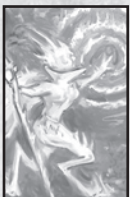
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# INTRODUCTION

*And pleasant is the fairy land,  
But, an eerie tale to tell,  
Ay at the end of seven years,  
We pay a teind to hell,  
I am sae fair and fu o flesh,  
I'm feard it be mysel.*  
— "TAM LIN"

Autumn shivers, shudders and gusts across the land, herald of Winter. Winter stretches, cracks, thaws and recedes so that Spring may come. Spring dances, grows, and languishes as the heat of Summer advances. And Summer strides the world, rages, simmers, and begins to grow chill as Autumn comes again. When day and night are equal in length, the cycle stands, perfectly balanced. Everything is about to end — or to begin again.

And now, the path appears — the Equinox Road.

## THEME: ENDCAME

The **Equinox Road** is a thematic book, based on the climax of a **Changeling** chronicle. Essentially, this book discusses the possibility of endgame: of a chronicle that has moved into its final stretch, where the stakes are higher on all sides and the possibilities have expanded. The characters are stronger, but the challenges they face are increasing.

With the theme of endgame comes the exploration of Faerie. There's probably nothing more dangerous — or at least nothing with the stark probability of such a multitude of unpleasant fates — than for a changeling to return to Arcadia. Yet just as only a changeling can really understand the dangers of that Realm, only a changeling can know just how important it might be to return. If a loved one or even a stranger is kidnapped by the Gentry, changelings know what that unfortunate person is in for. A potential return to Arcadia is likely the climax of a chronicle; there aren't too many things that can be as perilous and wondrous at the same time. Therefore, we include more material on Faerie here, in a book devoted to that climactic third act.

## FAIRYLAND, BUT NOT PARADISE

Arcadia isn't Heaven by any standard. Nor is it Hell. Nothing exemplifies the fae blend of beauty and insanity like Faerie itself, though. It can be a land of utter perfection — but nowhere in Faerie is one ever truly secure. The idyll

can vanish without warning. Too much of a good thing is more than a proverb, it's a real danger that can devour one's very soul. Arcadia cannot ever be home — unless one becomes something that's no longer human, something without pure reason or mortal empathy. Faerie is a place of extremes, never compromising to the mortal will.

Those who step into Arcadia of their own free will are faced with a choice. They can embrace the eternal temptations of the Realm, eventually becoming one with it, transcending the last of their mortal flesh and becoming an eternal part of the Realm. Or they can reject the call of the Wyrld at its strongest, remaining somewhat lesser — and yet greater, for the free changeling is the one who can matter, who can achieve things.

Things come full circle as the chronicle heads toward Faerie. Each character began with a prelude that explored their trials there, how the changing land changed them in turn, and how they managed to escape — and most importantly, *why*. Now, things have changed. The characters have new motives. Some may be even more tightly bound to their families; others may have severed those bonds completely. A changeling may feel all the more attached to the mortal world, or all the more alienated from it. The characters are more fae now — and they come to Arcadia on their own terms. How will the story play out this time? What happens when the circle closes?

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The **Equinox Road** is a companion guide, here to offer advice and ideas for taking your chronicle through the endgame. It shouldn't be taken as insistence that your chronicle *needs* to enter the endgame stage, mind. Rather, take a look and see what the endgame has to offer. You might want to introduce some of the ideas as soon as you like, and not worry too much about a climax. Not all **Changeling** chronicles are going to play out the same way. But if you have



some ideas for upping the ante and perhaps marching on to a major end, well, the material here may be of interest.

**Chapter One: The Third Act** is about roleplaying the more high-stakes, high-powered stages of a chronicle in general. It focuses in particular on ways that players might increase their own personal power levels in order to match the challenges around them. Here you'll find ideas for representing Wyrd evolution (as a changeling becomes more and more fae), advice on designing new Contracts, and a few more eldritch orders to round out the ranks of the powerful elite.

**Chapter Two: Twisted Tales** cuts to the chase of Storytelling the endgame, from handling a more high-powered game to the dramatic methods of bringing a chronicle to a spectacular end. You'll find several experimental ideas here for tinkering with the rules to heighten the stakes on either side. This chapter also features an extensive look at cross-over with the other World of Darkness lines, and how to get the most out of fusing them with **Changeling** if you feel so inclined.

**Chapter Three: Faerie** opens up Arcadia itself. Here you'll find guidelines for how the True Fae interact with each other and with their captives, becoming individuals or objects or even entire Realms as they see fit. There are guidelines for interaction with Faerie itself, and even a sampling of possible fae domains to inspire and use.

**Chapter Four: The Hardest Road** takes the guidelines of the previous chapter and distills them into a story guide.

This chapter is essentially a skeleton for a "return to Faerie" story, to be fleshed out and customized to fit your chronicle. Suggestions abound for each stage of the story, from the call to set out to bypassing the Gatekeeper to the harried flight home.

Finally, something deliciously peculiar awaits you in the **Appendix: The Game of Immortals**. Here you'll find a narrative minigame for roleplaying the sort of struggles that the True Fae engage in with one another. The Game of Immortals is about forging legends by dueling in the form of interactive Storytelling — in ways more abstract than you may be accustomed to. Give it a try. You may find it entertaining; you may also gain some insight into how the True Fae exist at different angles to the rest of the universe.

## NOT THE END

**The Equinox Road** was conceived as a send-off to the line of **Changeling: The Lost**; the cycle complete, the endgame presented. However, plans can change — and when you, the readers, show as much love for something as you have for **Changeling**, they do.

Although we've preserved the vision of **The Equinox Road** as a companion to the endgame and a guide to Faerie, there are still things left to explore for the line. And with your permission, we'll do so for a few more books yet. There are a few more spokes left in the wheel. We hope they inform, thrill and delight.

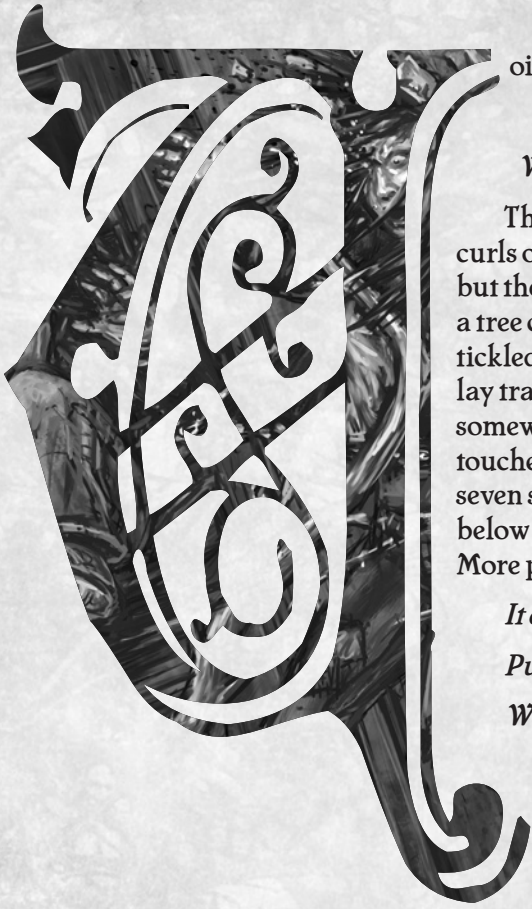
Thank you.











voices beğged somewhere. *Come back, Elmwood.*

*We miss you.*

*We love you.*

The walls shuddered. Wallpaper peeled. Behind the curls of moldering paper, a forest. Not just any forest, but the Forest of All Forests, each tree the ideal of what a tree could become. A small black bird with many eyes tickled its ear with its needled beak. Sunlight, bronze, lay trapped in shafts of drifting pollen. A siren blared somewhere. Someone pounded on a door. A hand touched his hand. Sap oozed from a nearby tree and seven spiders spun it into a sticky silken web. The grass below his feet wept with joy at his return. More voices. More pleading.

*It doesn't have to go like this.*

*Pull back.*

*We love you.*

A moment of clarity. They had trapped him in this room. Bound him to the chair. The long fingers of his tree branch hands were fixed together with electrical tape. A gag in his mouth. Some shitty motel room off the highway.

They wanted him to stay in this false prison, this dullard's reality.

A familiar face thrust up into his own. Marillion. She was still human-looking, with wisps of fog drifting from her eyes. Moisture collecting on her cheeks. But still she looked like the girl who was taken. He found it ugly, suddenly. He didn't look that way anymore, did he? His face had turned all to bark. His nose now little more than jagged cuts in the wood. His eyes like blinking knotholes. This world was just so... *Lacking.*

Marillion touched his face, felt her soft hands meet his rough cheek.

"I love you," she said. Elmwood tasted that lie — it was like bitter licorice.

"I want to go home," he said, his voice a croak, a creak, a rasp.

He closed his eyes, and then when he opened them again, they were all dead. Branches from his body had thrust out, pinning them to walls. One of his fingers was through Marillion's eye (no fog drifting from it now), and from it she dangled, her left foot still twitching, a line of blood sliding down the wallpaper to the dirty floor.

Elmwood took a deep breath, snapped his bonds, and retracted his branches. Bodies dropped, a symphony of thumps and thuds. He exhaled. Everything was so clear now. He tore open Marillion's chest and used it as a door, a gateway to Thorns and sky and roads that all will walk him home.



# CHAPTER I

## *The Third Act*

*If you don't know where you are going,  
any road will take you there.*

— LEWIS CARROLL

For us, every dream has its end upon awakening. A beautiful dream of flying with arms outstretched or a terrible nightmare in which one falls to the bone-breaking Earth below... both draw to a close when we wake. Whether it ends in a lazy drifting to wakefulness or in a short, sharp gasp as we lurch up off the pillow (shaking sweat as we do), we are cast back into this world, a real world, a *fundamental* world.

Not so, for the Lost. For them, the dream only deepens. Let's be clear, the dream has always been more than just a phantasm for changelings: they were taken away to a land where the pinnacle of splendor and the nadir of nightmare meet as one, they escaped through a Realm where Thorns and vines twitch for those who think too hard about them, and they came back to this world a changed breed with hooves instead of feet or skin like Autumn leaves or eyes that look like tiny clocks.

And that is only the beginning! The changeling, well, *changes*. She learns how to command those Thorns to do her bidding and drop sweet fruit at her behest. She learns how to skirt the lands of old Faerie, and maybe how to trick those alien Keepers by tangling them in their own damning rules. Those clocks in her eyes soon start to tick, the leaves across her skin soon *smell* like Autumn and crackle when she walks, and the hooves now aren't just hooves but whole caprine legs ready to gambol about. The dream doesn't end upon waking, no. It spreads like spilled honey.

### ENDGAME

This section is about the endgame. That's different from the "end of the game," mind. In a film script, it might be called the *third act*, in which your characters and stories

have grown to a certain point. The tale has momentum and now is sprinting, lumbering, or slithering toward some kind of conclusion. At this stage, it's quite likely that the characters have changed. They've developed new foibles and fears, gathered new strengths and triumphs, and have quite likely been building their traits to previously unachieved levels. This chapter is about characters at this crux in the story. You want endgame? Here it is.

### THE WYRDED MIEN

A Runnerswift with button-buck horns one day may have a rack of stag's antlers from which vines dangle and moss clings. An Artist just crawling free from the Hedge (having escaped his durance) may look spattered with paint or smudged with clay, but as the years go on, his whole body seems a canvas for drifting, shifting streaks of paint, for smears of warm clay that bubble and swell. A Snowskin is human, early on: maybe just an icy breath and a bluish pallor. But as time goes on, her Wyrd evolves, and her mien evolves, too: her flesh is now a spider web of blue and broken blood vessels, her eyes are frozen marbles in her head, her breath casts whorls and gales of snow, and every inch of skin is covered by a crusted frost like you might find on some ice cream that's been sitting in the freezer for far too long.

The Wyrd grows, changes, evolves. The mien does, too. And as one's Faerie self blossoms, the mien becomes less cosmetic because its power cannot be contained by the Mask. Yes, humans still see what they see, for the Mask is nearly perfect. But note that word, "nearly." Early on, our aforementioned Snowskin may feel cold to the touch to her human lover, and her doctor may note her below-average body temperature — strange, but not totally bizarre. The



Wyrd, though, it grows. It bleeds outward. It can be sensed even when it cannot be seen. At higher levels, the Snowskin enters the room and the temperature drops a few or maybe ten degrees. Her doctor takes her temperature and finds it to be unnaturally low, maybe 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and he thinks she's got hypothermia or something when, really, she's just a Snowskin.

It's important to note that as one's Wyrd develops, the mien becomes less human, and you as a player must determine exactly *how* one's inhuman appearance changes both the mien and the Mask.

How the mien changes is easy enough to determine: whatever elements were part of the mien before, well, assume those characteristics become all the more pronounced. At particularly high levels of Wyrd, at least a couple characteristics become drastically pronounced: a Venombite's scorpion tail may grow by several feet and literally drag behind the character; a Bright One's body may soon suffuse every inch of flesh with an eerie aurora's light; and a Mirrorskin's mien may lose all semblance of stability and appear as an ever-shifting array of faces and bodies. In this way, it becomes easy to recognize a changeling with higher Wyrd because of how dramatically their mien has lost any semblance of humanity. (This isn't a universal truth, however — some Lost escape the Hedge and even early on have unknowingly forgone their humanness regardless of their low Wyrd dots.)

The question then becomes, how does the Mask change? Above, we provided some examples to the Snowskin, but each seeming might offer its own unique changes and challenges to the Mask. Some changelings call this "bleedthrough," as in where the mien starts to truly come through the Mask with decreasing subtlety. Note that the suggestions offered below don't come with mechanical effects, because bleedthrough is received differently by different characters: a Beast's penetrating predator's glare may disturb some, but may attract others. The effects are predominantly narrative, and should be handled as such.

When a Beast's seeming starts to come through the Mask, it may manifest as an odor — a musk for some, an ammonia aroma for others. A Beast may become oddly hirsute: even if he was bald before, his body is now covered in chest, head and facial hair no matter how often he shaves or trims. The Beast may evoke a certain *mood*, too. A Runnerswift may appear like the prey he really is, and some will want to chase or harm him, and others (those who have been prey of some kind) may want to band together (birds of a feather and all that).

Darklings may enter a room and the lights might dim, or candles could blow out. They too might give off an odor: the charnel smell of the Gravewight or the smell of sewage run-off that could accompany a Tunnelgrub. The color may flee their eyes, the corneas becoming eerily dark. Their shadows may seem long, deep, or be cocked at an odd angle.

People might feel uncomfortable around Darklings, but they also may be captivated by them—an inner darkness calls to an inner darkness, and Darklings of high-Wyrd may make fast friends with the abused, with liars, or even with loners.

High-Wyrd Elementals manifest their element, even if it doesn't seem to be coming from them. A Waterborn hangs out in a room long enough, and the faucet maybe drips, or it starts to feel humid with condensation collecting everywhere. A Woodblood maybe gives off the scent of a verdant, heady forest, while an Earthbones might leave inadvertent streaks of mud or bits of rocky scree and debris wherever she goes. The element in question may also invoke a thematic shift rather than a physical one: for as warm as the Snowskin tries to be to her friends with all the laughing and smiling, they still describe her behind her back as "icy" or even "that frigid bitch." A Fireheart on a plane may suddenly be dragged off it before take-off because he got "angry" with the stewardess when all he really did was ask for some extra peanuts — his fire's fury manifests there not as heat, but as the metaphor of heat. (For that character, it may also translate as passion: a woman at a club may think he's hitting on her when he just reached past her to grab his drink. She feels his passion coming off him in hot waves.)

Like it or not, a Fairest's beauty and perfection also bleeds through. Someone might assume the Fairest has had "more" plastic surgery (when in reality she's had none at all). She might give off a constant scent of alluring perfume or the smell of flowers. She may brighten a room, or may enter it and all turn their heads toward her for at least a moment. At truly high levels of Wyrd, a Fairest may have a hard time going out at all—crowds mob her, men hit on her (or alternately are too intimidated to ever go near her), her face is forever remembered even when she's trying to hide it.

Ogres usually have the opposite effect. A high-Wyrd Ogre going out to buy some fast food might freak people out because they think he's going to up and tear the joint apart even though he's done nothing. Or, the opposite occurs: someone weak and abused begs him to be her bodyguard because she senses the strength of his seeming. An Ogre may give off an odor: the smell of blood, raw meat, murky swamps, or forgotten forests. The house may shake when he walks. He might break things even when he appears to handle them delicately.

The Wizeneds are quite likely to have an effect on the environment around them: an Artist might leave a fingerprint in paint, while a Chirurgeon might leave a fingerprint in blood. At high-levels of Wyrd, it's even possible that a Wizeneds passes through a room and a previously malfunctioning device suddenly works in his wake—a Mercedes wrecked on an icy road won't suddenly rumble to life, but a computer suffering the "blue screen of death" may up and work anew. Of course, somehow the Wizeneds's provenance sometimes becomes known through the Mask: an Oracle may find people asking him probing questions about their future even though he doesn't announce his oracular ability.



ties (and in fact works as an office manager at a telemarketing company).

## MERITS OF MASK AND MIEN

Below are Merits that affect the Mask or the mien. They are for high-Wyrd changelings only, as represented by the Wyrd prerequisites.

### DEVOTEE (• TO .....)

**Prerequisite:** Wyrd 7

**Effect:** You have followers. And not necessarily because you want them, either. No, these humans have caught glimpses of your mien past the Mask, and they've come to... well, worship you. They're not ensorcelled (unless you choose them to be), but once in a while they catch a hazy aura of your truly awe-inspiring or monstrous mien, and as a result they think you're quite special indeed. It's probably because they're damaged; these aren't healthy people. But they'll follow you into the gates of Hell. They'll do pretty much whatever you want — and that means throwing themselves in front of a bus or strangling their own mother at your behest.

This Merit functions like the Retainer Merit (p. 116, *World of Darkness Rulebook*). Each acquisition of this Merit equals one zealous Devotee (and several acquisitions pretty much means you have a cult that puts you at its holy center). Your character doesn't necessarily need to *do* anything to pick up a Devotee; they simply glom onto her because somehow they saw her mien or sensed her power.

Dots spent in this Merit indicate the training, capability or flexibility of the zealot. (Again, see the Retainer Merit for comparable aptitudes.)

**Drawback:** In addition to the drawback of the Retainer Merit, it's important to note yet again that Devotees are *damaged*. Each suffers from at least one severe derangement. In addition, while a Devotee zealously throws himself into completing the changeling's commands, sometimes they have... *creative* ways of interpreting instructions. A Lost asks one of his zealots, "While I'm busy across town going through Bethany's closets, I need you to occupy her for the next few hours so she doesn't come home." The cultist does as demanded, but interprets "occupy her" as meaning "put her in the hospital." Technically, it worked. But that might not be what the Lost wanted, precisely.

### MANYMASK (• TO .....)

**Prerequisite:** Wyrd 7

**Effect:** For most, the Mask is a set thing — some innate reflection of one's humanness or an unconscious costume of mortal skin and features. Some changelings learn how to project a whole new Mask, while others learn how to keep a mental and mystical closet of *several* Masks one can wear. For each dot purchased in this Merit, assume that the character has another Mask. This Mask is of the player's

design, and is very likely formed consciously on the part of the changeling (though some changelings, especially those with multiple personalities, may forge them unawares). Each Mask must be of the same gender and same Size (a 90 lb. wisp of a girl must have all of her Masks be reflective of a 90 lb. wisp of a girl), but otherwise, all other cosmetic features are up for grabs. One might be buff and mustachioed, another might be a pale slip who looks more like a chemo patient than a circus strongman. To slip into another Mask, the changeling merely needs to spend a point of Glamour as an instant action, and can do this as many times in a chapter (game session) as her Wyrd score.

### SUBLIME (.....)

**Prerequisite:** Wyrd 9

**Effect:** The character's mien has become truly otherworldly. Perhaps her human form is gone and she is just a being of pure light or darkness. Maybe she appears as a creature out of myth, or as an angel, or even a goddess. She may be the pinnacle or horror of beauty. While humans still see the Mask, they *sense* her transcendent nature. Mortal beings may not attack her (unless in self-defense), may not lie to her, and may not attempt to intimidate her. In addition, all humans who can see her must halve their Speed and Initiative scores (round down). Changelings, on the other hand, do not halve Speed or Initiative, but must succeed at a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll to attack her (unless in self-defense), lie to her, or intimidate her. Finally, the Gentry no longer see her as a direct enemy, and they see her as *almost* a kindred spirit. It doesn't mean the True Fae won't attack her, but it's quite likely they'll approach her first as something close to an equal.

**Drawback:** She also draws the attention of the Gentry. The Fae want her to come "home" to Faerie, and will do whatever they must to push her in that direction. That means her friends and family are subject to possible torment or death by the Fae, who think she must have her "fetters" to the mundane world removed. In addition, changelings don't often trust her; why would they, when the Gentry seem so fond of her?

### TOKENMASTER (...)

**Prerequisite:** Wyrd 7

**Effect:** The character's Wyrd is truly potent: it radiates from her mien in unseen waves. Those objects she values and touches run the chance of becoming tokens. She must first be in somewhat constant contact with the object for a number of days equal to (10 minus her Clarity score). A knife hung at her belt or a bed she sleeps on at night counts: the coffee maker she uses every morning would not count. At the culmination of that time period, the Storyteller rolls a single die — if that die is a success (8 or above on the roll), the object becomes a token as her Wyrd has inadvertently infused it. It's not impossible for a truly potent changeling to effectively create tokens left and right...



**Drawback:** ...and that's not always a good thing. First, she has no control over what the objects become—she cannot say, “I wish that this hand-me-down wallet from my deceased father magically makes money appear” and have that happen. The Wyrd does what it wants. Second, tokens can be dangerous, especially if they get into the hands of her enemies or into the hands of foolish humans who trigger dangerous catches.

## WYRDSKILL (.....)

**Prerequisite:** Wyrd 6

**Effect:** As noted on p. 173 of **Changeling: The Lost**, each changeling gains a free Specialty to Athletics, Brawl or Stealth to represent the minor physical aspects that carry from mien to Mask and give the character an extra edge. With Wyrdskill, a character binds another Skill to his mien and seeming, and at every Wyrd dot gained starting at Wyrd 6, the character receives another free Specialty for the Skill chosen to be bound to one's Wyrd. The mien literally grows to reflect the Skill: think of a Flowering Fairest who finds her Wyrd score is bound to her Subterfuge score. At Wyrd 6, her player grants her the Specialty of “Seduction” because her dizzying floral scent allows her to lie to get men into bed; at Wyrd 7, she maybe earns the “Swindle” Specialty because she finds that her “hothouse flower” veneer helps her with her many con jobs; and so forth.

**Drawback:** Upon finding that a Skill is bound to her mien and seeming, a character begins to rely on it too much, driven both by its potency and by the Wyrd itself. Other Skills may falter slightly: the experience costs to buy Skill dots or Specialties in other Skills in the same area as her Wyrdskill (Mental, Physical or Social) increase slightly. New Skill dots in the same area are now new dots x 4, and Specialties purchased for Skills in that same area now cost 4 experience points. (So, if her Wyrdskill is Subterfuge, it would cost more to buy new Social Skills or Social Specialties, but not Physical or Mental ones.)

## EVOLUTION OF THE WYRD

It could be argued that Wyrd is something the True Fae don't understand—they are not creatures of change. Yes, they may change their bodies. Their tempestuous Realms might shift around them, with mold-crusted castles springing up out of nothing, with oceans rising where once desert lay. But they cannot change their *ways*. They cannot grow and develop, whereas changelings can. The Faerie magic of the Wyrd gets into the changeling's blood, skin, hair and *soul*, and coupled with the human spark it becomes a dynamic thing, a source of raw potential, beauty and also madness. One could then suggest that the magic of Faerie is not truly for the Gentry, but belongs in the crucible that is the changeling, ever-shifting and pulsing with power. Perhaps like all other things, Wyrd is just a stolen tool or toy

for the Keepers, but for changelings, it is the core of their power: as much a part of them as a beating heart or dreaming mind.

As the character changes, so does her Wyrd. Simply put, it *evolves*. Some changelings claim it's something they control, not consciously perhaps but *subconsciously*, through dreams and meditations. Other Lost claim it's out of their hands, and that they are as much in the grip of the Wyrd as the Wyrd is in their own.

What happens, then, when Wyrd swells to undiscovered levels? What happens when the magic of Faerie — both sweet and insidious, both monstrous and magnificent — infuses every molecule of the changeling's being, lurking in the muscle and marrow, in the mind and the spirit?

## TRANSFORMATION OF THE SEEMING

What follows is a section detailing each seeming and how, at high Wyrd levels (we're talking Wyrd 7–10, here) the seeming and the kiths might evolve. Is this something the character controls? Perhaps. Alternately, it might be something the player controls, but over which the character has little or no control. Note that in each seeming, the blessings and curses of each deepen, too — forcing the character to walk a narrower margin, becoming all the more bound to her seeming.

Note that these rules aren't mandatory; characters with particularly high Wyrd published in other books won't necessarily sport this form of advancement. However, they are meant to be applied universally. Wyrd evolution of this nature shouldn't be restricted to certain characters; if one character develops the oddities listed for seeming and kith here when he reaches Wyrd 7, all characters in your chronicle should do the same if their Wyrd reaches that far.

### *Better, Stronger, Faster, Weirder*

In each seeming you'll find that the kiths get a boost, too, at Wyrd 7. Only the kiths from the **Changeling: The Lost** core are listed, so what of alternate kiths like the ones listed in, say, **Winter Masques**?

Basically, at Wyrd 7, assume that these kiths gain some kind of boost to their blessing—maybe +2 dice, maybe double duration. The boost is not game-breaking, but still a big help (especially when coupled with all the other “endgame” boosts to seeming). Discuss any potential bonus with your Storyteller, and you'll be able to figure out how your Bloodbrute or Troll evolve with Wyrd.



# BEASTS

When a Beast's Wyrd evolves, it's something of a tipping point: the bestial magic finally overrides the human compass. Human thoughts give way to instinct and intuition: hackles rise near a hidden foe, when one is frightened or angry she gives off a certain *musk*, and she gives herself over to odd animal habits (sniffing someone, stamping her feet at danger, snarling, even marking her territory in some way).

But it's not just about becoming like a biological animal, no — the character's own animal (as driven by her kith) represents something thematic about that particular creature: the trickiness and cunning of the fox or monkey, the stubbornness of a goat, the subterfuge of a serpent, and so forth. Faerie magic is tied more to the old tales than to Darwin's theories or a biology textbook, so it's important to figure out just what thematic ties your character possesses between her and her kith — and then, when this is uncovered, embracing that theme with wild zeal.

**Blessing:** The Beast is all the more in-tune not only with his own bestial side, but with all creatures great and small. The wildness becomes truly pervasive.

- At Wyrd 7, the character gains a free Animal Ken Specialty for another animal type with which she shares an old (or new) affinity.

- At Wyrd 8, spending Glamour on dice pools of Presence and Composure adds two dice per point of Glamour spent instead of one.

- At Wyrd 9, the character gains another free Animal Ken Specialty for an animal type with which she shares affinity.

- At Wyrd 10, any rolls involving Presence and Composure are considered an exceptional success at three successes instead of five.

**Curse:** The pervasive wildness has its downside, too — it's both demanding and limiting. Human levels of intelligence are almost wholly subsumed beneath animal instinct.

- At Wyrd 7, the player now suffers a full -5 untrained penalty when trying to roll for a Mental Skill in which the character possesses no dots.

- At Wyrd 8, the player doesn't re-roll 10s when using a dice pool involving Intelligence and, in addition, any 1s that come up on the roll subtract from successes.

- At Wyrd 9, the player can no longer spend Willpower to gain bonus dice on rolls involving Intelligence

- At Wyrd 10, if the player must roll for a Mental Skill in which the character possesses no dots, that roll is automatically a dramatic failure.

## BROADBACK

When they say, "that old goat," they mean you, and it isn't necessarily a compliment. Flexibility isn't your strongest trait — frankly, it isn't a trait at all. You don't budge.

Whenever you feel a collar around your neck (literal or metaphorical), you strain against it even if they're trying to lead you to water and get you to drink. You might buck the system, even against the good wisdom to go along with the plan. Anybody gets too close, you bite, buck, or kick. At Wyrd 7, your **Stoic Forbearance** kicks into high gear: the player can spend one point of Glamour to then add +4 to all rolls involving Stamina for the rest of the scene.

## HUNTERHEART

They might call you a "human predator" if only they knew you really weren't all that human, anymore. You can smell fear. And it's not that you *enjoy* it, not exactly, but it certainly drives you, certainly gets your mouth salivating and your loins tingling. Maybe you've turned it to some good: you're a bounty hunter or a revenge killer. Maybe you've gone bad: a serial killer. Even if you repress it, it's always there, the urge to hunt. At Wyrd 7, with **Tooth and Claw** you can now add +2 to any unarmed attacks, doing lethal instead of bashing.

## RUNNERSWIFT

In sharp contrast to the Hunterheart, you can't help but always feel *hunted*. In the dark, you feel eyes at your back. Even just a leisurely walk in the park can become an exercise in paranoia — the brush moves, you hear footsteps somewhere, a strange shadow crosses your path. Your heart leaps. Your legs leap, too — and before you know what's happening, you're running like you're trying to escape the Keepers all over again. At Wyrd 7, **Runs Like the Wind** now grants you an additional two points to your Speed.

## SKITTERSKULK

Listen, people are starting to find you creepy. Sure, the Mask still works, but some *aura* of your insectile nature is starting to bleed through. Maybe it's the way you don't blink so often? Or how your eyes might follow a fly doing barrel rolls around the room, and how you lick your lips in the process? Your demeanor is as much insect as human, now, and that's off-putting. Still, at Wyrd 7, your **Impossible Counterpoise** lets you quadruple your Defense when Dodging instead of merely tripling it.

## STEEPSCRAMBLER

You feel uncomfortable at street level or on the ground floor. You probably have an apartment up high — penthouse, maybe, or if you don't have that kind of cash, maybe you live on the roof. You'd rather take the steps or the fire escape than any elevator. Or, if possible, you'll just climb a drainpipe. People are starting to wonder, though, why you look so queasy and unsettled on the ground. It helps that at Wyrd 7, **Gifted Climber** now grants you a +5 bonus when trying to climb any surface.

## SWIMMERSKIN

Your skin doesn't pucker in the water. But it does get dry when you're *out* of the water. It's getting hard to stay out





of the water, isn't it? Even on a mild day you're dipping your fingers in somebody's ice water and running it across your brow. This isn't your home. Your Wyrded flesh wants to be in the lake or the ocean, or hell, even a kiddie's pool. The good news is, you're still a **Natural Swimmer**, and can at Wyrd 7 hold your breath underwater for one hour instead of only 30 minutes. In addition, your Speed is raised by three when you're swimming.

### VENOMBITE

It's a mistake to assume your venom is kept only to your bite: no, it creeps out in your words, or in a baleful stare, or in your passive-aggressive actions. You're a real snake in the grass, a spider hiding in the corner ready to strike. You can't help it, of course. It's in your nature, and it's only growing stronger. At Wyrd 7, your **Poisonous Bite** gets all the more dangerous: you can now attempt this twice per scene instead of only once.

### WINDWING

You dream of the sky. Almost always, now. You dream of the wind. You dream of *altitude*. It's what you are — soaring, always moving, and like the Steepsrambler it sucks being bound to this crude Earth. Being held too long to the fundament can make you irritable, indeed. Thankfully, at Wyrd 7 your **Gift of the Sky** lets you glide for up to two minutes per point of Wyrd, and you no longer suffer bashing damage from falling, only taking damage (lethal, at that) if you fall more than 150 yards.

## DARKLINGS

It's not that the Darklings have it harder than other changelings. They did, however, have a hard way back — fraught with a deep darkness, seemingly impenetrable Thorns scratching them from the shadows. Their time in Faerie marked them and forced them to rely on certain negative traits to survive. Some hide. Others lie. One Darkling steals; another kills.

When the Wyrd evolves, these traits tighten and become very much an ineluctable part of the character. A tiger can't change his stripes, and a Darkling can't change the darkness within. And it's no longer purely about survival, either. The Darkling's already survived, now it's about getting what she wants. Revenge, maybe? Money? Love or lust? The road to these desires is never a straight one, and it's always cloaked in deep shadow. And that's fine by them because that's who they are, now: creatures of deep shadow.

**Blessing:** The shadows gather. Blood becomes tenebrous, spirit becomes like ink. The dark is more to them than just the absence of light; at high levels of Wyrd, the darkness is a total confirmation of their being, a mirror despite the seeming oblivion.

- At Wyrd 7, the player can now also increase dice pools involving Larceny with Glamour.



- At Wyrd 8, the player can spend Glamour to increase dice pools that involve Wits, Subterfuge and Stealth, and each point spent increases the dice pool by two dice.

- At Wyrd 9, the character gains a free Specialty in Stealth or Subterfuge.

- At Wyrd 10, the character gains the 8-Again rule on all dice pools involving Stealth or Subterfuge.

**Curse:** Still, the darkness is an infection. It becomes so invasive, so all-encompassing that it's hard to peer beyond the veil of shadows to remember the light of day — or the light of one's humanness.

- At Wyrd 7, Perception rolls made during the daytime suffer a -1 penalty.

- At Wyrd 8, Darklings suffer a -2 dice penalty to all rolls made to enact Contracts during daylight hours (and this increases to -3 if the Sun is directly visible).

- At Wyrd 9, Perception rolls made during the daytime now suffer a -3 penalty.

- At Wyrd 10, any rolls made to enact Contracts during daylight hours do not gain the 10-Again rule and any 1s rolled subtract from successes.

## ANTIQUARIAN

Even when you leave your library (rare, these days), you always take a book. Or some artifact you can stroke, admire and study. For you, the world is now nothing but knowledge and information — walls distilled down to drywall grade and paint color Pantone numbers, personalities driven by items from their past and the measurements that comprise them (SAT scores, personality test results, height, weight, DNA), actions predicted by history and hard numbers. The Wyrd has made you a bit obsessive. Or maybe, just maybe, your obsessive nature is what's stirred your Wyrd to evolve? Either way, at Wyrd 7 the **Keys to Knowledge** now grants you 8-Again on all rolls involving Academics and Investigation (in addition to all the other benefits of said blessing).

## GRAVEWIGHT

Basically, you're dead. Your heart may have stopped beating. You probably give off a strange odor (gravemold, corpseflesh, must or dust). Maybe your skin looks like it's decaying, or like it's the cold marble of a tomb wall, or even that it's grown insubstantial like that of a ghost. Worse, you're more comfortable now dealing with the dead than the living — the living freak you out the way a corpse might unsettle anybody else. At Wyrd 7, your **Charnel Sight** is now innate.

You can view the unquiet dead with no expenditure of Glamour, whether you'd like to or not.

## LEECHFINGER

You're a leech. You can't change that, now. Maybe you leech money. Maybe you leech love. Maybe your very presence is a drain on the conversation or the happiness in the room. Once, it was something you controlled. Not so much, these days. Your presence is positively enervating to some. It has some benefit, though: at Wyrd 7, you can still **Sap the Vital Spark** with your touch, and now it can do up to two lethal damage per touch (and heal two points of your damage, as well).

## MIRRORSKIN

It's weird—you've kind of lost your own identity. That's what the Wyrd wants, it seems: your skin sculpts like wax, but it always has. Now, while you abstractly *know* who you are, it's like there's this intense pull to forget, to become anybody *but* you, for however long the Wyrd wants. With just a wish you feel like you could toss your old identity in the fire, and you could forever become *tabula rasa*. **The Mercurial Visage** strengthens at Wyrd 7: you now gain +5 to any Wits + Subterfuge disguise attempts.

## TUNNELCRUB

Tight spaces make you very, very comfortable. Is that the opposite of claustrophobia? Claustrophilia, maybe? Whatever it is, the darkness is your friend. It hides all sins. It hides all the awful things you probably want to do, and it even hides all the *beautiful* things you hope to accomplish — the darkness is fair, that way. It's not moral. It doesn't judge. It's your one true friend... the Wyrd has made that clear with the way it's changed you. At Wyrd 7, when you **Slither and Squirm**, you can add 2 dice to the Dexterity + Athletics roll made to wriggle into too-tight spaces.

## ELEMENTALS

At least the Beasts still get to be something *alive*, something that feels natural and part of the life cycle. The Elementals? Not so much. The elements of the world are truly fundamental: they do not judge, they are plainly seen and without obfuscation. Water is water, fire is fire, and so forth. The evolution of the Wyrd only confirms this for the character: one's humanness is cast further and further away from her. It's like her humanity is drowned in water, burned by fire, or buried six feet deep in the thickest clay.



That translates to becoming even stranger, and becoming more like the element she represents. Look to what the character's element represents for that changeling (fire might be fickle or it might be furious, while water might be seductive and deep or it might be better represented as raging rapids), and then know that the Wyrd is only going to amp that up. A character's first response is always this, always what her element demands. Yes, she can deny it, but the character must expend *conscious effort* to deny what the Wyrd has fostered her to do.

**Blessing:** The Wyrd manifests as the chief guiding element of the character, and it becomes not like a second skin, but like her first and only skin. She does not control the element: she is the element.

- At Wyrd 7, the character can now access the Elemental blessing (adding Wyrd to Health by spending a point of Glamour) twice a day instead of only once — but its second use that day necessitates spending two Glamour instead of one.

- At Wyrd 8, the player can spend one point of Glamour to add the character's Wyrd dots to her Speed score. This lasts for a number of turns equal to the character's Willpower and can only be used once per day.

- At Wyrd 9, the character's element is a potent part of the character's form and demeanor: the player may spend a point of Glamour to gain two dice to any rolls involving Presence.

- At Wyrd 10, the character may permanently add half her Wyrd score (five) to her Health dots; in addition, she can still access the normal Elemental blessing (adding Wyrd to Health) twice a day by spending Glamour.

**Curse:** At high levels of Wyrd, the character drifts further and further from her humanity: the alien element presides over her, not her mortal nature.

- At Wyrd 7, any Social rolls made in an effort to communicate with a human being suffer -2 dice.

- At Wyrd 8, any dice pools involving Manipulation, Empathy, Expression, Persuasion or Socialize do not gain the 10-Again benefit. In addition, any 1s that come up on the roll subtract from successes.

- At Wyrd 9, the unskilled penalty for Social rolls becomes -5 dice.

- At Wyrd 10, any Social rolls made in an effort to communicate with a human suffer a -4 penalty.

## AIRTOUCHED

You're not just *airtouched* at this point. You're air-jacketed, it's all around you and a part of you and inside you. Maybe you're forever light and fickle like

a springtime breeze, or maybe you're a frigid gale of ceaseless wrath. It takes every muscle and brain cell in your body to *not* be that which the Wyrd demands. At Wyrd 7, though, the **Velocity of the Zephyr** now allows you to run at up to double your Speed in a turn (whether the Speed is modified or not) *and* still take an action. In addition, negative Health modifiers no longer affect your Speed, so buoyant and swift are you.

## FIREHEART

Fire? It isn't predictable, and neither are you. Your moods vacillate wildly, sometimes, from vengeful (like a roaring conflagration) to weak and sputtering (like a guttering candle flame). You wish you could control it, but who doesn't wish they could control fire? All of this serves to enforce your **Flickering Acumen**: at Wyrd 7, you now gain +2 dice to all Wits-based rolls for every Glamour you spend instead of the normal "one for one."

## MANIKIN

You're the alien amongst aliens, friend. Your heart might be a ticking clock, your mind a sphere of Waterford crystal. Your thoughts and feelings have gone cold, or at least, really weird. You're now an artifice of humanity, a facsimile that loses some pieces of its human nature every day—like flakes of paint falling from a wall and revealing the truth beneath. Thanks to the **Artificer's Enchantment**, at Wyrd 7 you can now purchase Contracts of Artifice as if they're Affinity (new dots x 4). In addition, untrained Crafts rolls now suffer no penalty.

## SNOWSKIN

You are a beautiful and unique snowflake, unlike any other. The Wyrd has chilled you to the marrow, to your very *soul*, and the Faerie magic pushes you toward some uttermost reflection of Winter: bitter and icy like a tundra Winter, harsh and piercing like an icicle driven through someone's heart, or fragile and insubstantial like a crystalline configuration of flimsy frost. Your emotions are rarely passionate, though; it takes a lot to burn through those frozen layers within. At Wyrd 7, your **Voice of Ice** becomes all the more troubling to those who hear: all Intimidation rolls are now considered *rote actions*, as per p. 34 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

## WATERBORN

You're fluid. Too fluid. Water is mercurial, it flows this way and that, sometimes contained, sometimes spilling out past the brink. That's you. One day, you go along with everything, smooth as a stream. The next, you refuse to



be contained and controlled, a rushing river ready to smash the dam of one's expectations—sure, that means you change your opinions a lot and it's hard to count on you. But, this is what the Wyrd demands. With **The Gift of Water**, you can now swim up to *three times* your Speed score (all other benefits and caveats of the blessing apply, as per p. 110 of **Changeling: The Lost**).

## WOODBLOOD

The world is alive. It's verdant, thumping with a steady pulse — you can practically *hear* photosynthesis, you can *feel* plants straining to grow and drink and reach the light. You're the same way, really. If you're sheltered, you wither. But when the Wyrd is fed and you're given what you need, you bloom, baby — bright, tall, steady, as eternal as a hunk of petrified wood. Humans freak you out a bit, though; one wonders, might they want to secretly chop you down, use your skin for paper, your bones for chairs? Sometimes, you have to hide, and at Wyrd 7, **Fade into the Foliage** now grants you 8-Again on all Stealth and Survival rolls made outdoors where plants are allowed to grow.

## FAIREST

Beauty and grace drive the Fairest: they are perfect, or at least they seem to be, in many ways. The Wyrd will not let the Fairest be anything but, and that can be a problem: by sculpting them so perfectly, by making their voices so sweet or their eyes so bright, they can never again be anything less than exceptional. The pressure mounts. Worse, it draws attention, sometimes too good, sometimes not at all good. A stalker may see the Mask, but he can *sense* the mien beneath. A brute thinks to break the delicate glass figurine he sees before him. A bar full of witnesses never fails to remember the changeling's extraordinary face, and that's not always a positive thing, is it?

Of course, this can serve to damage the Fairest as their Wyrd evolves. On the one hand, it can serve to distance them all the more from humanity — they come to hate humans who fawn over them or who want to harm such a pretty thing. Or, their ego swells to truly inhuman levels: with beauty uncontested, it's hard not to think of people (or even other changelings) as lesser playthings, or tools, or even victims.

**Blessing:** They say beauty is only skin deep? Not true for Fairest with evolved Wyrd. Beauty is *soul* deep, part of every thought, living in her very marrow.

- At Wyrd 7, the player can spend Glamour to improve dice pools that include Presence, Manipula-

tion and Persuasion. Each point spent increases the dice pool by two dice.

- At Wyrd 8, the character gains a free Specialty in Persuasion or Socialize.

- At Wyrd 9, the experience cost for Social Merits is halved (round down).

- At Wyrd 10, all Social rolls gain the 8-Again benefit.

**Curse:** Ahh, but nobody said beauty was necessarily a *good* thing. It is not a moral trait. It can be cruel, callous, and for changelings beauty is so often packaged with madness...

- At Wyrd 7, rolls to resist giving into a pre-existing derangement (Resolve + Composure, usually) suffer -2 dice.

- At Wyrd 8, upon failing a degeneration roll and losing Clarity, the Fairest does not roll to resist acquiring a derangement: the derangement is acquired automatically upon degenerating.

- At Wyrd 9, the character's beauty is overwhelming to others; it thus becomes difficult for her to hide. Any Stealth rolls suffer a -3 penalty.

- At Wyrd 10, the Fairest never has more than one die to roll to resist degeneration. Clarity is lost too easily at this point in the Fairest's "evolution."

## BRIGHT ONE

You can no longer contain it — you shine too bright. You stand out wherever you go, as stunning as fireworks or as harsh to the eye as searing fluorescence. This may translate to a bright personality, and it's possible that the Wyrd will not let you be anything but an undeniable *beam* of character. But your light might also be eerie and strange, reflecting a personality that glows with an inner oddness. This is best reflected by the **Goblin Illumination**, which only grows upon reaching Wyrd 7 — the light you cast upon choosing now fills a much larger area (30' x 30' and 20' high), and if you spend a Glamour point to make it intense and painful, those attacking you suffer a -3 dice penalty (and sunglasses don't help).

## DANCER

Your grace is alien. The way you move? Not natural. Lithesome and too-supple, your internal rhythm (which you can hear in your blood or in the very air around you, even if others cannot) drives you to constant motion. You are a slave to it. Oh, and it's beautiful, but like most Fairest whose Wyrd has begun to evolve, it's *too* beautiful. Strangely so. Your **Fae Grace**



demonstrates this nicely: at Wyrd 7, you now gain 9-Again to not only your Expression or Socialize rolls, but also to Athletics. In addition, you gain +2 to your Dodge when avoiding attacks.

## DRACONIC

The dragon's heart pulses within you. As your Wyrd has grown, so have you begun to feel completely unnatural, like an ancient and mythic beast has awakened within and now is creeping out and living upon your flesh. You sometimes have weird dreams, too, like maybe you're bound to one or many of the Great Beasts of Faerie: you can sometimes hear their shrieks in the sky above, or feel their stampeding feet quaking the earth beneath where you stand. Your *unnatural* weapons grow, too: at Wyrd 7, the **Dragon's Talon** now grants you +3 to Brawl rolls. If you spend one point of Glamour, your Brawl damage does lethal instead of bashing for a number of turns equal to your Wyrd.

## FLOWERING

Flowers, unlike trees, aren't exactly *tough*. A bad frost? A harsh wind? A nibbling insect? The flower is delicate, just like you. You might seem normal, but as your Wyrd evolves you're easier and easier to damage, like some rare swamp orchid that only grows in one spot in the wide and dangerous bog. Your precious petals might tear; your stem could snap. Harsh words shred you. Harsh actions might cut you off at the base. Still, it's not all bad. At Wyrd 7, your **Seductive Fragrance** deepens — any rolls involving Persuasion, Socialize and Subterfuge gain an extra die.

## MUSE

You've come to recognize that your words have power, as do your actions. Others hang upon them. They sup at your tongue like a piglet at his mother's teat. You can practically *see* the puppet strings connecting them to your hands. It's a tremendous ego boost. It also creates a certain... megalomania? Narcissism is common amongst high-Wyrd Muses, and you're no different. The **Tyranny of Ideas** only confirms this: you can now spend Glamour to give a human subject +4 to any one dice pool involving Expression, Persuasion, Socialize or Subterfuge... or you can spend a Glamour and cause them a -2 penalty to any one dice pool involving those Skills.

## OGRES

Tragedy and violence makes the Ogres initially, and the Wyrd will not allow these things to be repressed or contained. No, for Ogres, their brutish bod-

ies only become more so: the scars of the past multiply, the flesh grows thicker in anticipation of coming pain, tusks twist and teeth sharpen.

Ah, but it's not just about what happens to an Ogre physically. Mentally and emotionally, intelligent thought is submerged beneath a red haze, a haze that calls the monstrous mind to violence as an easy answer. The violence once visited upon them has been stored up, and as one's Wyrd grows it's like the mercury in a thermometer creeping toward the top: one day, the glass will pop as the heat rises. So it is with violence: it will not be contained forever. The Ogre can vent it, of course, taking out his aggressions and clearing his head by giving into violence instead of resisting it. But it always rises to the surface anew.

**Blessing:** The Faerie magic that infuses an Ogre is less a cunning scalpel or a melodious tune, but more a blunt instrument that hammers the character into its desired shape.

- At Wyrd 7, the Ogre gains an additional dot of Health.
- At Wyrd 8, the Ogre's player can spend points of Glamour to improve dice pools involving Strength, Brawl and Intimidate. Each point of Glamour spent now adds two dice to the dice pool.
- At Wyrd 9, the Ogre gains a free Specialty in either Brawl, Intimidate or Weaponry.
- At Wyrd 10, the Ogre never suffers bashing damage, unless that damage is caused by a source of iron. Lethal damage and aggravated damage still apply as normal.

**Curse:** Of course, the needs of the ogrish body take away from other areas. The mind and tongue may falter. This isn't the Ogre's choice, of course: but the evolution of Wyrd can be quite demanding.

- At Wyrd 7, the Ogre doesn't get the 10-Again benefit on dice rolls involving Resolve or Composure (Perception rolls, i.e. Wits + Composure, are exempt from this).
- At Wyrd 8, the Ogre doesn't get the 10-Again benefit on dice rolls using Resolve or Composure, and in addition, 1s subtract from successes on these rolls (Perception rolls, i.e. Wits + Composure, are exempt from this).
- The character suffers a -2 to Composure when using it as a Defense Trait (that is, when subtracting it from another character's dice pool).
- Spending Willpower on Mental rolls does not earn the character three dice, and now only provides +1 bonus (this includes Perception rolls).



## CYCLOPEAN

The need to hunt has become too hard to resist, hasn't it? You find yourself wondering how you might kill an animal, or how you might stalk that rapist that's been plaguing the neighborhood for the last six months. It's in you. You see a footprint and you wonder whose it might be. You *smell* a fingerprint on a windowpane and you want to wander around until you find that smell again. The fact that you can **Smell the Blood** actually lets you accomplish this, *fee fi fo fum*: at Wyrd 7, you can now add half of your Wyrd score (round down) to any Wits-based Perception rolls.

## FARWALKER

It's getting harder and harder to deal with people. Your motley notwithstanding, you pretty much want to get away from everything and everybody. You feel comfortable when you're alone, and the more people that are around you, the more agitated you feel (and it doesn't help that you can hear them whispering insults behind your back, even if they're only *thinking* those whispers). Thankfully, your **Elusive Gift** gives you comfort. At Wyrd 7, you now gain the 8-Again rule on all rolls involving Stealth and Survival.

## GARCANTUAN

Sure, your body grows, your skin stretches, and your bones pop as you assume a giant form, but what's that all about, anyway? It's about repression. You've contained the horrors and madness of your durance and now, with your Wyrd gaining ground, all that awful stuff inside is ballooning up and out — and with it comes your giant Size. Your **Spurious Stature** allows you at high-Wyrd to become freaking *enormous*, and at Wyrd 7 you now don't suffer any damage when you return to normal human stature. In addition, when your Size is increased while using the blessing, you can now add half of your Wyrd score (round down) to any Strength rolls.

## CRISTLECRINDER

You hate to admit it, but you really want to eat everything in sight. That coat rack? Sure. The stuffing out of that chair? No doubt. But it's even more compelling when it's something made out of *meat* like a cow or a fat hog or... don't tell anybody, of course, but humans are made of meat, too. You're hungry all the time. Your teeth *itch*. You can't fill up that void inside of you fast enough, can you? Your **Terrible Teeth** work nicely to complement this urge, as at Wyrd 7 your bite now does +3 lethal, and no longer requires a successful grapple to enact.

## STONEBONES

You won't let anybody hurt you anymore, will you? That's what that stone exterior is all about. Nobody can hurt you. Abuse you. Torture and torment you. The Wyrd reminds you that you are an immovable object when you need to be, rough-hewn and tough as a concrete bunker. At Wyrd 7, your **Obdurate Skin** can now be used up to twice per day, and the ability no longer necessitates an instant action; it's now reflexive, instead.

## WATER-DWELLER

The fact that you dwell in water as a demon or some "monster beneath the deep" isn't about being fluid or fickle like the Waterborn — it's maybe about concealing yourself because of how horrible you look and how horrible you feel. Or maybe it's about embracing a certain darkness within... after all, the deepest depths are truly dark, just like how you feel sometimes. It's hard to think differently, anymore, and it's hard to lurk anywhere that *isn't* water. Water is just so dim, so gloomy, so... reassuring. You may still **Lie Under the Waves**, and at Wyrd 7 you can now hold your breath for up to one hour. In addition, you no longer suffer penalties to sight-based rolls when underwater or *out* of water.

## WIZENED

The Wizened find that the Wyrd makes them a bit obsessive-compulsive. Everything has constituent parts, and the Wizened want to break things down into those parts and find out how they work. Even when they're really able to do so, they can't help but wonder: is that poor depressed girl that way because of something stuck in her brain that might be removed with a casual slip of a knife? Does the Court not function properly because one of the cogs in the machine (i.e. another changeling) is gumming up the works? Can't everything be fixed?

Yes, they're cunning and ingenious, but this can be as damning as it can be helpful. Serial killers are cunning and ingenious, too — it doesn't necessarily make them sane. It becomes harder and harder to interact with anybody who just doesn't "get it," who can't imagine how things might be better with a tweak here, a nudge there, with a blow from a heavy wrench or a quick bit of work with a bone saw. Some lose themselves in the work, remaining awake for days on end, fixated on a single swipe of paint on a canvas or a pesky cobweb way up in the corner of the old manse.

**Blessing:** Tinkers, craftsmen, creators, artists — the Wizened seeming demands a certain nimbleness, and the evolution of the Wyrd provides this in spades.



- At Wyrd 7, the character may use the higher of Dexterity or Wits to determine Defense.

- At Wyrd 8, the character no longer needs to spend Glamour to gain 9-Again on all Dexterity rolls; this bonus is now automatic and permanent (unless of course the character drops back down to Wyrd 7).

- At Wyrd 9, any rolls involving Crafts are considered an exceptional success on three successes instead of five.

- At Wyrd 10, the player can add in his Wyrd dots when determining the character's Speed trait.

**Curse:** The body shrivels and distorts, and so too does the Wizen's mind and tongue. The Wizen are driven by a kind of bitterness, and this acrimony can hamstring them if they're not careful.

- At Wyrd 7, the Wizen now suffers -3 to any untrained Social rolls.

- At Wyrd 8, the character shrinks — perhaps he grows shorter, or his flesh grows leaner. In some fashion, his physical form tightens, withdraws, declines. The character loses both a point in Size and thus, also in Health.

- At Wyrd 9, the Wizen does not benefit from the 10-Again rule on dice pools involving Presence. In addition, any 1s rolled subtract from successes.

- At Wyrd 10, the character's Social growth is permanently stunted, much like his physical Size: he may not purchase any more dots in Social Skills.

## ARTIST

Art is better than the real thing, right? You can't help but capture the world in your work, and frankly, your work is better than the real thing. Your skills are... well, they're *perfect*. The rest of the world is with flaw, so lately you've really started to lose yourself in your art. But that's okay, because you're so damn good at it. Frankly, your hands don't even need to pay attention to your brain anymore: at Wyrd 7, your **Impeccable Craftsmanship** now extends its benefit not just to Crafts rolls, but also to all Dexterity-based rolls, too.

## BREWER

It's hard for you to actually get drunk (though that doesn't stop you from trying), but you know that the liquids you concoct, the draughts you ferment... well, they're the most potent around. It's hard not to think of others as weak, given how easily they topple from your heady brews. It's also hard not to see the world in terms of alchemies and recipes: with the right ingredients, can't anything be done? At Wyrd 7, your **Inebriating Elixirs**

are truly intoxicating: the Wits + Crafts roll to create such a concoction gains +2 dice, and in addition, you can do this as many times in a scene as you care to.

## CHATELAINE

Everything is about order. Precision. Clockwork. The house is everything. The domicile is key. Okay, so it's maybe a defense mechanism. And maybe you get a little agitated when a single pewter figurine is out of place or if your guests are even five minutes late. But this all serves your **Perfect Protocol**: at Wyrd 7, you gain 8-Again on any Social rolls performed in service to manners, etiquette or social protocol. In addition, if you spend a point of Glamour, you can gain a +3 dice bonus to Manipulation and Presence rolls for the remainder of the scene.

## CHIRURGEON

You tell people it's because you want to help, but really, it's because you want to fix them. They're flawed. And if only you could get in there, crack some bones, tear out a faulty organ or three. Human biology is so imperfect, just a gross mess—it's a miracle it works at all. People say sometimes they can see you staring through them. That's not true. You're just looking *real* deep, is all. At Wyrd 7, your **Analeptic Charm** grants you the 8-Again benefit on any Medicine rolls.

## ORACLE

Like all Wizen, you want to break things down and see what makes them tick. The element of time is like that, for you — if only you could tear it all open and see what waits in the future, maybe you could prevent others from getting taken into Faerie. Or maybe you could protect yourself and your friends. Blessedly, at Wyrd 7 you can now use your **Panomancy** once per scene... unfortunately, you're so obsessive over it you probably *do* use it once per scene. Some say you're addicted.

## SMITH

You don't understand people. You understand metal. Metal is goddamn fundamental. It's complex, sure, but it's predictable. Heat it. Strike it. Shape it. You've tried that approach on people, and it fails six times out of ten. But you'll keep trying because it's all you know at this point. At Wyrd 7, your **Steel Mastery** grows. Your extended Dexterity + Crafts roll now only demands that each roll equal 15 minutes, and in addition, any item affected gains a +2 equipment bonus instead of +1, so, nice work.



## SOLDIER

The threat is never over. You've become a bit paranoid, perhaps, but only because it's been proven true time and time again. The Gentry. Hobgoblins. Fetches. All threats—and hell, you even suffer threats from within your own freehold and Court. Somebody has to perfect the blade strike. Somebody has to know how to pop a head with a 7mm bullet from 500 yards. If not you, then who? Your **Blade Lore** now extends to firearms, too — any gun you pick up, well, you're assumed to have a Specialty in it. In addition, all Weaponry rolls gain an automatic +1 bonus.

## WOODWALKER

You're in danger, you know that. You see the forest and the wild places, and it calls to mind Faerie. You miss that, and maybe only that, about the land to which you were taken. So, you'll protect these lands however you must. You're only truly comfortable here, where the wild things dwell. Your **Wildcraft** at Wyrd 7 now also grants you a free Direction Sense Merit whenever you're in the wilderness. In addition, you can add half of your Wyrd score (rounded down) to any Survival rolls you make.

## BECOMING NIGHTMARE

At the apparent pinnacle of one's Wyrd, the dreams of Faerie become intense. It seems impossible not to succumb to them: yes, some are wretched and real-seeming dreams of skeletal trees and meadows whose grass is soaked in blood or butterflies made of glass that are all-too-happy to eat out your precious eyes. But others are magnificent, sublime, a call to beauty that cannot be replicated in this mundane world. You dream of a song whose melody inspires the tides to swell and the snow to melt. You dream of a milk-cake so sweet that its flavor stays on the tongue for weeks after waking. You dream of your Keeper's one kiss, a





small moment of apparent gratitude, burned upon your brow and leaving behind a whiff of rose petals and incense. The sensation is addictive. Some who reach this point only seek to sleep — often in the Hedge, where the dreams are made all the more real — and let the dreams find them anew.

That's when the character reaches Wyrđ 10. Truth is, that's not the *actual* zenith of one's Wyrđ, oh no. It is possible to go one step further. A changeling may unconsciously open her heart to the dreams both wondrous and vile. Those dreams seep into the pulsing chambers and color them with the green of ivy, the pale blues of endless seas, and the black of the stains scratched across a Keeper's own soul.

When this happens, the changeling... well, *changes*. She is urged to a crumbling precipice within herself. She is shown the doorway to becoming what she perhaps reviles most: a Lady of Faerie, one of the True Fae.

## BETWIXT

The actual shift where one ceases to be changeling and one becomes True Fae is not an immediate thing. It, in fact, necessitates action on the part of the character. When the moment comes (a moment that should be neatly discussed by both Storyteller and the changeling's player), the changeling's Clarity shudders. She suffers hallucinations — waking dreams of Faerie intruding upon this world (something thrashing about in a school locker, Thorns growing over everything, a fragrant stream trickling through the hotel hallways). Worse, her dreams at night become truly potent: she can feel the ice of a frozen lake beneath her feet, or taste the sweet butter that oozes from the center of a squeezed beetle. Upon waking every morning (or after a period of long sleep in which at least six hours of slumber are gained), the player must roll to resist a degeneration of Clarity. If she fails, she drops a dot of Clarity (and the player must also roll to resist the gaining of a derangement), and if she succeeds, no Clarity is lost but the threat of dreams still lingers and the hallucinations still come — worse, the next time she sleeps and wakes, her Clarity shall tremble once more.

Truly, so few changelings make it to this period that nobody really knows what to do about one who's locked in the throes of this stage. It *can* be defeated, turned around, and doing so is deceptively simple: one must vent her Wyrđ somehow. Mechanically, she must lose a dot of Wyrđ and drop down to Wyrđ 9 instead of 10 (rules for doing so are found on pp. 87–88 of **Changeling: The Lost**). The simplicity is deceptive because this plague of hallucinations and dreams isn't

necessarily a *bad* thing, at least in how it feels. The changeling might feel like she's approaching some level of freedom, an exalted state in which she casts off the shackles of this awful world, this *dross*. It's effectively an addiction: why would a heroin user cast off heroin when the needle stings so sweet? Great joy and emotion swell within a changeling caught at this point. Turning around is mechanically simple, but finding the willingness to do so is never so easy.

## TRULY LOST, OR TRULY FOUND?

And what happens if the changeling doesn't find the sense to turn away from the mad bliss and dreams-that-seem-too-real? Her Clarity will drop; she can

### *Crossover: Masks of Gods*

Players of other game lines are no doubt aware of other ways in which the concept of "aspects of reality" manifests in the World of Darkness. Most notable are the spirits of the Shadow Realm, best known to supernatural animists such as werewolves and certain mages, and the primal forces of the deep Astral Realm, which mages name as the dreams of the world itself. Are the forces that changelings pact with either of these entities? It seems unlikely. Changelings manifest no other particular ability to interact with the spirits of the Shadow, and are almost as defenseless as mortal humans against the various entities that dwell there. It is perhaps more possible that they connect with the forces of the Astral's Temenos or Anima Mundi levels, as the Astral has a deep connection with the powers of dreaming — but if that's the case, they interface with those powers via "shortcuts" that mages have a difficult time analyzing.

For simplicity's sake, it might be best to assume that changelings' Contracts are their own thing, and therefore cannot be severed by werewolf spirit-affecting magic or a mage's Arcana. That said, you can certainly decide otherwise in order to add some delicious complications. It would make a very interesting crossover story if a Bone Shadow's rituals wound up affecting the potent spirit of Vainglory, sending the local Fairest into quite the paranoid tizzy...



stand against it only so long, time will see her certainty of perceptions fade. Maybe it takes a week. Maybe it takes six months. But she can only hold out so long: eventually, the dam will break around the boy's finger, and the water will rush in.

At this point, the character — now at Wyrd 10 and Clarity 0 — is largely lost to the player. She is not Fae yet, but will be when she completes the one thing she truly wants: to return to Faerie. That is her single task, and she is driven to it deeply: any who stand in her way are subject to great pain and suffering even if she holds them as powerful friends, family or allies. Some have managed to restrain changelings who get to this point and bring them back from the brink. Most die trying.

Once she sets foot in Faerie? Well, the game is over for that character — now, she's one of the Gentry, one of the Lords and Ladies of Faerie's lunatic aristocracy. This character may become a potent antagonist, maybe one that can even be saved by the other players in the motley. Maybe it's the one Fae with which they can hold *some* kind of relationship, however insane and dangerous it becomes.

Or, maybe you want to look to the Appendix of this book — “The Game of Immortals” — and learn how you might actually *play* your new True Fae character, learn how to survive in the brand-new existence she now leads, so unlike anything she was before.

## FORGING CONTRACTS

The Lost inherited access to remarkable powers during their time in Faerie. They became signatories to ancient pacts between the fae and aspects of reality itself; beneficiaries of laws not beholden to the workings of science or sorcery. However, there's a secret to the ways of those Contracts. The Lost aren't limited to those Contracts set down by the True Fae — they have the ability to forge their own. The Contracts of the Great Courts are the most notable example; the Gentry were not present when those Contracts were forged, and may not even have been able to understand the terms the Court founders struck.

When a changeling “learns” a new clause for a Contract (which is to say, he spends the experience points and marks it on the character sheet), he is essentially initialing that Contract by the appropriate clause, in metaphysical fashion. He is actively presenting himself as a partner in the Contract, and therefore gains access to the privileges of that particular clause. The process is introspective, almost meditative, as the changeling draws on the Wyrd to strengthen an invisible connection.

Forging new Contracts, on the other hand, is a considerably more involved affair. It requires the changeling to actually create the pact between himself and the desired aspect of reality. The fae can make such contracts with almost anything, from concepts like time or fate to ephemera like dreams or fear or even vividly real things like birds or fire. It is in the nature of both changelings and the True Fae to be able to make deals with any aspect of reality, thanks to the strength of the Wyrd and the sweet appeal of Glamour.

However, making such a contract is no trivial matter. Aspects of reality are... not quite *reluctant*, but certainly lukewarm to the prospect of making such enduring bargains. They also want to make certain that the Changeling making the bargain is their ally. All demand some form of singular service to prove this alliance.

What are these aspects, really? According to fae lore, they are part of the Wyrd, because *everything* is ultimately part of the Wyrd. Each Elemental force or emotional abstraction is a thread in the Wyrd's tapestry, and changelings are those who can actually see and manipulate those threads. It's just a matter of finding the right thread and following it to the source.

## THE PROCESS

The process of creating a new Contract is of course a story, or at the very least a subplot, in its own right. In general, the steps are as follows:

- Forging the initial lesser alliance pledge
- Performing a greater endeavor task
- Setting the Contract's terms
- Writing the Contract into the Wyrd

## THE ALLIANCE

It begins with a pledge, made not between the changeling and another person, but between the changeling and *something*. The ability to make pledges of this nature is innate to the Lost, though not all learn to express it. (The Merit: Goblin Vow from **Rites of Spring**, p. 38, represents a changeling who has become talented at striking these pledges extemporaneously.)

To strike the pledge, the changeling finds an appropriate proxy representing the desired force. The Contracts of Eternal Spring, for instance, began with a pledge sworn in an orchard in full bloom, on a warm and breezy sunlit Spring day. There she swears the terms of the bargain, and makes her initial offering.

When making this pledge, the changeling must pay in advance. Accomplishing this payment is a two-fold process. The first step requires the changeling to



swear a lesser alliance (**Changeling: The Lost**, p. 178) with the desired facet of reality. This alliance earns her the notice and the tentative favor of the facet of reality with which she is attempting to make a deal. In effect, this pledge brings the changeling closer to this particular facet of reality. The alliance's sanction varies, depending upon the chosen facet of reality. If the changeling hopes to make a Contract to affect light, she would never be able to turn out a light or to ask someone else to do so. Similarly, if the changeling wishes to make a Contract to affect weather, she could never complain about the weather, wear or carry clothes that were designed to keep the weather from her skin (raincoats or warm fleece jackets, though ordinary clothes would not be forbidden) or set up a tent or other structure to enclose an area from the weather. She could use such areas normally, but could not create them. Similarly, if she wishes to make a Contract that affected a particular sort of animal, she could never deliberately harm that type of animal, and may be forbidden from eating its flesh or wearing its skin. If such a pledge would be too easy to keep, she may have to swear to more stringent terms. Anyone could go for a year without even seeing a tiger or chameleon, much less be forced into a position where they would have to eat such an animal's meat or kill the animal. In such a case, the changeling's pledge would require something more notable, such as actively championing the animal or wearing its colors without fail.

The changeling must keep this pledge for the entire time she is creating the new Contract, usually a year and a day, or if they are feeling particularly optimistic, for a season. Breaking the pledge's sanction immediately ends the process, and the changeling must begin anew. A wise Lost would attempt to make certain that their enemies never learn they are attempting to create a Contract. Tricking one's foe into breaking some form of promise is as old a tactic as the sacred vow itself.

As with any other pledge, the alliance counts toward the number of pledges by which a changeling may be bound.

## THE ENDEAVOR

Once the Changeling has kept her lesser alliance for a full month, she is ready to move on to the next and far more difficult phase of the process of creating a Contract: paying the particular aspect of reality to agree to it. This payment consists of the changeling swearing to perform a greater endeavor (**Changeling: The Lost**, p. 179) that is made on behalf of the particular aspect of reality, and sealing this pledge by sacrificing a dot of Willpower. A

## *Breaking the Pledge*

While promises are insufficient to allow a changeling to create a Contract, the actual beginning of an endeavor providing long-term aid to a particular aspect of reality is sufficient. For example, the aspect of Reflections would consider the greater endeavor to have been completed if a changeling attempting to make a Contract with it arranged to put up a public sculpture consisting of one or more large reflective surfaces that people would pass close enough to be able to see their reflections. To make this a greater endeavor, the sculpture would need to remain up for at least a season. However, if the changeling goes on to create the Contract and use the clauses and then sometime before the season is up the sculpture is destroyed or taken down, then the pledge between the changeling and the aspect of reality has been broken.

The price of this betrayal is especially steep. The changeling suffers a  $-5$  penalty to all interactions with this aspect of reality for the next full season, and potentially small curses of inconvenience may become dangerous. If the Changeling breaks such a pledge with Reflections, he will regularly cut himself shaving when looking in a mirror. If he is being pursued, his enemies may find it easy to keep track of him, consistently glimpsing his reflection in windows or polished metal. Similarly, betraying a pledge with Night would mean that the character would suffer a  $-5$  penalty to all attempts to sneak around under cover of darkness or to find her way along a dimly lit street. (There are plenty of ugly stories about Lost who attempted to strike pacts with Guns or Highways, and what happened when the effort subsequently went sour.) Repairing the sculpture or otherwise restoring the endeavor removes this penalty. It's generally seen as more prudent to wait until the season is up and the endeavor has been fully completed before actually creating and making use of the new Contract.



Changeling seeking to make a Contract with night or darkness would need to do some service equivalent to completely blacking out an entire district of a large city or an entire large town or small city for a night. Similarly, a changeling seeking to make a Contract with Reflections would need to do something like arranging for one or more large mirrors to be permanently installed in well-traveled public places so that tens of thousands of people would see their reflections daily.

As with any other greater endeavor, this task must be both difficult and time-consuming, and may involve significant risk. At minimum, it is the sort of task that could cause the changeling to become a minor celebrity and is often fairly epic in scope. The character is free to use any means at her disposal to accomplish the endeavor, and it can either be a single extremely impressive task or a series of impressive, but not overwhelming actions, but it must be sufficiently notable for at least some mention of it to feature prominently in the local news. The changeling is free to recruit others to aid her in her efforts, as long as she is also directly and personally involved in performing the endeavor.

Regardless of what this greater endeavor actually is, it must be something that in some way increases the appropriate facet of reality. More specifically, the endeavor should increase the impact this facet of reality has on both mortals and the mortal world in general. Blacking out a large city for a night would aid darkness or night, just as constructing a large and exceedingly obvious mirror and then placing it somewhere that people will frequently look at will serve reflections.

The character may try as often as needed to perform this endeavor. However, the nature of the service must be specified when the changeling makes the endeavor pledge and spends the dot of Willpower. If she wishes to change the nature of the service she had promised to accomplish, she must sacrifice another permanent dot of Willpower. Another limitation for completing this endeavor is that promises are never sufficient. Convincing a government or large corporation to build and maintain a particular public sculpture, or perform some similar action is never sufficient. The organization must actually follow through with their promise before the endeavor is considered to have been completed. As a general guideline, this endeavor should require an absolute minimum of four or five entire game sessions to complete as well as the aid of some or all of the other characters in the chronicle. More commonly, accomplishing such an endeavor requires between half a dozen and a dozen game sessions.

## SETTING TERMS

Once the character has successfully accomplished this greater endeavor, she can actually create the Contract. At this point, the player should work out the rules for the Contract with her Storyteller. See *Rules for Creating Contracts*, pp. 30–34 for more information about this process. However, simply making the Contract is insufficient to fully integrate its effects into the nature of reality.

By their very nature, Contracts temporarily alter the laws of nature, and until it has been fully integrated into the fabric of reality, the Contract requires exceptional effort to use. In addition to any normal Glamour or Willpower costs, the user must also sacrifice one permanent dot of Willpower every time she wishes to use a particular clause. This cost serves to temporarily make reality sufficiently flexible that the clauses of this Contract can be used. To avoid this penalty, the Contract's creator must instead permanently anchor the Contract into the fabric of reality.

Alternately, the changeling could instead design each of the clauses so that they are Goblin Contracts. However, this decision must be made when first creating the Contract. In this case, instead of requiring a sacrifice of Willpower, each clause automatically produces an unavailable mythic backlash against the user. The nature of this backlash must always be connected in some manner to the benefits the clause provides. A clause that provides information to the user may provide equally valuable information about the user to her enemies. Similarly, a Contract that gives the user a bonus in some situations may result in the user having an equal penalty in others. In effect, reality bends to the character's will and then snaps back with sufficient force to harm her.

You can get it cheap, but it ain't free.

## FINALIZING THE DEAL

To allow a Contract to be extended to all Lost, the creator must write it into the greater pattern of the Wyrd. To do this, she must venture into the Hedge and perform a powerful sacrifice. The object of the sacrifice is variable, but it must always be of substantial mythic worth. Sacrificing a five-dot token is sufficient, as is killing one of the Gentry. However, the most common sacrifice is easier to acquire, if also somewhat drastic. The character must sacrifice one dot of one of her Attributes. This dot must come from an Attribute that is used in the roll for at least one clause in the Contract.

To perform this sacrifice, the changeling must find a portion of the Hedge where she will not be disturbed,





such as a Hollow. Then, she must kill the True Fae, break apart the token, or simply place one hand on the ground and declare what part of herself she is giving up (“I give of my own strength, my own might, in accordance with the pact.”). After performing this sacrifice, she must cut herself and give some of her blood to the ground (sufficient to do one point of lethal damage). The instant she does this, she and everyone nearby feels a brief but abrupt “shift” in reality, similar to an earthquake too weak to consciously feel or a sudden decrease in air pressure. After that, the Contract can be used normally, without the necessity of spending permanent Willpower. The endeavor pledge is considered fulfilled, and no longer counts against the changeling’s pledge limit; the alliance remains, if slightly altered in purpose (see above). The spot in the Hedge is also marked by this sacrifice. The plants or other natural features within a few yards of this site forever more act as if the changeling who made this sacrifice has a Wyrd two points higher (to a maximum of 10) than normal (see *Changeling: The Lost*, pp. 212–213).

## EXCEPTIONALLY POWERFUL CONTRACTS

Some Contracts are unusually powerful and require an exceptionally high expenditure of power every time

they are used. The Goblin Contracts of Sacrifice (*Rites of Spring*, pp. 115–123) are examples of such Contracts. These Contracts require the expenditure of a permanent dot of Willpower or one dot of a specific Attribute before they can be used at all. They cannot be used as ordinary Goblin Contracts, nor can the changeling make a single sacrifice to cause reality to accept these changes more easily. Instead, such Contracts are so powerful that they always require some significant permanent sacrifice. Their exceptional power means they can produce all manner of exceptionally powerful or permanent magical effects, such as instantly creating or transforming an object or person in significant ways or, for the most powerful of such clauses, calling up a huge natural manifestation like a tornado or a minor earthquake. The Storyteller should always inform a player if Contracts she is designing are so powerful that they will be Goblines Contracts of Sacrifice. The player should then be given a chance to significantly reduce or limit the power of these clauses if she wishes to make this Contract into a normal Contract.

## FORGING COURTS

More than 1,000 years ago, four Lost worked together to form the four seasonal Courts. At least 500



years before that, four changelings formed the four directional Courts of Asia, and even longer ago, a pair of wayward fae forged the ancient Day and Night Courts.

Creating Great Courts is an endeavor far more complicated than forging a new Contract; however, forging a Contract is an important part of creating a Court. Courts are by necessity created in groups — the voluntary transition of power that confuses and repels the Gentry cannot be achieved with simply one Court. Therefore, establishing a new system of Great Courts requires multiple Lost, each one willing to undergo the process of creating at least one Contract to bind the process together. For instance, the founders of the seasonal Courts each forged two new Contracts with each season, one Eternal and one Fleeting.

While the greater endeavor needed to forge a Contract must be quite impressive, one necessary to forge a new Court must be truly epic and also noticed by a large number of mortals. If the endeavor isn't one of the major regional, if not national, news stories for at least a day, and more likely several days after it occurs, then the endeavor is insufficiently epic. After accomplishing this epic feat, the next step in the process of forging a Court is only possible once each of the other changelings involved in creating the Courts have also

successfully completed their greater endeavor. At this point, all of the changelings must gather together and sacrifice a second dot of Willpower. At this point, the new Courts exist, and each of the changelings receives one dot in the appropriate Court Mantle.

By spending this Willpower, each of the changelings has made a permanent pledge with the associated natural phenomena. The result of this pledge is that each of these changelings is literally incapable of breaking their lesser alliance with this phenomenon. They cannot force themselves to act against it, because their connection to this phenomenon is exceptionally deep and lasting. In addition, the character feels compelled to promote his Court. He cannot ever leave this Court or join any other. In return for making such a large change, the changelings involved in creating the new Court structure surrender a portion of their free will.

## RULES FOR CREATING CONTRACTS

The first step in creating a new Contract is deciding what it will control. The most important part of designing any Contract is making certain that it is properly focused. Every Contract only affects a single specific aspect of reality — time, dreams, elements,

### *Side Effects*

Creating a Contract is a profound and impressive step for any changeling. The vast majority of changelings never create a Contract, and only legends have created more than one. Since the process involves making an especially close and profound relationship with a particular aspect of reality, this connection is always strongly reflected in the changeling's fae mien. For example, a changeling who forges a new Contract with Light might always glow faintly, while one who makes a Contract with reflections might find her garments being somewhat reflective, while also finding that her own reflection is always especially vivid and visible, even in reflective surfaces that are somewhat dirty or ill-polished. These changes in the changeling's mien are always easily noticeable, but because this aspect of reality is well disposed towards the changeling, these changes never cause her any sort of penalties. For example, a changeling who glowed slightly would still not suffer any penalties to her stealth rolls.

By creating a Contract, the changeling has made a permanent pledge with the particular aspect of reality. In addition to changing her Mien, this relationship also provides the changeling with a minor degree of favor from this aspect of reality. While it won't actively aid the changeling, the aspect will attempt to prevent itself from being used against its favored cosignatory. In effect, it has made a permanent lesser alliance with the changeling (which does count toward the number of pledges the changeling is allowed). Any attempts to use this aspect of reality against the Lost who created the Contract suffer a -1 penalty. This penalty is applied to any attempt to use the Contract the changeling created against him. In addition, mundane uses of this aspect of reality are also affected. A changeling who makes a Contract with Night would find that anyone attempting to use the darkness of night (as opposed to other forms of darkness) to sneak up upon her would suffer a -1 to their Stealth rolls. Similarly, a changeling who creates a Contract with reflections would find that when anyone who attempted to harm her attempted to identify her by her reflection, they would suffer a -1 penalty to this roll.



animals, personal appearance, darkness, light... A Contract can produce effects that are related to the particular aspect of reality in both physical and the metaphorical ways, such as the *Contracts of Darkness* (**Changeling: The Lost**, pp. 136–138), which produces effects like fear, sleep, and creatures of the night, which are all metaphorical associations with Darklings.

However, regardless of what particular aspect of reality a Contract affects, it should only affect that singular aspect of reality. Someone reading over the Contract's various clauses should be able to easily describe what the central focus of the Contract is. One useful way to test this is to write up all the clauses, without individual names for each clause or a name for the Contract as a whole and allow someone who is unfamiliar with this Contract to read over it and see if they can easily determine what single aspect of reality all of these clauses affect.

For example, if you read over *Contracts of Mirror* with the name of the Contract and the names of all the clauses removed, it is still obvious that all of the clauses affect personal appearance, just as all of the clauses of *Contracts of Fang and Talon* affect the user's relationship and interaction with animals. If this connection is not immediately clear from reading over the Contract you are designing, then the Contract is insufficiently focused. For example, a Contract that has some clauses that affect luck or fate and others that affect time, dreams, or light is obviously too broad and unfocused. It's important to remember that every Contract is literally a Contract the character is making with a single particular aspect of reality. If it's not possible to clearly state what single aspect of reality is affected by this Contract, then the character cannot forge this Contract.

In addition to having a single central focus, changeling Contracts are also fundamentally fae abilities. Just as vampiric Disciplines tend to be associated with fear, death, blood or various traditional vampiric abilities, changeling Contracts are thematically connected to stories, traditions, or beliefs about the Fair Folk. Contracts that alter the flow of time, create illusions, cause inanimate objects to become animate, induce madness, or defy various physical laws all fit perfectly within the structure of Faerie stories. However, Contracts that allow changelings to fire beams of energy from their hands or perform complex rituals to summon spirits are beyond the aesthetic of the Wyrd — and where symbolism can take on supernatural power, aesthetic matters.

It is possible to find examples of almost any sort of general type of power in Faerie tales, there is magic

that uncover hidden information, defend the character against attack, slay or hinder their enemies, move themselves from one place to another or perform almost any other sort of task. However, the details of how these feats are accomplished is always strongly influenced by the nature of Faerie. Fae powers tend to have elements of both whimsy and spontaneity. Any rituals involved should be relatively brief and not terribly complicated. Also, the fact that in the cosmology of **Mage: The Awakening**, Arcadia is a Realm associated with the Fate and Time Arcana should definitely be kept in mind. This is not to say that Contracts cannot be used to manipulate a vast array of other aspects of reality. However, even Contracts that directly affect other aspects of reality often accomplish this by using powers involving Fate or Time.

The details of how a Contract acts are as important as what it does. A changeling can create Contracts that allow her to use various forces of nature to attack a target. However, these attacks should usually involve in some way animating or personifying this force of nature and having it attack the target. A changeling could use a Contract to cause the Earth to rise up and swallow someone or a car to become animate and attempt to run someone over. However, Contracts that allowed the changeling to harm the target by writing mystic symbols on one of their personal possessions aren't particularly appropriate. If an ability seems better suited to either comic book superheroes or human magicians, then it likely does not belong as a Contract. However, there's always more than one way to accomplish the same goal. Instead of firing a bolt of fire from her fingertips, a changeling would instead cause a nearby fire to either jump on the target or shoot forth a tongue of flame at them. This is ultimately a judgment call, rather than a hard-and-fast rule — just something to consider to help Contracts feel just right.

## THE STRUCTURE OF CLAUSES

The clauses of a Contract often build upon one another, where a higher dot clauses often gives the changeling the ability to perform effects related to those provided by a lower dot clause. However, higher dot clauses should never render lower dot clauses useless or redundant. If a one-dot clause grants 1 point of armor, and a three-dot clause grants armor equal to the character's Wyrd, nobody who learned the three-dot clause would ever use the one-dot clause again. This isn't an in-character rule that goes against the nature of the Wyrd — it's just a basic game design precept.



It's usually more interesting if clauses work with some synergy. For example, one clause may allow the changeling to see something far away, while another higher-dot clause allows the changeling to affect distant objects or people, but the Changeling must use the previous clause to see what he is manipulating. Similarly, in a Contract that involves affecting emotions, the one-dot clause might allow the changeling to precisely sense what emotions someone is feeling, while the two-dot clause might allow the changeling to make one of these emotions stronger or weaker. In both cases, the second clause builds naturally on the first, but it does not render the first clause useless. In both cases, these clauses work best if used together.

## THE POWER OF CLAUSES OF VARIOUS DOTS

Contracts consist of five clauses that range in power from one to five dots. In addition to being more powerful, in many cases higher powered Contracts also allow the changeling to perform actions that are more obviously magical or unnatural. One-dot clauses are usually fairly subtle, while five-dot clauses are usually acts of great supernatural power, frequently with clearly overt effects.

Use existing Contracts to compare and contrast. One-dot clauses are the most limited, a step above "parlor trick." They may affect the senses, provide the changeling with information about his surroundings, provide a bonus to one action, apply a minor effect to one target, or the like.

Two and three-dot clauses often have significantly larger effects, such as allowing the changeling to affect multiple nearby targets or a single distant target. Two-dot clauses can provide the changeling with more detailed information or produce more substantial physical effects. Two-dot clauses are also the first clauses that should allow the user to gain information about objects, people, or locations well out of the range of her senses.

Three-dot clauses are notably powerful and can do everything from provide a competitive attack or some other equally profound effect, such as providing a clearly supernatural movement bonus or exerting significant control over someone else's mind or emotions. In most Contracts, three dot clauses should be the first clauses that allow the changeling to perform actions that openly seem obviously unnatural or impossible, like causing a bonfire to form itself into a wall, or cause a new wooden door to rot away into fragments in a few minutes.

Four-dot clauses can affect more people, or from a greater distance. They can provide a very strong advantage in a fairly limited situation, or a noticeable advantage in a great many situations.

Five-dot clauses can do all of this and more. They are the culmination of the power of the Contract, and so should be impressive. Some things are still beyond the reach of the average five-dot clause, mind; "instant kill" effects are right

out, particularly if they're at all reliable or don't require a crippling cost. The same is true for powers that leave a target as good as dead, such as transforming them into a frog.

One exception to the general power level of a Contract is that you can get away with stronger effects on mortals than on other supernaturals. This is a little harsh, but such is the nature of the World of Darkness; being supernatural gives you a distinct edge over ordinary humans.

## CROSSOVER COMPARISON

You can look to other supernatural beings' specific powers for additional guidance on how to balance the various power by dot. However, it's worth noting that changeling Contracts tend to be a bit less powerful when compared to Disciplines, Gifts, Arcana or the like. From a crossover balance standpoint, this is because changelings have potent abilities such as pledges that move some of their total power away from Contracts, and because they pay fewer points to purchase each new clause. As a result, five-dot clauses are designed to be a little less powerful overall than other five-dot powers; changelings make up the difference by purchasing in bulk.

Naturally, if you aren't the least bit interested in crossover, or at least have a more balanced view of crossover, you can ignore this basic guideline. If power comparison doesn't come up into play, it's not likely to ruffle feathers. This guideline should only be observed if somebody's going to have less fun thanks to their choice of character type.

## LIMITS ON CONTRACTS AND CLAUSES

Because of the nature of the Arcadia and the beings associated with it, changeling Contracts can be more easily used to accomplish some tasks than others, and there are a few limits that they cannot transcend.

No Contract can alter the past, permanently create life, raise the dead or transform a changeling into a mortal or a mortal into a changeling. Attempts to create Contracts that can accomplish any of the above tasks automatically fail. However, while these laws cannot be broken, some of them can occasionally be bent. For example, while a dead person remains dead, someone who is dying can have their life saved by a sufficiently powerful clause, even if they are only seconds from death. Similarly, while a changeling cannot create a Contract that changes the past, she can create one that gives her visions of the future that allow her to change the present to avoid various problems that would otherwise occur.

In contrast, Contracts are exceptionally good at changing appearances and emotions, manipulating luck and chance. While any unnatural effects on thoughts or emotions should be purely temporary, the range of possible effects is many. Contracts can also affect the physical world, but most of these changes are strictly temporary. A



changeling can make a vault door as insubstantial as mist or transform a piece of furniture to a ferocious monster. However, Arcadia and everything associated with it is by nature somewhat ephemeral, at least in the mortal world. As a result, such obviously unnatural changes always fade within a few minutes, or at most a few hours. Soon, the vault door resolidifies and the couch ceases to be a fierce predator. Permanent or long-term changes produced by Contracts are almost always changes that can be attributed to natural causes — someone suffers natural-seeming injuries, or natural looking healing, or an object is repaired or broken. Unnatural changes, like animating inanimate objects cannot be made permanent and almost never last longer than one scene.

Finally, the laws of Arcadia are in many ways the laws of dreams. The inanimate can become animate, time can slow down or speed up, and individuals can temporarily ignore aspects of normal life like gravity or the solidity of objects. Contracts that produce effects that seem like something out of a dream that has been made real are usually well designed. However, surreal and dream-like should not be taken to mean silly. The affects of changeling Contracts should seem like something out of a myth, dream or nightmare, not a cartoon or a surreal comedy.

## GAME MECHANICS

Regardless of the purpose of a particular Contract or clause, the mechanics are all relatively similar.

- Every clause has a dice pool consisting of either an Attribute or an Ability + Wyrd. Most Clauses use Attributes, but clauses that are closely associated with a particular Ability usually use that instead. However, to avoid making the clauses too repetitive, even if all of the clauses of a Contract are associated with a single Ability, at least some of them should use Attribute + Wyrd. No more than two clauses in a Contract should use the same Attribute + Wyrd or Wyrd + Ability combination. Most clauses use one of the three Finesse Attributes: Dexterity, Wits or Manipulation. Consecutive clauses should also always use different Traits.

- Every clause costs at least one point of Glamour. No clause should ever cost more than four points of Glamour. Clauses that have some unusually powerful effect, such as being able to affect a large number of people or providing the changeling with significant combat capability should also cost one point of Willpower. In most cases, one-dot clauses cost one point of Glamour, two-dot clauses cost either one or two points of Glamour, three and four dot clauses usually cost two or three points of Glamour, and five-dot clauses cost two to four points of Glamour. For example, a low powered five-dot clause might cost two points of Glamour, while a slightly more powerful clause would cost three or even four points of Glamour. A very powerful five-dot clause should cost two or three points of Glamour and one point of Willpower, and the most powerful five-dot

clauses should cost one point of Willpower and four points of Glamour.

- Most clauses either produce instant effects, like injuries or property destruction, or last for one scene. Contracts that produce supernatural effects that last longer than one scene should cost one point of Willpower or require an exceptional success. Clauses can offer the option of producing effects that last either one scene or some significantly longer time. Such clauses should have an optional Willpower cost, so that changelings who wish the effects to last longer than one scene must pay a point of Willpower to allow this to happen. In almost all cases, clauses that last longer than one scene last until the next sunrise or sunset, since these form both natural and supernatural boundaries for activities. Clauses whose effects last longer than this should always require some special means to allow them to do so, such as spending a dot of permanent Willpower or using some rare oddment, in addition to user having to send at least one point of Willpower.

- The number of successes may or may not affect the power of the clause. In almost all cases, an exceptional success produces a significantly greater result than an ordinary success. Often exceptional success results in the clause lasting considerably longer than it otherwise would. However, in many cases rolling between one and four successes has no affect on the outcome. Other than the effects of an Exceptional Success, the number of successes rolled rarely affect the duration of a clause. However, they can be used to determine the number of targets affected or the magnitude of a bonus or penalty. Remember that success means success: a clause should not require more than one success in order to work properly, unless it's an extended action.

- If a clause produces a bonus or penalty to rolls, the magnitude of this modifier is typically based on either the number of successes rolled or the Wyrd of the changeling using the clause. In general, if the modifier only affects a single target, the magnitude of this modifier is usually the changeling's Wyrd, but if the modifier affects multiple targets, it is almost always based on the number of successes rolled.

- When a clause is used against a living target, it should be a contested roll if it has an all-or-nothing effect (contested by the appropriate Resistance trait + Wyrd or equivalent). If success has some measure of gradation of success (such as imposing a variable penalty based on the number of successes gained), then the dice pool should subtract the target's appropriate Resistance trait.

- Contracts can have one of three possible targets. Some, like all the clauses of Contracts of Mirror only affect the changeling using the Contract. Other clauses, like those of Contracts of the Moon (*Rites of Spring*, pp. 105–108) only affect others. Finally, some like Contracts of the Forge (*Rites of Spring*, pp. 99–102) only affect specific aspects of the physical world, but do not directly affect mortals, changelings, or living beings. Other than beneficial clauses



that can be used by the changeling to affect either himself or others, every clause should only affect one of these three categories of target. A single clause that allows the changeling to affect both a natural phenomena and another person is too broad. Many Contracts include clauses with different types of targets, such as Contracts of the Elements, which contains some clauses that allow the changeling to affect both himself and others that allow her to affect a specific element. However, a given Contract is probably a little too broadly based if its various clauses allow the changeling to affect himself, others (directly), and the natural world.

- The catch for each clause should be something that requires special effort or somewhat unusual circumstances, but is not completely unreasonable. The difficulty of fulfilling the catch should increase with the Glamour expenditure; essentially, a catch is “worth” whatever the Glamour cost is. In all cases, the catch should be in some way thematically appropriate. A good catch can really bring a Contract to life and make it exciting and interesting to use, while a boring or simple catch spoils the fun of fae magic.

- New-forged Contracts count as affinity to their creator (who must purchase all five dots during the process of creating the Contract), but not to changelings at large. There are exceptions, of course. Contracts forged in the process of creating a new Great Court become affinity to all those who join that Court. In addition, the Storyteller may allow a given Contract list to be affinity to all changelings of the creator’s seeming, if it thematically reflects a particular aspect of that seeming fairly well.

## EXAMPLE OF CONTRACT CREATION: CONTRACTS OF REFLECTION

The following Contract is provided as an example of how to go about the process of creating a new Contract. This Contract affects reflections. Mirrors and reflections feature prominently in a number of Faerie stories, and since the Contracts of Mirror (**Changeling: The Lost**, pp. 129–132) already exist, a Contract involving reflections is a fairly obvious choice. The first step in making this Contract would be for the changeling interested in forging it to make a pledge of lesser alliance with reflections.

Then, to convince reflections to help forge the Contract, the character must make a pledge to perform a greater endeavor for that aspect of reality and sacrifice one permanent dot of Willpower to sanctify the pledge. The endeavor the changeling performs can take many forms, but must involve either creating one or more new and particularly large reflection and striking or causing a large number of people to pay more attention to reflections. An endeavor that accomplished both would be even better.

One option would be for the changeling to arrange for a large permanent sculpture or art installation consisting of one or more large mirrors to be permanently installed

in a well-traveled region like a public square or a popular and well attended museum. Arranging to clean and highly polish at least the eastern surfaces of every large glass skyscraper in the downtown region of a city so that they are all perfectly clean on the same perfectly sunny morning and reflect the sunlight exceptionally well would also work, as would starting an effective city or state-wide advertising campaign that caused people to spend more time looking at themselves in mirrors or to purchase more mirrors.

## CONTRACTS OF REFLECTIONS

Once the changeling has completed the greater endeavor and sacrificed the dot of Willpower, the player can now work out the mechanics of the Contract with the Storyteller. The following section contains both this new Contract, as well as a discussion of how it was created.

### REFLECTIONS OF THE PAST (◉)

The changeling can look into any reflective surface, from a mirror, to a pond, and see anything that has been reflected there in the last week.

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Wyrd

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The mirror belongs to someone to whom the changeling has a close emotional connection.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The reflection shows untrue scenes that confirm the changeling’s fears or worries.

**Failure:** The surface continues to reflect its present environment.

**Success:** The changeling can summon up any image that the surface reflected within the last week. The quality of this reflection is the same as it was at the moment when it was originally reflected. The changeling can review the reflections as rapidly as desired or she can state a specific day and time to see exactly what the surface reflected at that moment, freezing this reflection in place for as long as desired. These reflections can be seen by anyone, though they can’t be photographed. The changeling can use this clause on any reflective surface, but many surfaces yield only vague and blurred reflections. She can continue using this clause on a mirror for one full scene.

**Exceptional Success:** The reflection that is revealed is significantly sharper and clearer than it originally was. A dirty puddle still won’t reveal an image as clear as a clean mirror; however, the image from a smudged mirror, a relatively clean piece of glass, or a flat and relatively shiny sheet of metal will be as clear as a well polished mirror, and the image from a muddy puddle will be as clear as one from a still, clean puddle. The reflected image will show up on film if photographed.



## Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The changeling owns the reflecting surface or at least the land on which it rests.
-1	The reflecting surface has been thoroughly cleaned, reshaped or otherwise significantly altered within the past month.

## Notes

This clause's effect matches the theme of reflections, essentially playing off the idea that a mirror might "store" a reflection. As a one-dot clause, it changes little and grants a fairly specialized advantage.

If looking to other games for inspiration, mages are allowed to look into the past as a two-dot power. The limitations placed on this ability are significant, however, relying on the presence of a reflective surface for any scene and reaching back no more than a week. This clearly marks the power as quirky fae magic, and accounts for the one-dot power level.

This clause uses Wits + Wyrd, because Wits is the Attribute used in almost all perception-related rolls. Also, since this clause provides information to the user, having an Exceptional Success provides clearer information and seems like the most reasonable option. This clause is also not exceptionally powerful, and so having the cost be one Glamour also makes sense. The catch implies that the changeling might use the power to spy on loved ones or hated rivals, which adds an interesting emotional twist to the power.

## GLIMPSE OF A DISTANT MIRROR (••)

The Lost can look into any reflective surface and use it to see out of another reflective surface in which his face has been reflected.

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Composure + Wyrd

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The mirror the changeling is looking into belongs to someone who has sworn enmity against him.

## Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The effect is reversed; anyone looking into the mirror through which the changeling is attempting to see can instead see the changeling.

**Failure:** The changeling sees only himself in the mirror he is looking into.

**Success:** The character and anyone he is with can see out of the mirror he wishes to see through as if it were a window. However, the target mirrored surface also displays the changeling's image. This clause works at any range, as long as the changeling has seen his face in the target surface within the last week. However, he must choose the specific surface, and cannot merely attempt to look through any surface in a

general area in which his face has been reflected. If the surface reflects poorly, like a somewhat dirty pot lid, the image the changeling sees is similarly distorted and blurred. The changeling can look through the reflective surface for up to one scene, or dismiss the effects at any time.

**Exceptional Success:** The changeling can see through any reflective surface his face has been reflected in as if it were a perfectly clear piece of glass. Even a murky puddle can be used to its surroundings with perfect clarity.

## Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The changeling stands within a few feet of the reflective surface he wishes to look out of and stare into it for several minutes.
+1	The changeling looks into and out of reflective surfaces that are of the same type and dimensions, such as two mirrors or two puddles of the same Size.
-2	The changeling's reflection in the reflective surface he wishes to look out of is blurred or only seen at a distance of more than five yards away.

## Notes

This clause goes somewhat further from the normal properties of reflections than the previous clause. Turning a reflection into a window is a more powerful alteration in the nature of reflections, but not all that much more powerful. Also, it is a fairly logical extension of the previous clause. As a two-dot clause, it is also reasonable for it to have essentially unlimited range. The limitation that the changeling must have seen himself in the target surface within the last week encourages this clause to be used either to spy on familiar areas or to engage in preparation — both very appropriate uses of power. It also cuts down on the judgment calls or bookkeeping that would be necessary if there was no time duration.

Here again, looking at similar abilities in **Mage: The Awakening** is useful. Mages tend to get a scrying ability at about two dots. However, as this Contract will be rather cheaper for a changeling to purchase, it should be less potent. Thus, the additional limitation that the distant surface reflects the changeling's face is added. This also conjures up the eerie image of people who aren't there watching you from mirrors — deliciously fae.

The clause is rolled using Composure, because this is the other Attribute most commonly used in perception rolls, and it's a good idea for consecutive clauses to use different Traits. It only costs one Glamour, because like the one-dot clause, it is relatively low powered. Its similarity with the previous clause is also why it has the same result for an Exceptional Success. The catch makes it specifically useful for spying on the changeling's more outspoken enemies. However, looking into a mirror owned by such a person can prove difficult, so the catch rewards cunning play.





### REFLECTION'S GRASP (...)

The changeling can reach through a reflective surface he has touched and manipulate any object within reach, including pulling objects through the reflective surface.

**Cost:** 2 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Dexterity + Wyrd

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The character attempts to reach through the mirror that he uses most often to look at himself.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The changeling's arm becomes briefly stuck going through the two reflective surfaces. He injures his arm, taking one level of lethal damage in the process.

**Failure:** The reflective surface fails to admit the character's arm.

**Success:** The changeling can physically reach his arm into one reflective surface and out another, assuming both are large enough for him to reach his arm and hand through. In effect, the character reaches through one reflec-



tive surface and his hand comes out of the other's surface. The destination surface must either be within the character's line of sight, or a surface he has physically touched within the last day.

The character can manipulate objects on the other side of the reflective surface and can even bring inanimate objects of Size 2 or smaller back through a reflective surface large enough to fit them through. The changeling cannot see through the reflective surface he is reaching through, unless he uses the Glimpse of a Distant Mirror clause. The changeling can use this clause for one full scene, during which time he can put his hand and objects he is holding through the surface as often as possible. This clause is particularly useful in areas with plenty of reflective surfaces; a changeling could be able to reach through many different areas in a car dealership or fitting room. While the changeling can't bring living things through the surface, he can grab a target and pull her into the mirror as hard as he can, or steal a gun or key ring from her belt.

**Exceptional Success:** The changeling can see through the reflective surface as well as reach through it.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The changeling is able to spend at least a minute running both of her bare hands over the reflective surface she wishes to reach out of.
+1	The reflective surface is especially shiny and reflective, like a mirror
-2	The reflective surface is especially dim or dull, like poorly polished metal, or a muddy puddle.

### Notes

Reaching through one reflective surface and out of another is an obvious extension of the previous clause, but is also significantly more powerful. Therefore, this clause makes an obvious next step in the Contract. One of the more interesting limits on this clause is the fact that it works far better if combined with the previous clause. However, rolling an exceptional success allows the changeling to bypass this limitation. This clause involves physical manipulation, so using Dexterity as the Attribute makes sense. The clause costs 2 points of Glamour, an average cost for a three-dot clause, and it is of relatively average power compared to other three-dot clauses.

The catch for this clause allows the changeling to have easy access to a small number of useful items that he sets next to his bedroom or bathroom mirror, which are useful, but far from overpowering.

### MIRROR WALK (•••)

The changeling can step into one reflective surface large enough to fit his body through and out of a similarly-sized surface that he has touched and that his whole body has been reflected in for at least one minute.

**Cost:** 3 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Athletics + Wyrd

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** A blood relative is currently reflected in the surface out of which he is stepping.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character steps into the reflective surface and becomes temporarily lost in the shining space between the mirrors. Each hour, he can make another roll (though needn't spend additional Glamour). If he succeeds, he finds his way back through the surface he initially stepped through. This process is sufficiently confusing and uncomfortable that the character also loses one point of Willpower.

**Failure:** The clause fails to activate.

**Success:** The character can step into one reflective surface large enough for her to fit through and then immediately step out of another reflective surface. Once the character begins stepping through, she cannot stop. If she holds another person's hand, she can bring that person through with her, but must spend another two points of Glamour and a point of Willpower to bring them through. The clause's catch cannot negate the cost of bringing through an additional person. The changeling cannot see through the surface from which she is emerging, but she can use the Glimpse of a Distant Mirror clause to take a look through it before stepping through.

**Exceptional Success:** The changeling can step back and forth through the reflective surface for a number of turns equal to his Wyrd without spending more Glamour.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The changeling owns the reflective surface out of which he is attempting to step.
-1	Either reflective surface is anything other than highly reflective, like a mirror, a still pool of clear water, or a flat sheet of well-polished metal.
-3	The changeling is only reflected in the surface he wishes to exit at a significant distance or in some way obscures his appearance, such as a reflection through smoke or fog.

### Notes

This clause is another evolution from the one previous. It is a potent travel power, but also has a fairly heavy cost, and relies on reflective surfaces that can reflect the entire body; it can't be used to pop through a dressing-table mirror, for instance. Since the changeling must fit through all manner of oddly shaped portals to use this clause, using Athletics seems reasonable. Also, the limitation to only surfaces that the changeling has both touched and been fully reflected in introduces an interesting and useful limit on a clause that might otherwise be too powerful.



Because it is significantly more powerful than the previous clause, the increased Glamour cost seems reasonable. Also, the catch specifically allows the changeling to be able to come to the aid and rescue of her relations, which is thematically appropriate for changelings.

## STEALING THE SOLID REFLECTION (.....)

The changeling can reach into a surface and remove the reflection of any object with a Size equal to or less than his Wyrd x 2. Once removed, this reflection is a solid object.

**Cost:** 3 Glamour + 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Wyrd + Larceny

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The changeling removes an image of an object owned by someone who is in debt to him.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The reflective object shatters loudly and violently. If the reflective object is solid, it will inflict one point of lethal damage from the shards of broken glass or metal. If the reflection is from a pool of liquid, the liquid erupts from the pool, spraying everyone standing within a yard of it.

**Failure:** The changeling can remove nothing from the reflection.

**Success:** The changeling can remove the image of an object currently reflected in a surface, effectively conjuring a solid duplicate. However, the actual object must have actually been reflected in this surface; a reflection of an image, photograph or reflection cannot produce a solid object (save for, say, a duplicate snapshot). The entirety of the object or person must have been reflected in the surface and the surface must be sufficiently reflective that the image is clear, detailed and relatively undistorted. Images from mirrors, large sheets of polished metal, or large ornamental reflecting pools all work well; muddy or wind-blown puddles or a sufficiently dirty and chipped mirror cannot be used. In addition, the surface must be large enough to remove the object from. The changeling can only pull out full-sized objects, not those that have been increased or reduced in Size.

To remove an object or living being from a reflection, it must also not be too large. The object's Size cannot be more than the changeling's Wyrd x2. A changeling with a Wyrd of three could remove an object with a maximum Size of six, while a changeling with a Wyrd of six could remove objects of up to Size 12, which allows them to remove both cars and small boats from a reflection. Any object or living being removed from a reflection is an exact mirror image of the actual object or person — the reflection of a car has the steering wheel on the other side and all lettering, including the license plate, is also reversed. However, sound is not reversed, and so the reflection of a CD sounds the same as

the actual CD.

A reflected car can be destroyed, but this clause only makes reflections solid for one scene. After that time, the reflection returns to the mirror and all damage, including death, is removed. While a reflection has been made solid, the original object casts no reflection and neither does the temporarily solid reflection. Also, no matter how many reflective surfaces the changeling possesses, it is only possible to create a single solid reflection of a single object.

**Exceptional Success:** The reflection of the object remains solid and substantial until the next time the Sun rises or sets.

### Suggested Modifiers

#### Modifier Situation

-2	The reflection is not perfectly clear and undistorted
+1	The person or object is currently being reflected in the surface

### Notes

This particular clause is clearly a five-dot climax to the Contract, since it can provide the changeling with easy access to all manner of tools, weapons or vehicles. Because this Contract involves a particularly unusual form of sleight of hand, using Larceny instead of another Attribute or Ability makes sense.

The player's initial pitch involved bringing living creatures out of mirrors as well, but that seemed prohibitively potent to the Storyteller, given changelings' ability to acquire five-dot powers comparatively cheaply. (He does, however, make a note of a potential five-dot Goblin Contract to introduce later, one that would allow a changeling to extract living yet warped reflections with unpredictable and dangerous personalities.)

As is the case with most five-dot clauses, the Catch is not one that will come up particularly often, but is thematically appropriate, since it allows the changeling to obtain at least an illusory repayment of a debt.

If this clause was significantly more powerful, it would be beyond the range of normal Contracts. For example, a clause that allowed the user to permanently remove something from a reflection and make it permanently solid would fall outside the range of the power available for ordinary Contracts. This clause would either have to be rewritten or it would only be available as a Goblin Contract of Sacrifice.

## FINALIZING THE CONTRACT

Once the player and Storyteller have agreed on the details of the Contract, the changeling will want to make this Contract part of reality, since otherwise it would be prohibitively expensive to use. Lacking access to either five-dot tokens or captive Gentry, the character goes into the Hedge and sacrifices a dot of Dexterity to anchor the Contract into



reality and make it relatively easy to use. The changeling returns from the Hedge with her limbs somewhat shaky, but proud of her achievement. She can now manipulate reflections, and so can anyone to whom she teaches this Contract. Since the changeling in question is Fairest, the Storyteller allows the Contracts of Reflections to be affinity Contracts for all Fairest; he feels the implied theme of vanity is appropriate enough to count as a seeming affinity.

## THE ELDRITCH ORDERS

They have been around since time immemorial, these orders. Changelings aren't a new phenomenon, after all, and they have left legacies the world around. Amidst the blowing sands of an ancient desert waits a cadre of changelings who have forever negotiated with the ancient Djinn that escape from the Hedge first as whispers, and later as whirlwinds of stinging silicate. In the burial barrows of the

Phantom Islands of the Atlantic, some Lost have long gathered to help dam up the terrible watery trods that always seem to carry the bloody boats of the callous Gentry. Way up in the mountains you might find those long-forgotten Dukes and Duchesses who sell ancient lore from their ill-cobbled castles for very high prices indeed.

The legacies of the changelings, these eldritch orders are quite potent and have been around for centuries, if not millennia. Each comes with more than one benefit, as those chosen or allowed to take such a title is clearly deserving of great gifts and glory. That said, the requirements to join an eldritch order are quite steep. These are not for weak-kneed changelings still trying to find their way in this strange world, oh no. The following entitlements are for those Lost who have found their paths, hewing somewhat to certain archetypes. These *particular* entitlements are what one might suggest to be the grandest of the grand, the eldest of the eldritch. These can most certainly be part of a changeling's "endgame," should the game grow to that point.





# THE CHARMED CIRCLE

*I join this legacy of kings and queens, of emperors and empresses, and I swear here upon this torc that all the joys and blessings given to me as befits my gilded station shall be shared among all those who love me truly.*

One witch advisor of the Autumn Court put it thusly: “There are kings, and then there are *kings*.” That, in the briefest of terms, is what the Charmed Circle is all about.

See, some freehold rulers are just that, rulers. Yes, they take the title of King, Queen, Caliph, Emperor, Imperator, whatever. Yes, they make laws, they enforce laws, they break laws. They have servants, they have territory, they possess wealth and hold *grand guignol* parties and all of that. But that doesn't make them special. Not really. Looking at it with some perspective, every freehold likely has at least four rulers competing for the dominance of the freehold, so who cares? If each city — nay, each tiny little burg — is home to its own freehold, then being King of Nowherestown is the same as being Queen of the Dungheap. The biggest fish in the littlest pond is a worthless creature, indeed, isn't that right?

Well, that's what the Charmed Circle believes. They recognize that kings come, and kings go. Some make mistakes and are rousted by insurrectionists. Others make mistakes and end up dead at the hands of assassins or beheaded by an old Keeper who sweeps through the town like a hurricane on a black horse. Others still hold their reigns for decades, but do little with their time upon the throne — all too many of these monarchs equate “safety” with “status quo,” and while that might work to some degree, nothing is truly gained, and maintaining equilibrium is not the mark of a powerful, effective leader.

And that is what the Circle seeks: *true leaders*. Those rulers who are exceptional in some aspect are what draw the attention of this eldritch order. It's true that a word like “exceptional” is just an adjective and thus, subjective. The

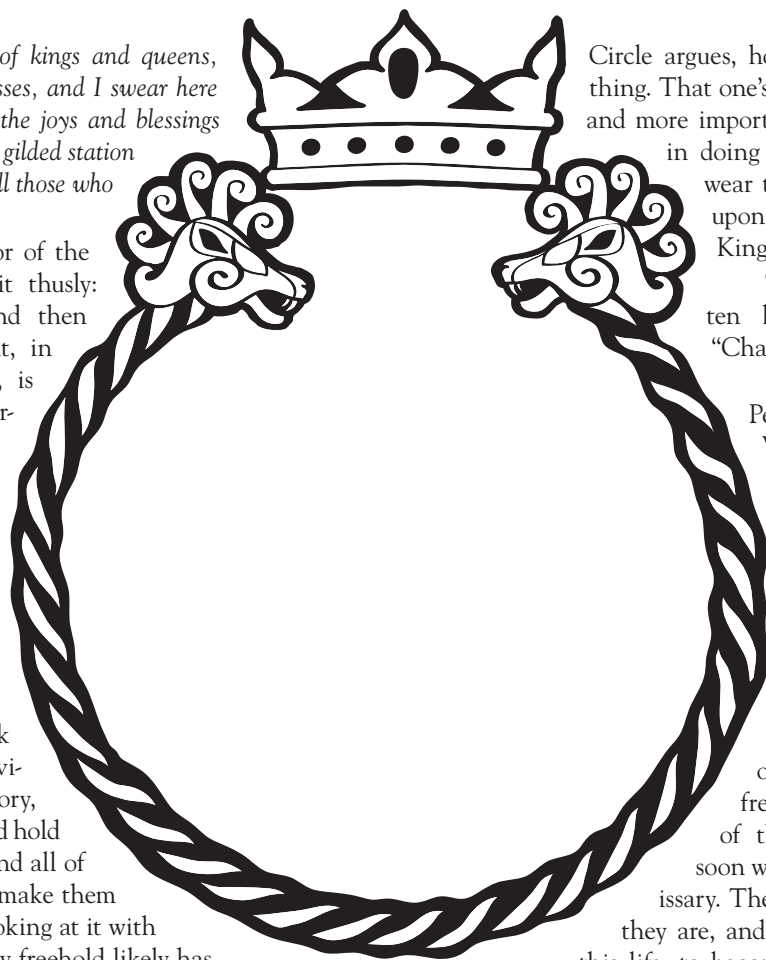
Circle argues, however, that it's no such thing. That one's excellence is measurable and more importantly, demonstrable, and in doing so merits a monarch to wear the golden torc that rests upon the neck of the Gilded King or Queen.

**Title:** King, Queen (often known as “Gilded” or “Charmed” King or Queen)

**Prerequisites:** Mantle 5, Persuasion 4, Willpower 7, Wyrd 7

**Joining:** First things first — the Charmed Circle is not a secret order. Oh, not at all. They're quite vocal about their existence, actually, placing themselves handily above all other so-called “noble” orders. If a newly minted freehold ruler hasn't heard of the Charmed Circle, he soon will. They will send an emissary. They will let him know who they are, and how he has a choice in this life: to become something, or to stay nothing. Some rulers scoff at this; they *are* monarchs, after all, with the swell of support and splendid Mantle necessary to be the topmost sovereign of the given Court, so how dare this uppity cabal of “nobles” come and tell them that as monarchs they're still little more than crap scraped from a boot heel? Some rulers, though, recognize that this means being a statesman of their respective Court still leaves them with some room to grow, doesn't it? They haven't hit the ceiling, and it's *not* all downhill from here. More power? More esteem, more glory? Well, why not?

The Charmed Circle does not offer suggestions as to how one might earn the respect of their supposedly venerated order. They only ask that, should the ruler wish to be exceptional then he must make exceptional decisions and must take extraordinary actions. That is it. They offer nothing more. They do not open lines of communication so that the ruler may make her case or explain her inaction or passivity. *They find you. They communicate with you.* Never, ever vice versa. (And those who have managed to track them down come to regret it one way or another.)





It's important to note that, for the most part, they don't ascribe moral judgment to the subjective requirement of a sovereign's extraordinary rule. A tyrant who breaks the backs of his subjects but still manages to close down that Hedge gateway that's been the source of the Great Hobgoblin Plague is just as notable as the benevolent ruler who ends a centuries-long monarchy to instill a democracy among the oppressed changelings. Each has taken an unusual or noteworthy action — even if it doesn't necessarily bear fruit (or bear the fruit that the ruler hoped), it's still something. It's still a move in *a* direction, still a sign that one is not purely a selfish, staid sovereign unwilling to commit to an action or offer some kind of sacrifice in service to the freehold.

Once they've marked a ruler, they choose a greeting party of six or seven of their members — some might be local, but some may come from far away — to present the Gilded Torc token and a written Contract to become one of the Charmed Circle. If the ruler wants to join, she merely needs to sign the document and force the torc around her neck. If she doesn't, so be it. They make no fuss. They simply withdraw. And that offer will never come again.

**Mien:** Odd that, for such a potent noble title, a changeling's mien does not shift dramatically upon joining this eldritch order. (Though, certainly a Gilded King or Queen will already have a powerful mien all their own, one that likely reflects the Mantle they bear for their respective Court.) All that changes is that parts of the changeling's form offers occasional glimpses of precious metals and stones: one eye might appear a glittering sapphire, or nails might seem to shine with a platinum sheen etched with whorls, or skin may take on a golden hue glinting in the Sun. The mien doesn't show always, and often seems to appear to most changelings when they look away: in the periphery, they see and even *feel* the gilded royalty radiating off the sovereign in waves. Turn to look directly at the monarch, though, and that mien seems harder somehow to see.



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**Background:** The changelings of the Charmed Circle are all leaders. Most — probably 90% of them — are actual Kings and Queens of a freehold, representing their chosen Courts as sovereign. That said, it isn't a stringent requirement that those of this order are current Kings or have *ever been* monarchs of the Courts. Certainly some changelings are natural leaders and never actually make it to the top of the actual ranks, but still marshal a considerable contingent (even an army) of Lost to follow them. While it's harder for such an individual to come to the attention of the Circle, it does happen. Those who are genuinely notable will stand out one way or another, or so the theory goes.

Those who are leaders possess the traits of leaders: they likely possess a Social puissance, for without the ability to stir others to action and create inspiration (or fear), a leader has no way to lead. All Social Skills, with perhaps the exception of Animal Ken and Streetwise, are commonly high among Gilded Kings and Queens, and most tend to favor one Social Attribute over another: a Manipulation Queen might be a whip-tongued puppeteer; a King of Presence might be a barrel-chested boaster, while an Emperor of Composure might be a patient and prudent governor.

**Organization:** At a distance, the Charmed Circle seems to have no organization at all. In fact, they appear as nothing more than an esteemed club for regents and rulers, a congratulatory guild. This is as designed, because there are some things the Charmed Circle doesn't want its prospective members to know.

See, the Circle acts as a council. Each member has a single vote on matters relating to, well, *anything*, but issues that have to do with the freeholds are usually ruled by their member kings. Once one joins the Circle, that changeling is now beholden to their judgments. If they see fit to change things, they vote, and if the vote comes to pass, that king or queen better pony up and do as the Circle asks. They don't do this often, and they don't do it in regards to trivial matters, but when something big comes to bear (an incursion from the Keepers; a band of fetches threatening the peace and sanctity of the freehold; some viral Contract taking over the minds of the local changelings) they will get involved even if the ruler has already taken action, and they will judge that action as proper or not proper. Ironic, considering they only offer the Gilded Torc to those sovereigns who seem capable of potent *independent* action, but what happens when you gather all those independent rulers into a single noble order? They all think they have the right answer.

Once some monarchs discover this unfortunate side effect, they might try to buck the system. Of course, in doing so, the Circle dispatches a contingent of Gilded Kings and Queens to the "confused" noble to urge him to make the proper choices (i.e. the choices made by the Circle members). If he refuses? Depends on how vehemently the refusal is, and it depends on how serious the issue at hand hap-

pens to be. In most cases, they simply vote to rescind one's connection to the eldritch order (they can do that; it's in the Contract!) and voila, all the benefits that come with the package are gone and will never return. If one's refusal is violent or comes over an issue that the Circle considers particularly momentous, well, they might just get out the knives and end the king's reign. Permanently, and in a pool of blood.

One has ways to work within this system, of course, as it operates like many political situations: earn favor from other Gilded Kings and Queens, and you have perhaps earned their vote. Of course, earning favor often means voting for them or doing them some service, and so the gears turn in a widening gyre—a circle within the Circle. Those unable to curry favor within the Circle will have a hard time, indeed.

**Concepts:** beneficent empress, braggart king, brutal tyrant, martyr queen, once a hero/now a ruler, poet lord, sovereign monster

## PRIVILEGES

The following advantages are granted to a Gilded King or Queen upon joining the Charmed Circle.

## SUCCESS BEGETS SUCCESS

Upon joining, the changeling gains another five Merit dots to be spent solely upon Social Merits, even if it brings a Merit up to five total dots. Note that this is genuinely magical: the changeling needs to do nothing to earn it other than join this order. Perhaps she "inherits" a large sum of money or property from a distant and now-dead uncle (Resources). Could be that a local mortal agency suddenly pledges its allegiance to her for all her "charitable work" (Allies or Contacts). Maybe a human ensorcelled attaché appears and claims he has "always" worked for her in some capacity or another (Retainer).

## FRIEND OR FOE

Once per story, the changeling may touch a target (may necessitate a successful touch attack) and vocally declare the subject "friend" or "foe." Doing so has serious repercussions for the remainder of the story.

Declaring one as "friend" is beneficial to the target. The target gains a +1 to all non-Social rolls. The target gains two Willpower upon waking in the morning thanks to "pleasant dreams." And, finally, the target gains +3 to any Social rolls made involving the changelings of the freehold (though the sovereign is excluded from this).

Declaring one as "foe" has quite the opposite effect: the target suffers a persistent -1 to all non-Social rolls, *loses* a Willpower point upon waking every morning instead of regaining any (due to "troubling dreams"), and the subject suffers a -3 penalty to any Social rolls involving the change-



lings of the freehold (though once again, rolls involving the sovereign are excluded).

The Gilded Queen can revoke the curse or blessing, though, at any time. Doing so, however, doesn't allow her to use it again immediately: she must still wait until the next story.

## THE GILDED TORC (....)

They hand the ruler this torc upon asking her to join: a torc is a collar, of sorts, a twisted golden band that lays heavy and rigid upon the neck. Once a day, the changeling wearing this torc may activate it while a subject kisses her hand. She can either *take* one Skill from or *give* one Skill to the subject. The Skill comes or goes completely; if she only has Crafts •• to give, that's all she can give. If the subject has Athletics •••••, then the ruler must take all of those dots, no more, no less. (In addition, if the Skill taken or given is equal to a Skill already possessed at that level or above, no change occurs.) That said, the king does not preternaturally know how many dots a subject possesses in a given Skill — certainly he can *guess* that the Olympiad runner has noteworthy Athletics, while the wisp of a poet may not possess a great Brawl score in comparison to what is probably a prodigious Expression Skill. Also worth noting, the Skill traded means that Skill is *lost* for the day. If the queen offers her Craft, then she no longer has it to roll. If the queen thieves a subject's Subterfuge, then the target will surely have trouble conjuring a lie for the remainder of the day (and this can be the reason the queen steals it in the first place, not because she wants the Skill, but because she hopes to rob the subject of its benefit).

**Action:** Instant

**Drawback:** The Gilded Torc would like to remind its rulers that they must not take all too often, for stealing from one's subjects is considered... a bit boorish, and certainly out-of-character. As such, if the king chooses to take a Skill, she suffers three bashing points of damage as the torc tightens for but a moment, bruising her neck.

**Catch:** If one isn't willing to pay the price to use the Gilded Torc's benefits, well, fine. Then one must be willing to suffer the consequences. Accessing the torc's ability

without proper Glamour cost or Glamour roll is dangerous: the character must suddenly make a Stamina roll. Failure indicates that the character passes out as the torc tightens about her neck and cuts off her air supply (unconsciousness lasts for one scene). Success means she remains conscious, but she still chokes for a turn. In addition, she feels dizzy for the rest of the day whether knocked unconscious or not, suffering a -2 to all rolls.

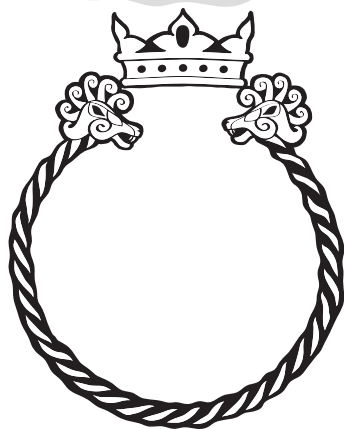
### *Rumors of the Charmed Circle*

The following rumors are all-too-common when this "noblest of noble orders" comes up in conversation...

- Wait. Where do those Gilded Torcs come from, anyway? The truth? The real honest holy-fucking-shit truth? The Gentry makes them. Why? Nobody knows that part, yet. Some say the torcs are just collars, leashes that the Fae use now or will one day enact. Some say it's a promise, part of a pledge that confirms... well, that those of the Charmed Circle will join the truly Charmed Circle, and end up in the ranks of the Lords and Ladies.

- One story says that they offer their torc to a new king or queen and, if that monarch turns it down, oh well. They leave. Offer revoked. Uh-huh, pull the other one, it's got bells on. The real story is that you turn them down, you end up dead. Or brainwashed. They've got a chokehold on the Wyrd, and they're not afraid to use it to choke your unappreciative ass.

- The Charmed Circle has a "circle within a circle," and they're the ones that run everything. Everything.





# KNIGHTS OF THE WIDOW'S WALK

*I shall be faceless and nameless in service to what is best.*

Atop the roves of many coastal houses is what's often known as a "widow's walk" — a railed walkway or platform that allows one to look upon the sea and watch the vessels approach. It earned its name because the ocean claims many men, and the roof is where the wife would wait, gazing out upon the empty expanse with the hope of her husband's return in her heart. Quite often, he would not.

The Knights of the Widow's Walk are very much like those men lost at sea, gone for so long and so consumed by their mission that they might drown and never be seen again. See, the Knights are spies, driven into deep, deep cover. They leave their freehold and go to another. There, they assume a whole new identity, a persona suited to the social sphere they seek to penetrate. New name. New face. New role. Some risk Glamour addiction. Some find their Clarity shuddering as they are submerged beneath the waters of the new identity. Some get caught, and get dead.

What do they do undercover? The menu of potential tasks is limitless. Spy on a rival sovereign to see if she's secretly returned to her Keeper's service? Attempt to uncover the names and identities of a dangerous Loyalist army or vast Privateer band? Abscond with a treasured — and well-hidden — token? Assassinate a Prince? All of the above might end up on a Knight's plate. For some, the task may take a few weeks, maybe a few months. Others go deep for years, losing huge chunks of their lives in service to this long-standing eldritch order. (For more on the history of this entitlement, see "Organization" below.)

Though, really the bigger question is — why do it at all? What's the reward for going deep, and who tells them to do it?

**Title:** Sir or Lady, but largely unused given the secrecy implicit in this order's existence

**Prerequisites:** Mantle 2 or less, Subterfuge 4, Wyrd 6

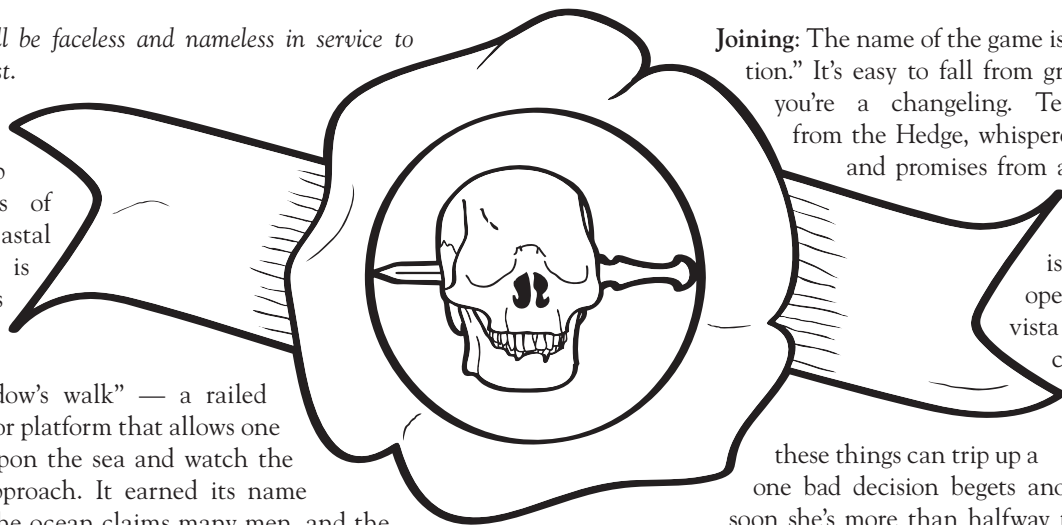
**Joining:** The name of the game is "redemption." It's easy to fall from grace when you're a changeling. Temptations from the Hedge, whispered threats and promises from a long-forgotten Fae, selfish urges opened by a vista of magical possibility; all of these things can trip up a Lost and one bad decision begets another, and soon she's more than halfway to fucked.

Maybe she's made some enemies. Maybe she's trying to recover from one or several addictions (be it heroin or oneiro-mancy). Maybe she just can't keep reality and her hallucinations straight. As one's Wyrd climbs, so do the possibilities — some good, many bad. A changeling bloated with power can become a monster, a tyrant, a coward, or a lunatic. Potent Lost have a thousand ways to ruin themselves, because the bottom of the barrel isn't really that far at all.

Once a changeling of estimable power falls into the gutter, they might find a hand descend from above: and it belongs to one of the Knights of the Widow's Walk. Any Knight is free to make the offer to a changeling if he thinks she could make a good spy. Loose morals, check. An urge to flee this life, got it. A tongue whetted sharp with lies, okay. This is not an offer made lightly. Often, a Knight in a position to make the offer is a Knight who is already in deep cover somewhere, so it means blowing his cover and revealing a great deal. A smart Knight vets the potential spy for weeks, months, even years if he feels that he has that kind of time. Some don't have that luxury or that intelligence, and make the offer right away.

Denial isn't really an option, given the secret nature of the Widow's Walk. If the target turns down the opportunity—or at some point tries to bail out of the deal — then that target has to take a permanent dirt-nap. It's sad, but necessary. Such is the nature of the order's clandestine business. The only comforting thought is that this represents a small mercy: after all, if the target has truly hit bottom, then shoving them off this mortal coil is a kindness.

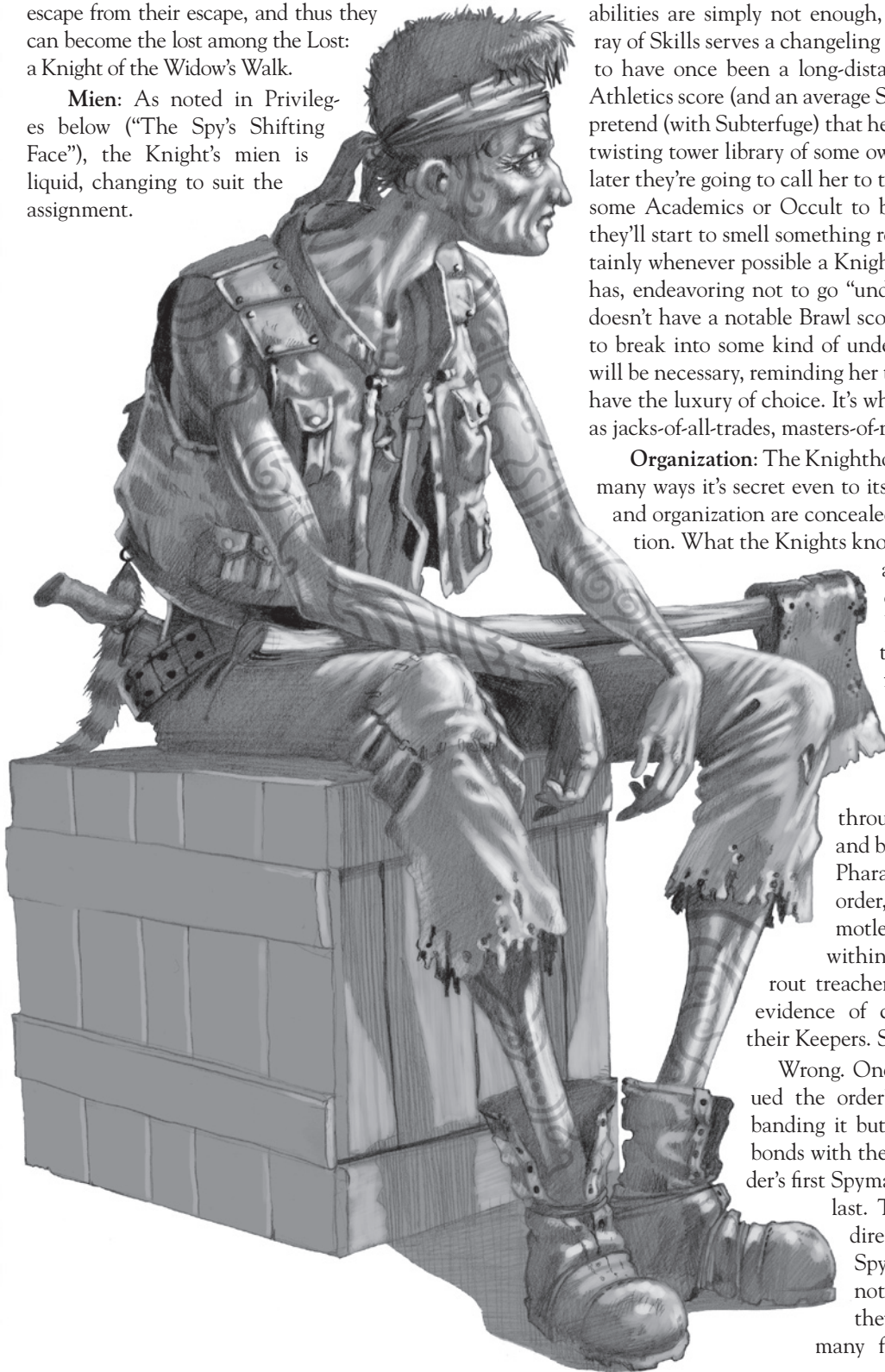
It's worth noting that not every member of the Widow's Walk Knighthood is strictly one who has hit bottom, though





that counts for the largest portion of its membership. No, sometimes the members are ones that are on the run: fleeing a vengeful queen, escaping the seemingly-infinite hands of a diabolical Keeper, or just trying to leave one's own human family in peace. In a way, they've hit bottom too, but it's not so much of their own doing. They're still in need for an escape from their escape, and thus they can become the lost among the Lost: a Knight of the Widow's Walk.

**Mien:** As noted in Privileges below ("The Spy's Shifting Face"), the Knight's mien is liquid, changing to suit the assignment.



**Background:** As noted, those with an urge or need to *escape* (be it their own ruined lives or some enemy or ex-lover) are the primary targets for this Knighthood. But beyond that, what goes into crafting a talented spy or a gifted "deep-cover" agent? Social Skills are key, of course: the ability to lie, schmooze and coerce are critical. One's social abilities are simply not enough, however. No, a broad array of Skills serves a changeling well. How can she pretend to have once been a long-distance runner if she has no Athletics score (and an average Speed)? She could certainly pretend (with Subterfuge) that her durance was spent in the twisting tower library of some owl-eyed Lord, but sooner or later they're going to call her to task and if she doesn't have some Academics or Occult to back that story up... well, they'll start to smell something rotten in the freehold. Certainly whenever possible a Knight makes do with what she has, endeavoring not to go "undercover" as a boxer if she doesn't have a notable Brawl score, but what if she's trying to break into some kind of underground fight club? Brawl will be necessary, reminding her that Knights do not always have the luxury of choice. It's why so many of them end up as jacks-of-all-trades, masters-of-none.

**Organization:** The Knighthood is a secret order, and in many ways it's secret even to its own members: its history and organization are concealed behind layers of occultation. What the Knights know (or are told) is this: long ago, the Secret Pharaohs of the Nile Cataracts believed that a number of the subjects within their freeholds were surreptitiously serving the Gentry instead of protecting the many Hedge gateways that lined the river through the reeds and shallows and boulders. And so the Secret Pharaohs created this noble order, asking that a nomadic motley serve and go undercover within the freehold to attempt to rout treachery. They did. They found evidence of changelings still loyal to their Keepers. Story over. Right?

Wrong. One of the Pharaohs continued the order's existence, publicly disbanding it but privately maintaining its bonds with the Wyrd. He became the order's first Spymaster, but certainly not the last. The order always is under direction by an undisclosed Spymaster. The Knights do not know who he is, though they may know one of his many false names—the current



Spymaster is said to go by the names of Minister Throck-thrush, Black Goat, and The Bagman's Nephew. Of course, trying to investigate any of these names is a lesson in futility, given the circuitous and duplicitous trails (replete with a hundred dead ends and false leads) one will discover.

The Spymaster is intimately aware of every Knight within his ranks, and personally ascribes them with tasks. Given that some estimate that this eldritch order is home to dozens if not hundreds of such spies, it seems amazing and even impossible that the Spymaster knows of the comings-and-goings of all his Knights. Oh, but he does. Once a changeling joins the ranks (a severe affair in which he spills a pint his own blood while blindfolded, all under the watchful gaze of the Knight that recruited him), he's on the radar. He'll receive his first assignment within a few days, and it'll appear quite out of nowhere. Each assignment is handwritten. It's sealed with a wax stamp whose relief is that of a dagger crossing the image of an eyeless skull. The wax stamp is preternaturally tough to break for anybody *but* a Knight of the Widow's Walk.

### *That Wax Seal*

Any outside the order find that the wax seal and letter have a Size 2 and Durability of 5, with a total Structure of 7. All Structure must be destroyed before the envelope can be opened. Once it's opened, the letter appears as a complex substitution cipher that, to a Knight, is plainly read. To anybody else, the cipher must be broken, which is no easy feat (extended Wits + Occult roll, 15 successes necessary, each roll equals one half-hour of deciphering).

Those who refuse the bidding of the Spymaster receive a second letter urging the completion of the task at hand. But if the Knight waits too long to take on his task, he may find that the benefits of his calling are suddenly inaccessible, and that he is no longer a member of the order (which can be awkward when one's mien is suddenly revoked in the midst of other changelings).

Do the Knights know of one another? At times, yes — often, a freehold will be home to more than one such spy, and in this case it's possible that one's received assignment will actually make note of the identities of fellow Knights. In addition, some Knights set up semi-permanent "safehouses" amidst various freeholds, and these are known to a large portion of the Widow's Walk spies operating in that area.

**Concepts:** damaged goods with new lease on life, habitual liar, "hollow man" Mirrorskin, low-Clarity assassin, masked paramour, pretend victim, smooth-talking mole

## PRIVILEGES

What follows are the three privileges available to those members of the Knights of the Widow's Walk.

### THE SPY'S SHIFTING FACE

A Knight's identity is up to her. Upon receiving a new assignment from the Spymaster, she has the opportunity to shift her mien considerably, becoming what appears to be an entirely different changeling of a different kith — though, she can only shift to the mien of a kith within her seeming (a Beast could change her mien from a Swimmerskin's shark façade to a praying mantis-esque Skitterskulk, but *not* to a Fairest Bright One, for instance). This costs her nothing, and her Mask also changes according to her whims (though always to the same Size and gender). She doesn't actually gain the benefits of the new kith, though she still can access the blessing of her own original kith.

She can reveal her own true face and kith by spending a Glamour point, and this lasts for one scene.

She can also shift her mien and Mask in the middle of an assignment, but doing so costs her one Willpower *dot*.

Curiously, the Knight cannot use this benefit to appear as someone else: the shift of Mask and mien must be invented wholecloth (or come from a persona the character had used before). Attempts to accurately mimic another's face (Mask, mien or both) fail automatically. Certainly she can attempt a fair facsimile, and with makeup can carry it further, but it'll never be a perfect mimicry.

### A BOUQUET OF LIES

A Knight of the Widow's Walk can literally *smell* lies. No roll is necessary; when someone lies to the character, it manifests as an aroma appropriate to the lie. (A sweet lie — "I love you" when it's just not true — might smell sickly sweet, whilst a lie about a murder — "I didn't kill him, I don't know anything about it" — might smell like a rotting corpse.)

### SUBTERFUGE, SO SWEET

The Knights are excellent liars. They must be, given that so much of their day-to-day lives hinge on constant deception. Thankfully, this eldritch order prepares them for that, giving them a comforting bonus for perpetuating such subterfuge. Once a day, the changeling may regain a point of Glamour from lying successfully (meaning, having convinced another of an untruth). In addition, upon joining the Knighthood, the changeling may take a free Specialty in Subterfuge.



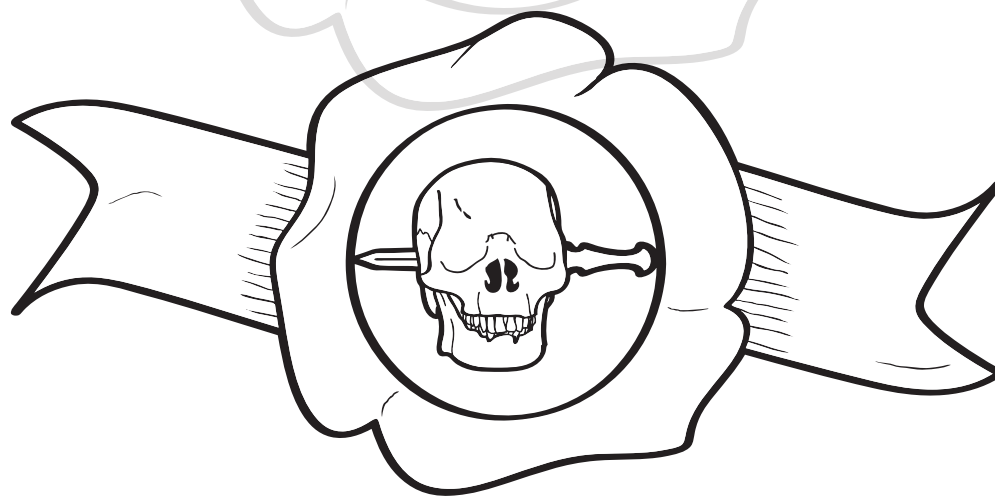
### *Rumors of the Widow's Walk*

The Knights of the Widow's Walk represent a very secret eldritch order, and so for most changelings the only rumor regarding them is the one about their existence. But within the noble order, rumors still persist...

- The Spymaster is a True Fae. Except, he's been exiled, right? Given that so many of the order's assignments seem to revolve around exposing Loyalists or damaging the resources of the Gentry in this world, you'd have to think that he's on the "good" team. Or maybe he's just trying to get rid of his competition? Okay, so there're competing rumors that say he's some really old vampire, but that's a load of road apples. Vampires don't exist outside of those porny Anita Blake novels.

- A second Widow's Walk exists within the first, and this one's gone rogue. How would you ever know? It's a faceless, headless organization. So there's a Spymaster — ever meet him? Didn't think so. One wonders why two such noble orders exist with the same name. What's the deviant purpose? Is one good, one bad? Are they constantly maneuvering to undo one another's work?

- Last year, the Widow's Walk took it up a notch. This one Winter Court witch, I think they call her Saint Beatrice of the Wooden Spoon (though hell if I know why), she went undercover in freaking Faerie, man. That's right. She's strong enough to masquerade as one of Them. She can't handle it. You know she can't. She's going to tell them everything and then we're all dead, or worse — slaves all over again. Still, it bears repeating, if anybody can do it, it'll be someone from the Winter Court. They seem so good at hiding in plain sight.





# THE PARLIAMENT OF VICTORS

*It's good to be the champ. I'll do what needs doing to stay champ. I'll win. I'll kill. I'll boast. I'll woo. Whatever it takes to keep succeeding.*

Want to join the Parliament of Victors? It's easy. Win, and keep winning. Boast and offer challenges left and right. Slay the Keeper. Have a threesome with the two princesses. Steal the still-

Or consider Lady B, the Cyclopean gang banger who negotiated peace (at the ends of two gold-plated .45's) between the four warring Courts.

Or what about Steamhead Cyril, the Broadback Gladiator of Queen Sarah and Victor of the Spring Court who performs at the behest of his mother, Queen



beating heart of the ancient Humbaba and eat it like it's a pomegranate.

Every freehold has one: the hero. Not a reluctant hero, no. Not the guy who does the right thing but stays silent about it, who refuses to take the spoils of war and accept the laurels placed upon his brow. *This* hero knows what he is. He's the cock of the walk. The best of the best, a platinum band amongst a handful of dirty silver ingots. And it's not just about having a success here and there. Killing one of the Gentry is a good start, but it has to be done with flair, with *narrative panache*: killing the Keeper whilst protecting the queen that you just bedded with little else besides an iron candlestick, *that's* something for the books. And that's something for the Parliament of Victors.

See, a Noble Champion in the Parliament of Victors is on par with the king or queen, and may even be more popular. Everybody knows the Champion. They know of his exploits because he tells them of his exploits. It's not about getting into the legends and earning some kind of twisted immortality the long way. It's about the hero getting what he deserves *now*. Not later. He succeeds because he wants. What he wants — wine, women, song, whatever — are earned because he succeeds. The cycle recycles.

Consider Suli the Slayer, a Draconic who challenged his Keeper to a duel atop Coit Tower in San Francisco. Surrounded by a cage of Thorns and a whirlwind of biting glass butterflies, he took on his Keeper. He cut off its head and its hands, then kicked the body down to the street below (it crashed into a car on Lombard Street and then turned into a flock of gulls). He keeps one of the hands on a leather cord by his side.

Sarah? Who remains undefeated even after these ten years, despite the network of scars that criss-cross his leathery flesh?

All of them, Noble Champions in the Parliament of Victors. They are the heroes of their freeholds, above all others. Singular amongst the Lost.

**Title:** Noble Champion

**Prerequisites:** One combat-related Skill (Brawl, Firearms, Weaponry) at 4, Presence 4, Wyrd 6

**Joining:** Joining is easy, so to speak. Get the attention of the Victors by deed. They'll come. They'll wine the changeling, dine the changeling. Then they'll make their offer. Problem is, it's just as easy to fall from grace as it is to join. See, the Noble Champions of the Parliament of Victors don't get to rest on their hindquarters. They have to keep up momentum. They're heroes. They need to act like it. Loud. Boastful. Social. Harder still, they can't fail a challenge. Someone comes up to a Champion and threatens to knock his block off? Or if he says he's going to take care of that band of treacherous privateers lurking in the deep Hedge but doesn't? That's a problem. He won't get *kicked out* of the eldritch order, exactly, but he will lose access to all three privileges until he can prove his mettle anew.

**Mien:** The changeling's mien *grows*. It becomes larger-than-life, almost mythic in proportions. If the Champion's mien has antlers, they grow larger, more impressive. If her skin is covered in scales or in ribbons of water, it shimmers, perhaps with a kind of iridescence. Lithe limbs grow longer and all the more beautiful. Big eyes deepen and shine with a captivating luster. In addition, the mien inspires a mix of



## What About the Sacred Band of the Golden Standard?

What separates these guys from the Gilded Aspirants (*Changeling: The Lost*, pp. 306–309), exactly? Both claim to be champions. Both claim heroism and don't necessarily go about it the most honest or honorable way. So what's the deal?

Frankly, the Noble Champions think of the Gilded Aspirants as little brothers — sure, it's cute how they play at being heroes, but the whole “hero” thing is really a One Man Show. There's room at the top of the mountain for one, and it's always, *always* a Noble Champion.

Moreover, the Parliament of Victors isn't interested in the long-term Viking immortality seemingly pursued by those of the Sacred Band. The Gilded Aspirants seem to think of heroism as something that transcends the moment, a greater grab for an eternal slice of the neverending story. The Noble Champions don't care. Being a champion *is* about the moment. It's about the victorious swing of the blade, the triumphant *crack* of the rifle as the Keeper's head explodes in the scope's view, the taste of honey licked off the thighs of a courtesan who wouldn't be in bed if it wasn't for that whole “champion” gig.

Also, they're not a chummy group. You don't find a number of Champions in a single freehold: the rules are, one per freehold max. A domain might have a gaggle of Gilded Aspirants (and the one Noble Champion might kindly claim that they *almost* add up to his awesomeness).

Finally, the Champion doesn't really care about the freehold—or, at least, doesn't *have* to care. He does what he does because he cares about himself. It's solipsism almost on par with what the Gentry themselves possess: all things seen as a reflection of the Victor's wants and needs.





intense emotion — the ugliest brute seems suddenly beautiful while the most stunning warrior-queen stirs both fear and self-deprecation in those who gaze upon her. It represents an aura of celebrity, palpable and pervasive.

**Background:** What does it take to be a Noble Champion? It isn't enough to be good; it necessitates becoming the best. The best at what? Well, that's where the different flavors of "hero" come into play. One Noble Champion might be able to put a bullet through a Keeper's eye at 500 yards, while another might do surgical procedures with a rapier — *blindfolded*. Physical and martial prowess is common, but other supplementary Skills are apropos: a high Persuasion (used to coax the king into bed), Socialize or Expression (the better to boast with, my dear), Athletics (think Olympiad-level displays of might), and Intimidation (sometimes it's necessary for the Champion to bully someone into recognizing his unparalleled aptitudes). If anything falls by the wayside, it's Mental. Being a Noble Champion isn't about chemistry experiments, fixing an engine, or book-learning. Well, it can be if done with the proper élan, but usually, who cares?

Of course, most Noble Champions tend to be profoundly full of themselves, and often sport the Vice of Pride (or, for some, Lust and Greed provided those aspects go to feed one's narcissistic furnace). Speaking of narcissism, it's not uncommon for a Victor to have particular derangements. Narcissism and Megalomania come to mind, though some gain a Fixation or an Obsessive-Compulsion about home-spun superstitions and folklore that keep the champ from losing. In addition, some Champions hide a very damaged inner core, building up walls around a frail self-esteem (and so, Depression and Inferiority Complex might manifest).

**Organization:** The Parliament of Victors doesn't have any profound organization — in fact, given that there's only one Noble Champion per freehold, the group doesn't really need much formal organization. Since the Wyrd enforces the pledge of the hero to the order, it's not like they need a secret council to vet one another outside the offering of an invitation to a prospective champ.

The one thing they *do* have is semi-regular gatherings. The Noble Champions often come to recognize that they have no equals among their peers, and so they go to be among other Noble Champions for a time. They might get together for a weekend retreat. They might come together for dinner. Maybe they compete, committing to games of sport or hunting parties. (And, the beautiful part is that in being defeated by another Noble Champion, it doesn't seem to upset the pledge: one may still retain privileges upon losing a challenge to another of your heroic ilk.)

**Concepts:** corn-fed golden boy, fallen hero, haughty Draconic, one-woman army, preening Adonis, sore loser, violent supermodel

## Rumors of the Parliament

The Noble Champions represent obvious targets, and thus are host to a whole slew of what they claim are just "bitter rumors."

- They're forming an army. The Noble Champions, they only get along with one another, right? And so they're forming an army. Why wouldn't they? Alone, each one is a deadly foe. Together? They're like a hurricane and an earthquake and a nuclear bomb shoved into one. No freehold stands a chance when they decide to get over themselves long enough to mobilize. Don't buy that whole "they're loners" angle.

- Within the order waits a kind of "inner council". Think of them as the Olympian gods, right? Zeus and Hera and Apollo and all those guys? These guys have been so favorably looked upon by the Wyrd that the rumor is, they can control fate itself. They have *that much* might and magic. You want something done? You go to the inner council. Or better still, you join the Parliament of Victors yourself, and they'll tell you the truth soon as you sign up. Trust me.

- It's a True Fae recruiting tool (which is ironic given how many of these guys are tools themselves. Get it? Tools?). Seriously, the Noble Champions represent the *crème de la crème*, and that's what the Keepers want. They know that changelings of that kind of power can represent a very real threat to them, and so it's a perfect back-door to find out who's really *got* that kind of power, and how to ply them with more of the same to get them on board. You think the Noble Champions are just getting together for dinner or to go hunting in the Hedge? They're going deep. They're going to Faerie. Can you say, "indoc-trination?" I knew that you could.

## PRIVILEGES

What follows are the privileges that the Noble Champions so richly deserve (at least, if you ask them). Remember that, should a Noble Champion lose a challenge or fail



at a notable task, he'll lose access to these privileges until he can reclaim his "title." This doesn't mean just failing a roll (although he'll certainly not be thrilled with failure on any level), but it means falling down at a challenge he swore he could complete. The Storyteller remains the ultimate arbiter.

### STACKED ODDS

The odds are clearly stacked in the Noble Champion's favor: any and all Physical rolls are considered exceptional successes on four successes instead of five.

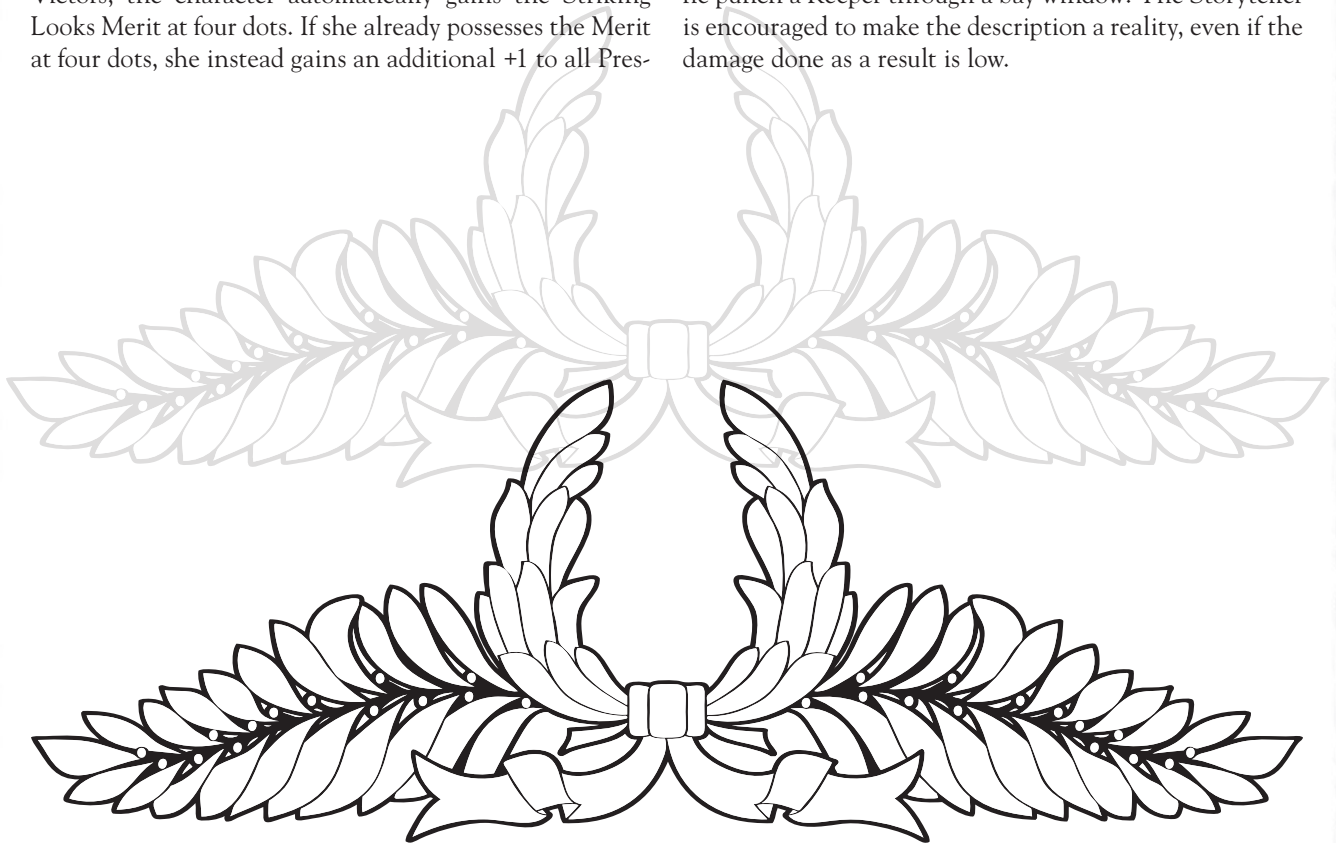
### THE HERO'S VENEER

Upon joining the lofty ranks of the Parliament of Victors, the character automatically gains the Striking Looks Merit at four dots. If she already possesses the Merit at four dots, she instead gains an additional +1 to all Pres-

ence rolls (this is added to the normal benefit gained by the Striking Looks Merit).

### MIGHTY BLOW

Once per chapter (game session), the character can spend a Glamour to add her Wyrd score to a single combat roll (based off of Brawl, Firearms or Weaponry). If successful, the attack is dramatic and showy (even if the damage done isn't). The player is encouraged to describe the flourish of the mighty blow—does lightning coruscate up the blade of her sword as it crashes down upon an enemy's collarbone? Does the bullet take a whining and unlikely ricochet to end up punching through the Loyalist's hand (just in time, causing him to drop his own weapon)? Does he punch a Keeper through a bay window? The Storyteller is encouraged to make the description a reality, even if the damage done as a result is low.





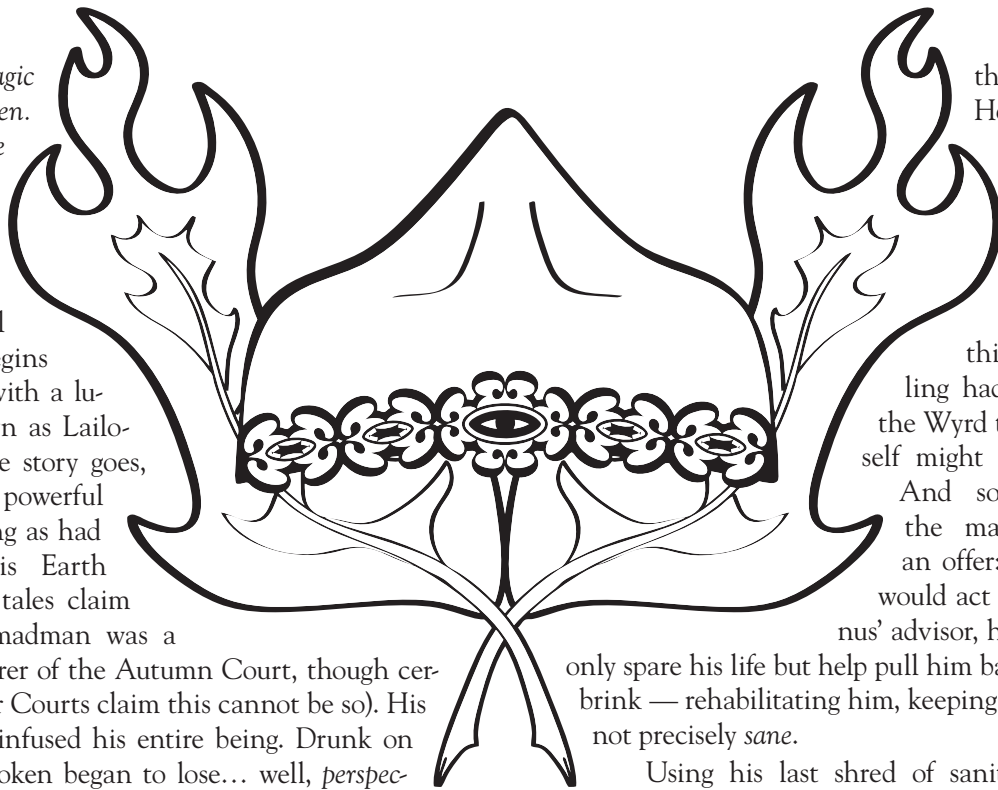
# THE OFFICE OF VIZIERAL COUNSEL

*My magic  
for my queen.  
Nothing else  
matters.*

The story of the Office of Vizieral Counsel begins eons ago, with a lunatic known as Lailoken. As the story goes, he was as powerful a changeling as had walked this Earth (and most tales claim that this madman was a Beast sorcerer of the Autumn Court, though certainly other Courts claim this cannot be so). His Wyrd had infused his entire being. Drunk on power, Lailoken began to lose... well, *perspective*. Sanity dwindled, torn to fringed ribbon. He heard the lilting melodies and dissonant songs of Faerie drift upon the breeze calling to him, whispered out of some Hedge door somewhere, and he wondered just what it was that he was becoming. It went on like this for weeks, months, and soon he began to suffer blackouts. Upon waking one morning, he bolted upright to find himself in the midst of a field of corpses: bodies charred, beheaded, some turned to ice, others with trees grown up through their chests.

Lailoken had enough sanity to recognize he had gone almost completely insane. He didn't remember killing these scores of people. But the blood on his hands—his fingertips still smoldering with steam, smoke, fog — made his sins clear.

As luck would have it, the local Summer Court king was having a pass by, hunting stag upon his horse. The King, the warrior known as Cantigernus, saw what had become of these people at the hands of the lunatic Lailoken. He thought to destroy Lailoken on the spot, and then... an idea struck him. He knew the tales of



this sorcerer. He knew not only of what this man was capable, but also knew that this changeling had a grasp of the Wyrd that he himself might never have. And so he made the mad murderer an offer: if Lailoken would act as Cantigernus' advisor, he would not

only spare his life but help pull him back from the brink — rehabilitating him, keeping him *saner* if not precisely *sane*.

Using his last shred of sanity, Lailoken judged the bargain as a good one, given that he had little interest in having his head at the end of a pike. He agreed, offering a pledge to seal the deal. Thus was born the eldritch order of the Office of Vizieral Counsel (known then and sometimes now as the "Kin of Lailoken" or simply, "The Lailokin").

The members of this order all act as sorcerer-advisors to the kings and queens of the freehold. It is their sole purpose. While not all of them are addled madmen capable of leveling an entire town with some long-forgotten clause of some heretical Contract, many are, and joining this order helps keep their lunacies at bay.

**Title:** Vizier

**Prerequisites:** At least 12 dots in various Contracts, Politics 3, Occult 3, Wyrd 7

**Joining:** The Wyrd is powerful, but dangerous. Itself, it is not a direct cause of madness — but its power is heady and intoxicating, and many changelings are ill-prepared to wield the magic of Faerie. And what choice do they have? Wyrd infuses. It in-



fects. It's not just something the changeling calls upon when she needs it — it's *within* her, as much a part of her being as her heart and mind. Hence, it's easy to let one's Clarity slip out of one's grip, submerged beneath the tides of magic. Madness comes. Derangements manifest, and so do Frailties. It won't be long before the Gentry start to see the character as more a kindred spirit than an escaped captive.

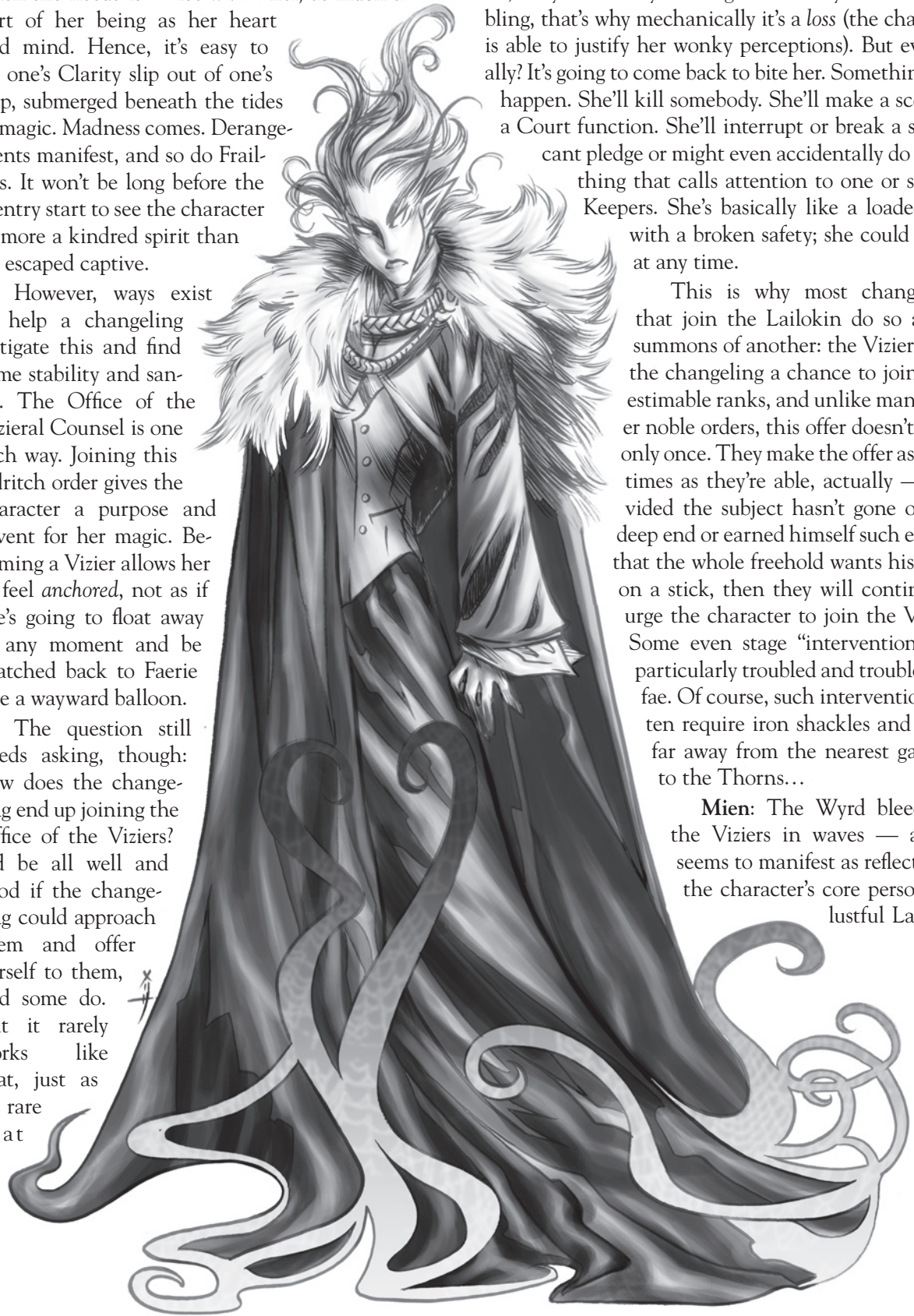
However, ways exist to help a changeling mitigate this and find some stability and sanity. The Office of the Vizieral Counsel is one such way. Joining this eldritch order gives the character a purpose and a vent for her magic. Becoming a Vizier allows her to feel *anchored*, not as if she's going to float away at any moment and be snatched back to Faerie like a wayward balloon.

The question still needs asking, though: how does the changeling end up joining the Office of the Viziers? It'd be all well and good if the changeling could approach them and offer herself to them, and some do. But it rarely works like that, just as it's rare that

an addict seeks help before the addiction gets bad—no, early on the Wyrd feels great. Clarity loss isn't troubling, that's why mechanically it's a *loss* (the character is able to justify her wonky perceptions). But eventually? It's going to come back to bite her. Something will happen. She'll kill somebody. She'll make a scene at a Court function. She'll interrupt or break a significant pledge or might even accidentally do something that calls attention to one or several Keepers. She's basically like a loaded gun with a broken safety; she could go off at any time.

This is why most changelings that join the Lailokin do so at the summons of another: the Viziers offer the changeling a chance to join their estimable ranks, and unlike many other noble orders, this offer doesn't come only once. They make the offer as many times as they're able, actually — provided the subject hasn't gone off the deep end or earned himself such enmity that the whole freehold wants his heart on a stick, then they will continue to urge the character to join the Viziers. Some even stage "interventions" for particularly troubled and troublesome fae. Of course, such interventions often require iron shackles and a trip far away from the nearest gateway to the Thorns...

**Mien:** The Wyrd bleeds off the Viziers in waves — and it seems to manifest as reflective of the character's core persona. A lustful Lailokin





might find that the air above his flesh is suffused with tendrils of sultry red smoke. A frenetic or angry Vizier may crackle with sharp snaps and pops of lightning or static. Charity as Virtue might cause a halo of burnished light, while a cruel and callous Vizier might simply be cast in an unsettling shadow.

**Background:** The term “Vizier,” literally translated, means “bearer of burden.” That’s appropriate to those who join the Viziers, because they must be mentally prepared to bear a tremendous burden. For all the benefits to them personally, joining this eldritch order isn’t one that comes with a free social boost and an ornamental title. No, a changeling who joins the Office of the Vizieral Counsel is a changeling who’d better be prepared to work.

As a magical advisor to the king or queen, a Vizier’s life is hardly his own. While certainly some rulers will make this easier than others, for the most part running a freehold and juggling all the disparate elements (elements that can be as simple as negotiating peace between two arguing Lost or as complicated as stomping out a hobgoblin insurrection that threatens to come flooding out of the Hedge) is a painful and time-consuming job. Acting as a ruler’s right-hand magician and advisor means that a lot of the sovereign’s burden is shared squarely upon the Vizier’s shoulder.

What goes into this mighty job, this heavy millstone around the Vizier’s neck? It means offering a number of social and mental advantages — a Vizier must be a bureaucrat, a diplomat, an investigator, a sage. The Vizier will often act as a king’s representative, operating on his behalf as a proxy. Plus, when issues of magic of Wyrd come up... the Vizier is expected to be the uttermost authority. Above all else, the changeling better know the ins and outs of Faerie magic and madness... or she at least will need to learn how to fake it with extreme confidence.

**Organization:** To a large extent, each a Vizier is an island. While some freeholds have more than one Vizier, many only have the one — and that Vizier is expected to service *all* of the Court kings and queens.

There’s the rub, and perhaps the most difficult thing about a Vizier’s job. She’s expected to be neutral. When the season shifts, her job does not end—no, she remains standing in place next to the throne, and advises the coming monarch. This is tricky for a number of reasons. In some domains, the rulers come to resent the Vizier—after all, she acted as counsel for what may have been rivals, and because the Vizier represents a stable presence it’s also likely that many of the freehold

changelings come to *her* with their problems. (Alternately, some rulers are happy that this is the case; if the Vizier wants to take the burden while the king takes the glory, so be it.) Other rulers shut the Vizier out entirely. No explicit rule states that a king or queen must accept a Vizier’s advisements or even let her *give* the advice in the first place. Of course, once one king accepts her advice, then *all* the rulers will jump on board because—why be left out? And that might be the worst burden of all for some Lailokin: when the Court rulers attempt to manipulate her against the others, leveraging her abilities and instructions against the other Courts.

How a Vizier reacts is up to her. If she wants to be the Power Behind the Throne and try to pull the puppet strings of one or several rulers, then that’s the way it’ll be. If she doesn’t have the foresight and instead is the puppet instead of the puppeteer, then oh well. Maybe she’s honest and good. Maybe she refuses to be shut out. Maybe she’s happy to be shut out. For the most part, other Viziers simply don’t get involved. Frankly, a once-deranged (with probable high-Wyrd and low-Clarity) changeling is far more useful as a worthless or manipulative Vizier than as a loose cannon with the mad magic of Faerie fate at her fingertips. Some Viziers might get involved from afar and urge a ruler to heed the freehold Vizier’s advice. Some might instead try to stir the character into action or to mend her scheming ways. Otherwise? They stay out of it.

*However*, betraying a king or queen in a way that brings harm to that ruler? Bad news. The privileges of the Entitlement are torn away (which can be quite devastating; see “The Eternal Advisor,” below). The pledge between changeling and the eldritch order is severed. Any derangements she possesses, as well as any Frailties, trigger madness sweeps upon her, leaving her a weeping, trembling wreck (if it doesn’t kill her). A Lailokin doesn’t need to do every deed her king asks of her, though some may do that anyway. That isn’t a betrayal. But any refusal to serve or action taken against the ruler that brings harm to that king is a dire mistake.

**Concepts:** ancient witch, beleaguered soothsayer, court jester whose punch lines contain wisdom, deceitful puppet master, neglected advisor, power behind the throne, silent observer

## PRIVILEGES

Below are the three privileges gained by joining this eldritch order.



## THE ETERNAL ADVISOR

The Vizier does not age, at all. Her duty is eternal, for she is now bound as an advisor to the freehold and its rulers. She can still die, of course: a bullet to the head or an iron fireplace poker through the heart is still damage. She's not immune to any source of damage except that which may come from aging. Whatever age she's at when she joins, that's the age at which she'll remain...

...until she leaves the eldritch order, of course. Leaving the order means that her normal years will catch up with her (or at least "normal" in compared to how the Wyrd might have normally extended her years). If that puts her past the normal years of survival, then she withers and turns to dust, dead.

## THE CLARITY OF DUTY

Joining the Office of Vizieral Counsel is like pulling back from the precipice to a stable, safe place. While a member of this order, a changeling gains +5 dice when making a roll (usually Resolve + Composure) to resist the manifestation of an existing derangement. She also gains +1 to any Clarity rolls made in an effort to resist gaining *new* derangements, too. Finally, she can ignore all Major Frailties (but Minor Frailties still apply).

Leaving the order, however, is damaging to a changeling's sanity. Upon ceasing her Vizieral duties, she *automatically* loses a dot of Clarity.

## THE CLAUSEMAKER'S BOON

Magic comes easily to the Viziers. Frankly, it needs to — it's their job. Provided that the Vizier's player can explain how purchasing a given clause of a Contract will help her perform her duties for the king or queen (Storyteller is the final arbiter, and other players should be encouraged to offer yeas or nays), then purchasing that clause (i.e. that dot of a Contract) only costs the player the same as it would if she bought a Merit (new dots x 2). This is regardless of whether or not the Contract is affinity or non-affinity. Note that it still means she must buy the Contract one dot at a time — just because it's useful to her duties doesn't mean she can jump from Fang and Talon • to Fang and Talon ••••.

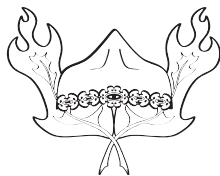
## Rumors of the Lailokin

The Lailokin aren't a secret order, and in fact frequently become advisors in freeholds large and small. As such (and especially in those freeholds where more than one Vizier provides counsel to a king), rumors are sure to spread. Rumors like these:

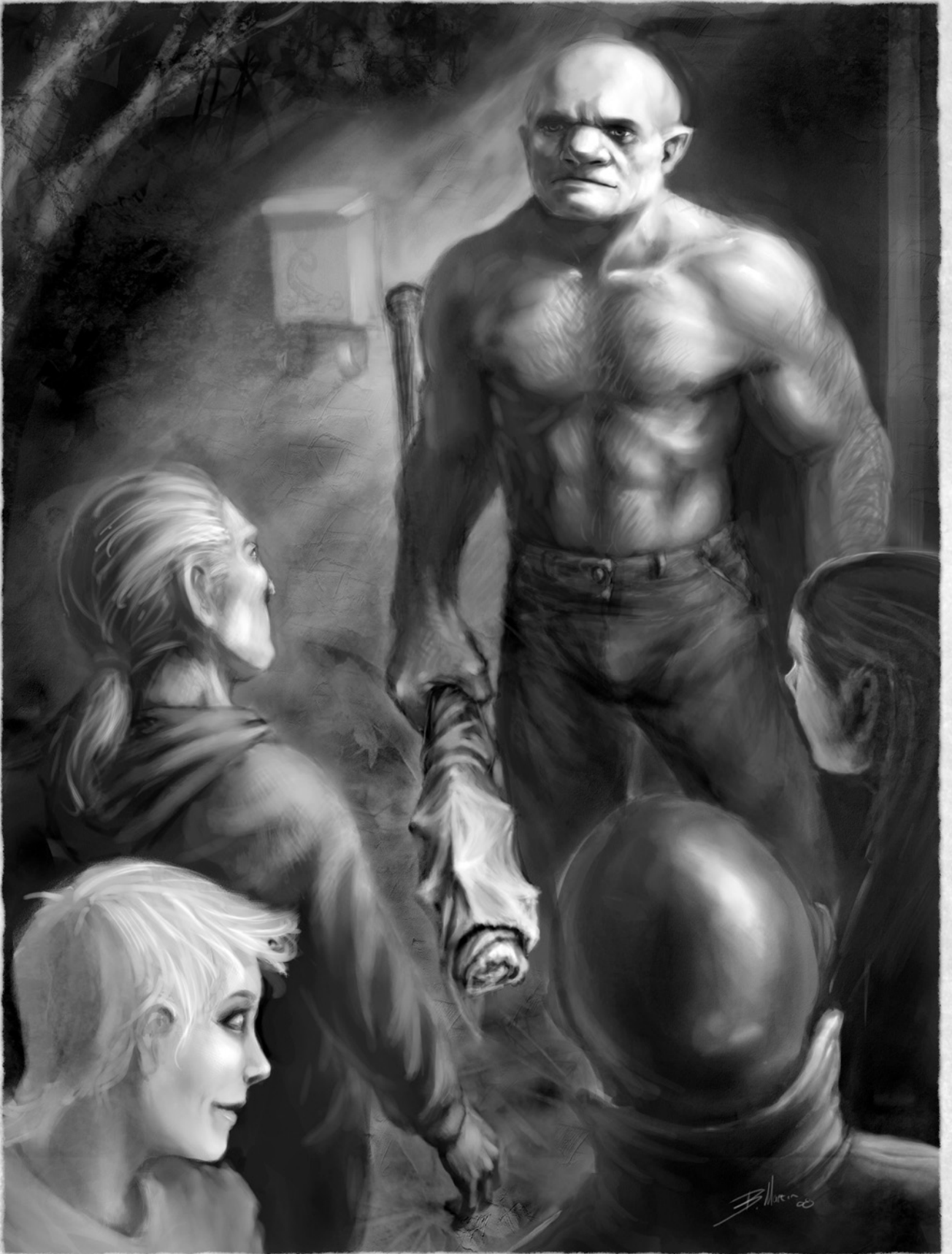
- These guys are eternal, right? Their crazy moonbat founder, Lailoken? Ask around, and you might learn that he never died. He's still out there. Working for some king or another. Maybe he doesn't call himself that anymore, but he's out there, all right. And given that he's been alive for a couple thousand years, let's all just hope he walks the narrow path and keeps on keeping on for the Viziers. Or we're all going to cower beneath his madness and might.

- Face it, they have more power than the rulers themselves. They're always there, always a presence. Oh, sure, the kings and queens don't need to take their advice, don't even need to let them in the door. But they will. Why? Well, what I heard is that they get a Polaroid or other picture in an envelope slid under their door. And on that picture is a shot of them getting killed: mid-brain splatter or axe-to-chest. Written on the photo is a note: "You should listen to your advisor." And they listen. They always listen.

- Rumor mill tells of one of them that tried to become a queen herself. That was a bad day for that freehold. First night of Winter comes, they hand over power to her. The curtain draws back. Her title is stripped from her — she's no longer a Vizier. She ages, *super* fast. Skin like parchment, hair goes white, bones crack. She doesn't die, though. And she goes nuclear. Her mind fractures into a thousand tiny pieces. She went on a tear that night. Killed a good third of the freehold. They still talk about it: the "Night of the Winter Witch," they call it.











love you," he said one more time as the door closed, knowing she hadn't heard him. Then he turned and stepped down the walk, to where they were waiting.

Rory stretched out a hand, and they clasped each other's wrists. "Joz," Rory said. "I hated to ask, but I'm glad you're with us."

"Good to see you, Rory," he replied, resting one end of the cloth-wrapped bundle on the ground and shifting his grip on the wooden hilt that came out one end. "Good to see you all. Glad you've been safe."

"Not for much longer," wheezed Beth-Beth.

"Well." He shrugged.

"Joz," said Bright Megan. "Are you sure? I mean... we're so glad to have you, but..." She twisted her hands.

"She's right," said Silver, shifting uneasily. "Joz, you've earned this. We don't want to take you away to go burn out with the rest of us losers. None of us holds you to this, you know."

"Yeah," said Rory, low-voiced. "We'd want... I mean, yeah." Beth-Beth just nodded.

The Ogre looked over each of them in turn, and shook his head. "There's nothing here or anywhere I love more than my family," he said, pretending not to notice Megan flinch and hide her face as he said it. His smile was a little sad. "But I couldn't live with them if I was the kind of man to break my promise to all of you. You're family, too."

He hoisted the bundle onto his shoulder. It rested there like it was home. "Come on. Let's finish it."



# CHAPTER 2

## *Twisted Tales*

*"...They don't like it when violent things happen in my Illustrations.  
Each Illustration is a little story.*

*If you watch them, in a few minutes they tell you a tale.  
In three hours of looking you could see eighteen or twenty stories acted on my body,  
you could hear voices and think thoughts.  
It's all here, just waiting for you to look..."*

— RAY BRADBURY, *The Illustrated Man*

## STORYTELLING THE ENDGAME

This book presents resources for playing epic **Changeling** games: chronicles where the Lost dare the shores of Arcadia and challenge the Fae themselves, or stand against the Gentry when their hunger threatens the human world. The World of Darkness is a place where subtle supernatural plots twist everyday life. If the creatures behind the curtain of secrecy let down their guard the consequences would be disastrous — but it's one thing to *say* that and another to *show* it. Virtually every group wants to kick over the anthill at some point, give the horrible creatures in the back story a chance to stretch their legs and see if their protagonists can stand up, confront them, and create a damn good finale.

Epic, disastrous things immediately inspire visions and fragmentary scenes, but a story is more than an image of dragons lumbering up Miami Beach, of Fae gods turning skyscrapers into huge trees, or changelings uttering the secret words that bind the Wyrd. The worst thing you can do is confuse these impressions for developed stories, use brute force to make the scenes happen and hope that some rationale will stitch them into a good story. Epic stories often fail because this thought process worms its way in. Players talk about fighting an aerial battle on gryphon-back to defeat the Army of

Fimbulwinter, armed with oaths the rot-elves have beaten into weapons of power. They get pumped up, ready to play — but for some reason; the chronicles that actually work tend to be a lot humbler. Why is this? Why can't enthusiasm alone carry your epic aspirations?

Hype is exciting but it isn't play. If you build a story by boosting the extreme side of the game and brainstorming half-finished scenes you're doing the opposite of designing a chronicle. In a roleplaying game the rules, setting and protagonists are all tools that create a narrative during play. But enthusiastic speculation creates the story first and expects game play to catch up, falling into place to produce what the players demand. So it's no surprise that when the big moment comes, groups struggle with the vast, epic edifice they've created in their imaginations. It intimidates the Storyteller and makes players anxious about character portrayal.

You can build an epic, but you have to do it by *playing* the game. Your time at the table is the epic — it leads the story. This is what makes roleplaying a distinct activity. Instead of passively witnessing the build-up, make it happen through the medium of your changelings, your World of Darkness and the themes you've put at the heart of your chronicle.



## Storytelling and Story-Playing

We hope that over the course of the chronicle your group's developed a strong collective play style and a real appreciation for each other's efforts. Roleplaying is a pastime for friends and assumes a certain amount of trust and goodwill. A good story brings people together because at heart, it's founded on players being as good an audience as they are participants, and wanting to help everyone give their best performance.

That's why this section's title is a bit deceptive. Not all of the techniques here are for Storytellers alone. Players can use them to refine their performances and improve group communication. Ultimately, roleplaying is based on resolving creative tensions between the players and Storyteller, characters and setting, and a bunch of other binary categories that are ultimately arbitrary, but give us a structure to improvise and provide unexpected, compelling results. So everyone, player and Storyteller, can examine the techniques here. Together, they can use them to complete a memorable chronicle.

## ANATOMY OF AN EPIC

If your World of Darkness doesn't matter to the players, even the most extreme events won't matter. Endgames work because players believe in their importance. They're fascinated with the world and want to see how it transforms. You've got to build a living world around the players. If you don't, even the most extreme events won't matter. Develop your World of Darkness from the ground up. Put your visions of Ragnarok on the backburner for now and concentrate on the setup — but remember that at every step you're sowing the seeds of new plotlines, culminating in your endgame. Then, when it's time to finish it, consider the following elements.

## CHRONICLE AND CHARACTER THEMES

In *Changeling* and other World of Darkness games, theme is front and center. We talk about it explicitly but we don't force it on you. You don't have to adhere to the game's focus. This is intentional. Think of theme as a landmark: a place to find your way by. Some people

## Heavy Lifting

Intimidation is a common problem in the endgame, though not every player or Storyteller cares to admit it. At first glance it looks like this section's numerous techniques will only exacerbate the problem by increasing the workload. To make it clear, don't use *everything* here and *only* use it to the extent that it would inspire you.

You don't have to work everything out in precise detail. These techniques aren't hard rules to play by. Instead, draw on the tools in this section whenever part of your story looks like it might grind to a halt. Employ them when you need or want them — not just because they're printed on the page.

want to get as close to the core ideas as possible, while others are happy to keep it in the distance.

So *Changeling* is a "Storytelling Game of Beautiful Madness." On page 13 of the game, it says the theme is "to find one's way home." What the hell does that mean? There's no one correct answer for everyone, but there are *interesting* answers for every participant in your game. Start then, by asking every participant what this means in the context of their place in the game. For Storytellers, the answer is the theme they want to explore through their chronicle. For players, it's a theme that guides their characters. This isn't the same as the character's background or personal values (though these things can certainly influence the theme). You can create arrogant characters to explore the value of humility, for instance. These larger themes are part of the play experience, not the imagined world.

For a chronicle with tightly integrated themes, take this process through two rounds. Use one to identify basic themes and the other to explore the ways they connect and blend into an overarching set of ideas.

The result describes your endgame's thematic focus, both for the group as a whole (based on the Storyteller's theme) and individual players (based on their character themes). You can use a number of techniques to turn this general direction into specific parts of the finale. You might use the linking word technique in Chapter Four of *Changeling: The Lost*. This naturally leads to a consistent direction for the story. You can also pick a motif (a recurring event or structure in the narrative) for each theme.



These serve as inspiration points for scenes and chapters in your chronicle as well as the mood and symbolism. This works in any part of your chronicle, but we're talking about the endgame, so let's modify either technique according to different stages in your chronicle. These are:

### Foreshadowing

To apply a key word or motif to foreshadowing, tone it down a notch and associate it with a passive image. Foreshadowing is usually a side effect of the action, not the center of the story. If the theme describes an end state rather than a recurring condition, twist the theme's symbol a bit to indicate the story will challenge it and make the players work to bring it to fruition.

**Example:** *Steve's character theme is "peace through balance." Tara the Storyteller chooses a quiet garden or green space as its motif (Steve could choose it too, and request that Tara works it into play). Early in the chronicle, his character negotiates peace between two rival freeholds. The final meeting takes place in a small greenhouse. Suddenly, his character senses someone spying on them. He gives chase, but only finds a few flowers crushed underfoot — a sign that something's going to disrupt the fragile balance.*

### Rising Action

As the story progresses, put your themes in the middle of things. Make them the subject of scenes, subject to ever-increasing stakes. It's life or death, war or peace, and it all hangs on the themes in question.

**Example:** *By now, Steve's character is a noted peacemaker, a master of compromise, but even he's hard-pressed to keep the peace between the Miami and Tampa freeholds. Each blames the other for sabotage and mayhem. The players' motley believes there's a third party to blame, but renewed recriminations drown out their voices. Suspicious representatives meet on neutral ground: an Everglades cabin with a bountiful flower garden. One diplomat is late, however — until his body floats by. Battle erupts and flame consumes the garden.*

### Climax

Make it big. This is **Changeling**, so the most abstract things can take on a palpable form. Elemental Lost really do burn with rage. Jealousy is a muscular, crimson-skinned man culled from a powerful dream. Fear is a changeling with terror-inducing Contracts and a horrific mien. Apply your themes to the environment; they should consume the entire story. Don't hold back.

**Example:** *Suspicion leads to war, which leads to the revelation that two True Fae used the rival freeholds as*

### *The False Climax*

A staple of action and horror films, the false climax gives the players a definitive-looking challenge, a hint of the denouement — and then the final struggle *really* begins. A hate-maddened warrior jumps up from apparent death to launch a final attack. You defeat the Gentry, but they existed to guard the world from Arcadia's all-devouring chaos — and now it's crawling down to face you.

A false climax multiplies the significance of the real ending because it gives you an extra "beat" to explore the dramatic significance of what's happened. The real final conflict gives you a chance to turn the sentiments of that moment into action, multiplying its emotional impact. It's a potent technique, but don't overuse it. As a movie cliché it's worn out its welcome and if you use this repeatedly it gets boring fast. Save the technique for the endgame and you won't lessen its impact.

*proxy fighters in a duel. They caused the conflict and sabotaged Steve's peacemaking attempts. But one of them has manifested as a Fae Prop called the Deathrose. It stores the souls of fallen combatants to keep score for the Gentry. After learning of it from a captured Fae servant, Steve's motley fights its way to Arcadia and plucks it from a poison garden. They make it back on the eve of a terrible battle and reveal it to both sides, proving they've been manipulated. Now it's time for both freeholds to unite behind the characters and dare Faerie itself, to destroy the Others' influence for good.*

### Denouement

After you've sealed the gates of Arcadia, cracked the Hedge's walls or chronicled your motley's rise to Arcadian divinity, you need to tie up loose ends, meditate on what's happened and provide a final catharsis, closing the chronicle. Use your themes to make an end statement about the story.

**Example:** *The motley led two freeholds to Arcadia. They used the Deathrose as a weapon, first against its creator's greatest enemy and then, after reconstituting it from the foe's essence (no Prop can be used against its owner, so it must be remade as a separate thing) wielded it against the enemy. The fight is difficult, but the players' motley prevails.*

*Afterward, Steve's character plants the Deathrose on Arcadian ground. Its petals fade to white. Suddenly, new*



flowers bloom: one for every soul lost in the war. This garden is a new domain, a safe haven for changeling travelers. It has a strange governing intelligence made of war-dead spirits, and they create a safe path back to Earth.

## BACKGROUND

Set up backgrounds filled with potential action. Characters start with angry relatives, lost loves and mortal rivalries. The game turns these into story events. The Storyteller matches personal backstories with histories and conflicts drawn from her supporting cast and game setting.

When your endgame comes around, give your backstory another look. After all, you won't get another chance to reveal it within the chronicle. One simple technique is to write out background facts in point form. Check off every background element you've managed to explore and see what you can do with the unaddressed elements that remain. This isn't just a Storytelling tool. Players have just as active a role in shaping the chronicle finale by playing their characters and stating their preferences at the table. The Storyteller uses this method to help plan the endgame as a whole, but players do it from two perspectives. First of all, your character probably still has matters to resolve. Whatever happened to her twin sister? Why did that noble say, "Third time's the charm and charms are bright, charms burn the eyes of the bit-terest night," back in the first session? The chronicle is a collective story, so it's a good idea to develop a more focused agenda as your character's story draws to its conclusion. You don't have to address every neglected point, however. If a note turned out to fall a bit flat, you don't have to labor to address it just for the sake of closure. Life isn't always neatly resolved, and neither are all stories.

Play interests extend beyond what you can accomplish through your character, however. The Storyteller is there to give you a meaningful experience, so you have a say in how events are going to play out. Explore your backstory for unresolved elements and discuss them with the Storyteller. It's likely that she'll appreciate input as she prepares for the finale. Storytellers and players have to strike a balance, based on trust in each other's good intentions. Players envision certain experiences and need stories that acknowledge this, but the Storyteller provides unexpected situations and even challenges the players' ideas about what they really want. It's not always about playing in your comfort zone or getting the experience you expect. An intense game can feature legitimate unease, even *anger*, but all within the boundaries of a group dynamic built on trust. For instance, one player might want the chance to confront and even duel

## Open-Ended Revelations

Plots tend to get more tightly focused toward the end of a chronicle. In an archetypal chronicle, the beginning is focused on exploring the social and supernatural environment. You don't know what's out there and why it's important until you encounter it through the early chapters. They tell you what a freehold is (even if you know the books from front to back, *really* knowing them is a function of experiencing them in play), what changelings do and the challenges they face. The middle of a chronicle takes this knowledge and turns it into a plan of action: a way for characters to make their desires known in the new world.

By the time you get to the finale, you may find that you've uncovered so many secrets that there isn't much room to unveil the background, or that the players are so committed to a particular way of playing that the revelations you thought would be real bombshells just wouldn't matter to them any more — or as riddles, are so far removed from their mindsets that they probably won't ever figure them out.

Storytellers, the solution is simple: cheat. In other words, if your planned revelation is irrelevant or obscure, change the revelation to better fit the current story. If one character's twin was supposed to "really" be a sorcerer in a crossover that never happened, it's time to decide she is in fact a fetch, sent by the chronicle's main antagonist. If a player comes up with a wrong answer to a puzzle that's a better fit than your secret right answer, then retroactively change the right answer to match the more interesting solution. The world that the players see is more important than your own behind-the-scenes ideas.

the chronicle's antagonist: a Fae lord that has hitherto stayed behind the scenes, creating monsters and dilemmas. The Storyteller isn't obligated to provide that story event but she shouldn't ignore it, either. Between the player's wishes and the Storyteller's preparations lies a third way that acknowledges everyone's desires but formulates them into something new: the kind of surpris-



ing, exciting conclusions that come out of the best **Changeling** games. So the duel *does* take place, but it's horribly one-sided; the Other toys with the character, but at the same time, reveals a weakness that the motley can capitalize on. The duel served a purpose, but it didn't just fulfill the player's wishes.

Character backgrounds provide the easiest way for you to formulate and express your interests as a player. Just as the Storyteller can make plans based on your back story, a player can delve into the chronicle's collective background to help plan the endgame. Open, constructive dialogue is the key to success. You don't have to find a way to ask about the freehold's secret chambers in-character every time. Bring it up out of character; tell the Storyteller you always wanted to explore that end of the game.

## THE PLOT

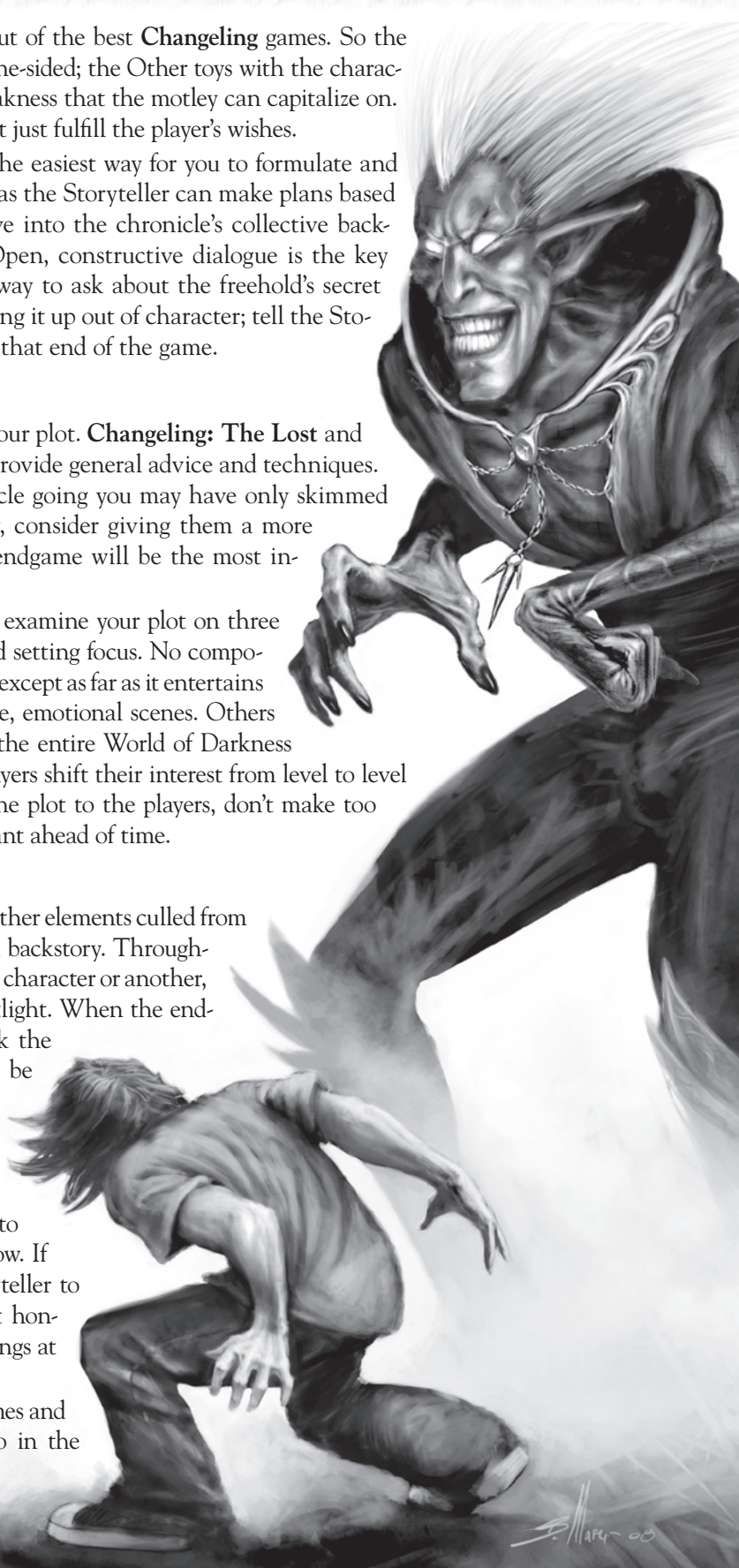
Theme and background inform your plot. **Changeling: The Lost** and **The World of Darkness** core books provide general advice and techniques. In the excitement to get your chronicle going you may have only skimmed these sections; if you haven't already, consider giving them a more thorough reading now, because the endgame will be the most intense part of your chronicle.

To give your game an epic scope, examine your plot on three levels: character focus, group focus and setting focus. No component is more important than any other except as far as it entertains the players. Some people love intimate, emotional scenes. Others want to witness history and see how the entire World of Darkness responds to chronicle events. Most players shift their interest from level to level though, so while you want to tailor the plot to the players, don't make too many assumptions about what they want ahead of time.

### Character Focus

A plot's character focus brings together elements culled from one protagonist's personal themes and backstory. Throughout the chronicle, scenes zero in on one character or another, giving each one a moment in the spotlight. When the endgame examines an individual, unpack the entire dramatic arsenal. There won't be another chance to explore the character during the chronicle, so don't hold back. It's also time to redress imbalanced character focus. Does one player constantly miss a chance to be the center of attention? Fix that now. If you're playing, don't rely on the Storyteller to make it happen, either. Talk about it honestly and don't be afraid to arrange things at the "meta-game" level.

Make time to reveal character themes and backgrounds. This is often hard to do in the chronicle's climax because in that one,





## The Chosen One

The “chosen one” is an old epic fantasy tradition. He’s the messiah, true king — the character upon whose shoulders rests the fate of the world. This isn’t an easy concept to apply to a roleplaying game and shouldn’t be; a chronicle is about the group. Storytelling games look to literature and film for ideas but they’re really their own art form. That means you can’t lift a single-character focus directly from the source material because it pushes everyone else to the sidelines.

You can use the chosen one, as long as the other characters are just as important, even if they aren’t celebrated in prophecy. If the chosen one’s destiny depends on learning certain skills and secrets, make the other characters teach them. If there’s a prophecy, make sure that every character has a role to play. The chosen one is a pivotal figure but can’t walk the path laid out for him until it’s been prepared for him.

You can give the chosen one a twist, too. What if he’s fated to do horrible things? What if he’s destined to die at the hands of a friend? Add burdens commensurate with the character’s mythic status, or give him a power to fail and destroy that’s as dramatically potent as any anticipated success.

extreme action-packed moment, you want events to have as broad an appeal as possible. Failing that, look for time in the denouement or during the lull before the climax.

Character journals (or “blue books”) are a time-honored, effective technique for exploring individuals in the midst of a group storyline. Nowadays, you can use Internet forum posts, electronic documents and blog entries. Aside from the fun of sharing your character’s point of view with the world, it’s easy for the Storyteller and other players to write responses and comments. This promotes your entries from being side fiction to a fully integrated part of the game, and allows you to play through interactive stories between game sessions. Your group can even designate a period of in-chronicle time where journal-based events happen.

**Example:** *Szandor sees a second moon in the sky and knows this means that Arcadia and Earth have merged at last, in a conflagration that will see the dominance of*

*one world, or the other. The Five Kings have promised to assemble and defend humanity, but that won’t happen for three days. His motley decides to deal with personal matters first. In other words, the players devote three in-game days to an individual focus. Two other players decide to run live scenes with the Storyteller, but Szandor’s player uses the time to write a journal entry about visiting his estranged wife. He doesn’t know that she always knew Szandor’s fetch wasn’t really him, but Szandor believed she loved his copy more than the twisted thing that returned, and is set to forgive her in aloof, measured tones. So when his player posts this event, the Storyteller responds as his wife, bringing that revelation to his individual story.*

## Group Focus

Storytellers naturally emphasize a chronicle’s group-focused aspects. This fosters cooperation and keeps stories from getting stuck on one protagonist. The classic roleplaying story revolves around the ensemble; your finale should present it at its finest.

One of the best ways to do this is to look back at the motley’s history. Note important accomplishments. It might have founded a freehold or defeated a powerful enemy. One thing groups can do to develop a shared identity is to explicitly list these events. Write down your awkward first meeting, the court appearance that forged you into a new motley and every other story event that transformed you into a strong group, fit to confront the final days of your chronicle. You can use journaling here, too. Jot down entries about the motley’s accomplishments as they happen.

An appealing endgame builds on the group’s history and interests. Storytellers are often tempted to start major events in a remote corner of the World of Darkness, where they can dictate exactly what happens. If you want to make the players care, don’t reveal the Perilous Gate in the Storyteller-controlled Toronto freehold. Bring it to their hometown, especially places where they’ve come to know the neighborhood. The **World of Darkness** games emphasize a detailed local setting. Over time, players get used to visiting particular places and talking to regular Storyteller characters. In the endgame, you don’t have to hold anyone or anything in reserve for future games. The changeling who claims the north end of town doesn’t need to be kept safe so that you can use him again. Kill him, put him under the thumb of a Fae lord — whatever you do, you don’t have to moderate events for fear of wrecking the next chapter.

The tradeoff for a local focus is that the Storyteller needs to give up some control. It’s easy to use that Toronto freehold to introduce exactly what you want. Nobody



over there is going to save people who are supposed to die or solve a mystery too quickly. You could ensure that critical scenes have the same fallout no matter what the players do. They save the guy you'd planned to kill after he shares some vital bit of information, but saving him doesn't reveal *more* information. The problem with this approach, however, is that it deprives players of the sense that they're effective participants in the story. Instead, develop a ladder of events that build on each other. As characters succeed, they get access to the higher tiers of the ladder: better information, material rewards and so forth.

**Example:** *Malcolm asks the players for a summary of the things his players believe define them as a group. They remember the time they stood up to the bullying Lord Tothman when he threatened Tara's character Esme in court. They also remember saving five missing Lost from a corporation that wanted to harvest changeling organs.*

*These are great starting points. Malcolm wants to introduce a power that can "cure" changelings. He goes back to the corporate plot and decides the same company — the shadowy Cheiron Group — developed the drug. Naturally, Lord Tothman was one of their first experimental subjects. The freehold suspects the players' motley is responsible for his disappearance. The characters investigate to clear their name and find the once-mighty Summer lord in a homeless shelter, reduced to pure mortality, with few memories of who he was or what happened to him. After a difficult dream quest, the characters rehabilitate his mind, but not his powers.*

*Malcolm is prepared for this eventuality. He's set up this hierarchy of results:*

1. The motley gets some unreliable information about a medical procedure.
2. The motley learns that changelings are being drugged in a building on the waterfront. After that, they're no longer Lost.
3. There's physical evidence: a crumpled folder with the names of the scientists and the "Anomalous Factor" that both advises them and provides a crucial component for the cure.

The motley's actions rate a 2 on the scale, but Malcolm decides that with a little effort, the motley could win a rank 3 result. Tothman ripped off some papers when he escaped and left the folder where he thought it couldn't be found, but Cheiron agents are on its trail. Thus begins an endgame where a powerful entity (the Anomalous Factor — really an "anti-Fae" creature who escaped his Earthly prison) threatens to destroy the Lost forever.





## Setting Focus

Endgames are unique in that you don't have to worry about sticking to chronicle basics. Put Lost magic on network television or destroy Arcadia if you want; you can make any change without worrying about long-term consequences. At the same time, the fact that nobody's going to play it again means that the fallout from an event won't always be the thing that captures players' interest. They're not going to see the aftermath so they won't necessarily be as invested in it. An effective finale builds on the chronicle's total history to attract committed play. An engaging endgame feels like it sums up the entire chronicle.

To make that happen you need to give **Changeling** a dynamic, progressive setting. The books are a snapshot: a still moment of things as they are at the start of the chronicle (not counting your house rules and setting changes, of course). The World of Darkness is always changing, however and the protagonists aren't responsible for every new development. Gentry rise and fall on the winds of immortal politics. Distant freeholds change leaders, monsters find new lairs — it's a busy world out there. Some people call this continuing story the *meta-plot*. It's a potent way to set up your endgame but it needs to be designed carefully, lest it alienate the players.

The best way to do this is to design setting changes in discrete chunks that play across a session or chapter. Character actions trigger each event but they aren't necessarily responsible for them — a distinction we'll talk about shortly. Design the event and note possible triggers. Perhaps the players' motley has a ripple effect on Lost culture. The players' changelings defeat the Huntsman and prove that one of the Gentry *can* be beaten. Word spreads through freeholds worldwide and they begin to actively campaign against the Fae. Some dare the gates of Arcadia and lay the groundwork for a final battle.

You don't have to attribute *every* major event to the characters. Use your group's exploits as a symbolic inspiration instead. There's no direct causal link in the plot, but the Storyteller assumes that the players' motley represents the changeling zeitgeist. This technique keeps the world's vast scope while subtly reinforcing the protagonists' special place. They're not the only actors in the chronicle, but it moves to their rhythm nonetheless. Perhaps a victory over the Huntsman doesn't inspire changelings far and wide, but it's part of a new era, where even Winter courtiers might dream of defeating the Others. The players control one fighting motley among many.

## Big Crossover

Your endgame is an opportunity to explore the ultimate truths of your World of Darkness. You can definitively state whether mages and changelings are talking about the same Arcadia or if vampires are a corrupt Fae creation. You don't have to worry about the possibility of player-run vampires and mages coming up in future stories set in this iteration of your World of Darkness, so you can run roughshod over those games without consequence. (If they matter at all to you, of course.)

Make these connections serve the plot. The players aren't there to listen to you hold forth on the secret metaphysics of the World of Darkness. They want to explore the world through a story, so big ideas have to matter to the story at hand. Nobody cares if mages really get their powers from stealing part of a True Fae's soul. They *do* care if one day, every soul shard takes over its wielder, making them puppets of the Gentry.

This assumes that your game is focused in **Changeling: The Lost** and doesn't feature protagonists from the other game lines. If you're running a true crossover chronicle where (for instance) a vampire, hunter and changeling get together to resist supernatural evil, you'll need to be more evenhanded. The first thing to do is consult the players. How important is each line's "canon" to their play experience? Some players are open-minded about this kind of thing, but a few will want to keep each line in its own safe harbor. If a vampire's player wants to study Kindred origins without encountering the slightest whiff of Fae involvement, respect that and stick to **Vampire: The Requiem** for inspiration.

Setting-scale plotlines emphasize a larger, ever-changing World of Darkness, so they're especially important when your finale hangs the world in the balance, but they also serve some practical ends. Major events allow you to tweak your game's setting and rules without forcing players to make new characters or accept retroactive continuity. Instead of asking players to pretend that there's always been a Court of Thunder, or that Contracts have always worked according



to your house rules, story events create these changes, but leave previous chapters intact. In the endgame, you can also change the rules for dramatic effect. See *Changing the Rules*, below, for more about this subject.

**Example:** *Malcolm designs two events to set up his endgame. First, he decides that the Seasonal Courts were created with the help of the True Fae in exchange for a secret debt that comes due at the end of days — at the end of the chronicle, in fact. The Court founders deferred payment by allowing the Gentry to take slaves according to long-standing traditional agreements, but these have fallen by the wayside. Once the last such conspiracy falls, the balance of the debt — thousands of human souls — must be paid in full. Consequently, Malcolm decides that when the players' motley destroys a conspiracy to take children to Arcadia, that ended the last traditional slaving pact. The Gentry send hunting parties to kill Court-affiliated changelings.*

*Malcolm wants to make the story a bit subtler after this burst of action, so he decides that if the motley fends off the initial attack they're part of a broad trend. Lost around the world successfully defend themselves. This triggers the next event, as the four Pitiless Factors who are responsible for claiming payment set up conspiracies around the world. Instead of striking directly, the Factors use work through worldly agents. The Pitiless Factors will eventually take over entire cultures, touching off a finale where the motley leads the resistance against a Fae-ruled Earth.*

## DRAMATIC TOOLS

Storytellers can use a number of other techniques to enhance the endgame. We methodically explored elements of the finale before, but now we're going to get a bit scattershot. Real chronicles aren't neat and tidy conceptual machines that output conventional plots. They veer from horror to humor with a sentence. Climaxes stretch over a dozen sessions or fly by in the blink of an eye. Storytelling (and play) is a balancing act between adhering to the patterns that inspire us (like movies and books) and embracing the special aspects of the roleplaying form. You need dynamic tools to do this well, without waiting for the moments ordained by source literature or a Storyteller's notes. So instead of linking the following methods to any larger structure, apply them as needed.

### CHANGING THE RULES

We've emphasized that the endgame gives you a chance to open up previously inviolable parts of the game to advance the story. Nothing's sacred, really, but we're not always eager to alter **Changeling's** core ideas without a good reason, or without carefully considering the consequences. The finale lets us discard the usual

caution and make big changes. We don't have to account for long term play any more and we have a strong incentive to take radical steps, because the endgame is a potent enough story event to justify more extreme Storytelling methods. Changing the rules is one of these. In the finale, we can tweak the rules above and beyond what we'd need to run a custom, long term **Changeling** game. New rules represent a shift in the Wyrld, an overriding theme or some other sign that the end is nigh.

New rules might reflect as real changes in the setting. Suddenly, every changeling gains a dot of Wyrld because Arcadia creeps closer to the mortal world. Contracts are unraveling, so their users can "bid" for more power than usual by scoring an exceptional success — or pay a horrible price when the dice go sour. Players usually recognize these as important signs that the chronicle's entered a new phase. The rules are, after all, tools for putting the players' their stamp on the story. If their characters notice these changes, the result could be anything from social upheaval to the rise of a powerful, protagonist-led conspiracy to exploit the new order of things. The laws of Faerie magic are breaking out of their ancient routines — the *Lost* *must* take notice.

On the other hand, you might change the rules just to give part of your story a certain feel. These systems don't come into being because of setting events. Apply them as a narrative device to give scenes a certain emphasis. For example, if you want to guide the story toward scenes full of cinematic violence, you might give minor antagonists fewer Health points or enable the use of Fate points (see p. 130). The Narrative Seasons below are one way to apply these ideas.

### NARRATIVE SEASONS

Narrative Seasons are scene templates. They add particular rules to the game to tweak its feel. These need not be permanent; apply them to your story for a scene, session, chapter — whatever fits the moment. You don't need an in-chronicle rationale for them, but apply one if you like. Perhaps each Court's power intensifies in the last year of the world, and the Wyrld twists events to comply with the spirit of each passing season. Naturally, you can use other Courts as models to develop your own Narrative Seasons. Just look at the Court's theme and choose systems that support it.

**Spring:** Narrative Spring focuses on intrigue and social conflict. While this template applies, social rolls tend to have extreme results. Social dice pools always have the 9-again quality, but if a social roll fails and scores at least a single 1 on the dice, the character suffers a Dramatic Failure.



During Spring play, players use social dice pools to seize powerful advantages over their rivals. If the roll succeeds, the victim suffers a penalty to dice pools associated with one particular Attribute (such as Strength or Resolve) for one roll per dot of the “attacker’s” Wyrð (or in crossover games, another supernatural trait), unless the victim performs a scene-length task of the attacker’s choosing, stated at the time of the roll. In Narrative Spring, a changeling can weaken a giant warrior with a clever word.

**Summer:** In the season of Wrath, violence and action take center stage. Physical dice pools gain the 9-again quality, but if the roll fails and scores at least a single 1 on the dice, the character suffers a Dramatic Failure.

Mundane humans with Attribute + Attribute or Attribute + Skill dice pools of 7 or less fall before the wrath of supernatural demigods. They don’t have Defense scores. As long as they’re visible, attackers never suffer ranged dice pool penalties to hit them. Don’t add a species factor bonus to these “spear carriers” Health.

Supernatural characters are actually harder to kill. Even after suffering fatal injuries, any supernatural combatant lasts until the end of a scene unless an enemy delivers one additional blow (a “coup de grace”). 0 Health characters who survive the scene can be saved with first-aid if it’s administered immediately. This benefit doesn’t apply to environmental hazards or large scale devastation unless the Storyteller allows it.

**Autumn:** Autumn favors magic and sorcery. Supernatural power dice pools gain the 9-again quality, but if the roll fails and scores at least a single 1 on the dice, the character suffers a dramatic failure.

Every character can collect mystical secrets — up to one per dot of Wyrð — and may redeem them for a single use of any Contract or enhanced ability with a single Contract on a one point per dot basis. For instance, a character with one secret can either raise his Eternal Autumn dots from two to three to use the higher rank once, or temporarily employ the first dot of Contracts of Stone. He can’t cash in more secrets on a single action than the lower of his Resolve or Composure.

The Storyteller makes these secrets available in play; she either keys them to particular Contracts or lets them apply to any one, provided the player narrates a connection between the secret and the power he wants to employ. For example, his character might know the secret name of an old building, giving him enhanced power whenever he acts inside that building.

In crossover games, other supernatural beings might have a similar ability to collect secrets — and even normal humans might be able to employ certain powers.

**Winter:** Winter is a season of cold-blooded stratagems. Mental dice pools always have the 9-again





quality, but if the roll fails and scores at least a single 1 on the dice, the character suffers a dramatic failure.

In Winter stories, all characters can compose special plans. To do so, the character needs to successfully research a subject or learn a secret about it. She learns the weak points in a noble school of fencing, finds a loophole in freehold law or learns an infiltration tactic from an old soldier. If her investigation succeeds, the player then rolls a relevant dice pool based on a Mental Attribute — Wits + Weaponry for the fencing style, for instance, or Intelligence + Academics to exploit the law. If she succeeds, her character adds the rote quality (roll failed dice again) to all dice rolls related to the subject matter, up to one roll per success. Characters can hold a number of running plans equal to their lowest Mental Attribute in reserve.

## THE EPIC TROUPE

An epic troupe is one way to make your World of Darkness feel like a vast, lively environment. It's an extension of the classic troupe concept. In a traditional troupe, players create one primary and one supporting character, along with a host of minor roles. In a **Changeling** game, the primary character would be one of the Lost. Secondary characters would be competent Retainers and might have some minor supernatural powers. Minor characters are normal humans: the type of people that might be part of a main character's Allies Merit.

Instead of bringing every primary character to the session, one or two troupe players portray their main characters. The rest play supporting or minor characters. The story focuses on a few main characters but players of supporting or minor characters enjoy the freedom to take bigger risks, because even if something horrible happens to whoever they're currently playing, their primary characters are safe and ready for another session.

Epic troupes take this concept to the next level. Every player creates a standard changeling protagonist and a number of alternate characters who provide different perspectives on the overarching story. Alternate characters belong to different functional categories, selected for the distinct roles they bring to the story. This works well in high-stakes chronicles, because their events can entangle hundreds or even thousands of people. The Storyteller gives the entire cast of characters a common narrative thread. In fiction, you can see this method working in Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, where parallel stories follow people who share the same street corner or another casual connection, but don't have close ties with the central protagonists.

An epic troupe chronicle switches between character categories every chapter, story or session, and occasionally segues into a mixed group, drawn from several categories. Players might choose their favorites out of the lot for the chronicle's climax, or play through several perspectives. If the Gentry invade on dragon-back, players see it happen through the eyes of embattled changeling lords, allied Hedge wizards, local cops — perhaps even the Fae themselves. This is an advanced play style, however, because the players need to track each character's knowledge separately and should avoid directing them all toward a common goal. Players must be willing to let their characters be played by the Storyteller from time to time; inevitably, a scene will call on two characters who have the same player — and talking to yourself is just awkward.

Here are the basic character categories for an epic troupe game. Use whichever ones you like or invent your own instead, but what you see below should serve as a starting point.

**Main:** This category includes the standard players' motley as detailed in **Changeling: The Lost**. It's self-explanatory, save that not every changeling may appear at the same time. Players, decide how your main characters would use the time between appearances. Journals can be useful here.

**Divine:** These are True Fae or other powerful, hidden actors. This gives the player an insight into the secrets at the core of the chronicle. Divine characters initiate the action and comment on events as they transpire, but don't meddle in the affairs of "inferiors" so often as to trivialize what everyone else is doing.

Players don't normally know everything a divine figure is thinking or doing, even while they play them. Storytellers provide just enough information to start the story off and give the players what they need to make decisions. Divine beings also make broad choices that might play out in a number of ways; they don't micromanage the plot. For instance, you might start your game with a council of Fair Folk. The Storyteller tells the players that their Gentry have been searching for a certain human being. She's "hidden to the Wyrd," so the Fae must use intermediaries to find her. In their divine roles, the players cement alliances and start planning. The Storyteller uses the results to structure his chronicle and generate foreshadowing. He works out the fine details, like who the Gentry's minions are and why that human is so important. He might surprise the very people who created the plot.

**Alternate:** Alternates are changelings (and perhaps, other supernatural beings) who are less important



to the story than the main characters, but might appear in vignettes to explore a situation from another perspective. Storytellers can wreak havoc on alternates' lives to emphasize how important the story is, or give them information that the main characters need, but can't get themselves, or would enrich the chronicle from an audience perspective, even if it doesn't tell the main characters anything new. While the main characters explore courtly intrigue for the throne of Miami, alternates in the Sahara dig up a powerful artifact that will influence that struggle for the crown. Alternates contract a hideous Wyrd disease; main characters look for the cure.

Like divine figures, you don't need to know everything alternates know to play them. The motley finds the ancient artifact but the perspective shifts to the main characters just before the scene that would reveal its secrets. Sometimes, however, players get just as interested in the exploits of the alternates as they do about those of the main characters. As a result, you might play two groups of main characters, picking the best from both motleys to participate in the climax.

**Supporting:** Supporting characters have been initiated into the world of the Lost, but they aren't changelings themselves. They might serve them, hunt them or investigate them for a secret society. These characters aren't as powerful as the primary protagonists but they're still competent. The ensorcelled are the most obvious characters to fill this role. They might have special expertise, great wealth or minor supernatural powers. **World of Darkness: Second Sight** includes the minor abilities they might have, but you can also start them off with powerful pledges or even a few dots in one or two Contracts.

Some supporting characters accompany the main characters and others dog their heels, but no matter the connection, it puts them in the path of major story events. Supporting characters uncover secrets with their determination, abilities, and special place in the supernatural world. They know enough about the World of Darkness to make connections, but not so much that they're consumed by the perspective of a particular faction. Use them to reveal new information and bridge mundane and supernatural outlooks.

**Minor:** It's a big world; lots of people live in it. Some minor characters know about the supernatural and some don't, but they all provide a "man on the street point of view." They're ordinary people, or were before the plot pulled them into Wyrd-touched events. When your game's consumed with freeholds and changeling rivalries, pulling back to mundane life

underscores the wonder and horror of the setting. If dragons invade Miami, your changelings will recognize Arcadia's gambit and take a stand, but for mortals, it's about surviving an inexplicable disaster. Their eyes reveal that an epic endgame changes the world from the ground up. Plus, of course, they make great victims. Play them to the point of death or madness to get a grip on how dangerous an antagonist really is.

Unique game traits aren't important. You can use the abbreviated, non-combatant format in most cases, or assign a standard "average person" sheet with a dot or two left for customization. Their life stories make them important and not just because they've encountered Faerie. Their normal lives are worth cherishing and protecting. Explore their jobs, family ties and passions. Make them complex figures so that their helplessness arouses compassion and their heroism inspires respect.

### *Troupe Experience*

Epic troupes divide attention between multiple characters, so awarding experience points can be a tricky thing. If you hand out standard awards to characters as they appear you'll have to deal with slow advancement.

Instead, consider awarding experience to the player, not the character. Multiply the standard award by the number of characters he'll regularly play. Storytellers might want to drop this final number a touch to represent the uneven importance of different character types (main characters should be the prime recipients). Main, alternate and supporting characters usually advance, but divine figures and minor characters rarely do so. Players give each character one point per session, but they can divide the remainder as they see fit.

You can also award experience in "pulses:" large, infrequent grants. This has the advantage of mimicking character maturity in other media, where ability rarely rises in fine increments. Award a new pulse every time the focus switches to a new character group. Limit players to one or two new dots per trait after each award. This keeps them from dumping the entire award into a single game trait.



# CROSSOVER: THE LOST AND THE WORLD OF DARKNESS

A question that naturally arises in any World of Darkness chronicle is: how might one supernatural “race” interact with the others? What would a changeling have to say to a vampire? Would a werewolf and a Hunterheart hate each other on sight, or find some common ground? How would a changeling view a Promethean — a beacon of hope, or no better than a fetch?

As a **Changeling** chronicle approaches its conclusion, and the horizons of that chronicle broaden somewhat, the Storyteller and the players might be interested in including some of these creatures, and, more to the point, their societies. A werewolf on its own is an interesting and probably frightening creature, even for the Lost, but if a motley meets a pack and learns something about the Tribes of the Moon and the battle against the Pure, that motley can get a sense of exactly how little it knows about the World of Darkness. This can actually be a message of hope for the fae — look how much of the supernatural is untouched by the Gentry!

This section discusses crossing **Changeling: The Lost** with the other World of Darkness game lines. At present, six such lines (including **Changeling**) have been published. The sidebar names each (except for **Changeling**, which we assume you have already read) and presents some of the specific terminology, just so Storytellers who might not have access to all of the relevant core books at least have some context.

## THEORY: WHY CROSSOVER?

**Equinox Road** focuses on the end of a **Changeling** chronicle, and therefore the crossover rules and notes presented here deal with changelings’ interaction with other supernatural beings as they relate to the chronicle’s end. The truth is that examining crossover without this kind of strong focus is difficult, because each of the World of Darkness games is broad in scope. Why would a motley of changelings and a cabal

of mages interact? The question almost stifles discussion, because there are so many reasons why such interaction is possible. We examine, therefore, bringing changelings into the larger World of Darkness at the culmination of a chronicle.

## THEME DILUTION

One of the occasional arguments against mixing characters from the various World of Darkness games is that the themes of those games are different. That is, while the mechanics of combat (for instance) are the same in both **Changeling** and **Werewolf**, combat *means* something different in those games. Werewolves fight with tooth and claw just to make a point. For changelings, a fight might just be a brawl, but could also be a matter of honor or survival, and in any case it isn’t taken lightly. Likewise, **Vampire** and **Changeling** are both highly political games, but the themes of the former game make lying and cheating much more likely than in the latter (where breaking an oath is a much more important thing).

What this means for the Storyteller is that when you plan a crossover story, find where the themes of the games intersect with the themes of your chronicle, and highlight those areas, rather than trying to figure out all of the pitfalls of mixing the characters. Likewise, remember that a changeling doesn’t know much (or anything) about the vampires of **Requiem**, and so won’t immediately shun, say, a Ventrue because of their propensity toward madness. A major theme of any crossover story should be the exploration of forbidden and dangerous secrets — which is a theme appropriate for *any* World of Darkness game.

## VAMPIRE: THE REQUIEM

It might be tempting to compare changelings to vampires, in a way. Changelings, after all, feed from human emotion — is this not an analog to the vampire’s thirst for blood? It’s a false comparison, though, because the human doesn’t lose anything when the changeling absorbs emotion. Indeed, most people nev-



## *The Denizens of the World of Darkness*

**Vampire: The Requiem:** Vampires refer to themselves as *Kindred*. All vampires belong to one of five different *clans*, which determine what supernatural powers they wield and some of their weaknesses. Many vampires also belong to *covenants*, organizations that fill the roles of religions, political parties and secret societies. Small groups of vampires band together into coteries.

**Werewolf: The Forsaken:** Werewolves are born to human parents, but undergo a First Change some time during their lives, at which point they discover their savage heritage. Werewolves refer to themselves as *Uratha* in their own language, or sometimes as *Forsaken* (those who ally themselves with Luna, the spirit of the moon) or *Pure* (brutal, vicious werewolves who make war on their lunar cousins). Forsaken werewolves take social roles called *auspices*, based on what phase of the moon they first Changed under, and many join *tribes* that provide training and support. The basic unit of werewolf existence, though, is the pack.

**Mage: The Awakening:** Mages are human beings who Awaken to mystical Supernal Realms and work their arcane powers through a connection to these places. Every mage walks a *Path*, depending on which Realm she Awakened to, and some join one of five *orders*, ancient fellowships that stretch back to a forgotten city of antiquity. A group of mages is called a cabal, while a local organization, usually composed of multiple cabals, is called a Consilium. As a special note, one of the five Supernal Realms that mages can Awaken to is called Arcadia. The relationship between this Realm and Faerie is discussed later in this section.

**Promethean: The Created:** Prometheans, sometimes called the Created, are living beings made of unliving flesh. Like the Golem of Hebrew legend or Dr. Frankenstein's monster, these creatures are powerful, despised by humanity, and extremely rare. This is, well, because Prometheans bring out the worst in people. Close proximity to Prometheans makes others suspicious, angry, jealous and spiteful — and all of this ill will is focused squarely on the Promethean. Each Promethean walks a Pilgrimage, hoping to find the secret of Mortality, and sometimes these beings are lucky enough to find others of their kind and band together into a throng. Prometheans descend from one of several *Lineages*, based on the first of that particular "family" to gain sentience. A Promethean's approach to his Pilgrimage is called a *Refinement*, and this approach can (and usually does) change several times before the creature finds Mortality.

**Hunter: The Vigil:** Hunters aren't supernatural beings, per se. Rather, they are human beings who have chosen or been chosen to protect humanity from the supernatural. Hunters are often obsessive and zealous, and over time can even appear quite insane (provided they survive their avocation long enough). Some hunters belong to *compacts* or *conspiracies*, organizations that can provide access to weapons, training and personnel to facilitate the Vigil. Some hunters band together into local groups, scrounging whatever they can. And some face the darkness alone.

er know that a changeling has been nearby, soaking up their desire, rage, fear or sorrow.

Vampires are the unnatural prolongation of human existence. That is, a vampire is dead. A changeling has returned from something like death (the duration) and begun life anew. Vampires and changelings both have strange relationships with time, vampires because time spent in torpor causes them to lose memory, and changelings (of course) due to their long stints in Arcadia. Interaction between the two at the end of the chronicle, then, might come from the changelings needing to learn something about their own pasts and

appealing to the sympathy of a vampire who can never recapture his mortal life.

Another possibility, of course, is that vampirism could be cured by a trip to Faerie. In Arcadia, a changeling might be able to forge a new Contract (as detailed in Chapter One) allowing her to return a vampire to mortality. Of course, that would then require getting *out* of Faerie and back to the mortal world again, but since such a story would be a quest to return from the dead, there's no reason it should be easy! (Certainly one of the major themes of **Vampire** focuses on the explicit lack of a cure for vampirism, so definitely check



with your players first; they might not enjoy such a thing being genuinely possible.)

## CONCERNS

Vampires are probably the most limited of the major supernatural character types, in terms of mobility. They suffer aggravated damage from sunlight, after all, which means that a few minutes in the sun destroys them. Likewise, vampires must feed on fresh blood at least every week or so, and since they use blood (called *Vitae*) like changelings use *Glamour*, most of the undead feed nightly. In a modern city, these obstacles aren't difficult to overcome — every city has a nightlife, and with that nightlife comes people to feed from. But in the Hedge, with no people around (other than the changelings, who might well start looking tasty after a while) and no easy shelter from the sun, logistical concerns become paramount.

Some vampires can feed on animals, but more powerful ones can't. Hobgoblins, however, aren't precisely animals, and so the Storyteller might allow a vampire to take blood from such a creature, provided the intended hobgoblin can be caught. The Damned can, of course, feed from changelings, meaning that any enemies the group encounters on the trip are probably forfeit to the vampire's hunger.

Sunlight is another issue. It's possible to view a trip through the Hedge as an extended journey into the wilderness, and plan accordingly. A light-proof container of some kind can protect the vampire during the day, but the group should be wary of traveling through the Hedge only at night. It's possible for the vampire to sleep during the day while the group travels, perhaps in a cart liberated from the Goblin Market, and guard the rest of the group while they sleep once night falls. That does mean, though, that the group is trusting a hungry vampire to watch over them while they sleep. (And, from a game-play perspective, it means that the vampire is always alone.)

Some trods through the Hedge, though, are never lit by sunlight. These Nighted Trods take travelers through dense underbrush, through caverns, and under rocky outcroppings. The sun is sometimes visible, but light never touches the path. Finding a Nighted Trod would enable a vampire (or several) to stay active — provided that he can resist the daysleep.

## MECHANICS

For the most part, a vampire's Disciplines work normally in the Hedge. Changelings are susceptible to Disciplines just as supernatural beings normally are (that

is, they add their Wyrds ratings to resistance rolls, etc.). Hobgoblins, however, are a slightly different case.

Some hobgoblins can be affected by the Animalism Discipline, while others are only affected by the "higher functioning" powers of Dominate. The Storyteller needs to make that decision on a case by case basis, and unfortunately, there's no way for a vampire to tell until he tries it. After some time in the Hedge (and a few mishaps, probably) the vampire's player might be allowed a Wits + Animal Ken or Occult roll to determine at a glance if a given creature operates on a human (or human-like) level of cognition.

Vampires cannot eat food, and so cannot usually partake of goblin fruits (though there is always the possibility of something like bloodroot, as mentioned on p. 250 of **Changeling: The Lost**). But some of the animals in the Hedge have mystical properties to their blood, and the vampire is uniquely suited to discovering these properties. In game terms, the possibility of having such animals gives the Storyteller a way to allow vampire characters all the fun of guessing whether a given goblin fruit is going to be beneficial or deadly in the long run, and to give the vampire a way to interact with the Hedge a bit more directly.

Remember that stepping off the thorns doesn't strip a vampire's Morality (called Humanity), but it does sap her blood as the thorns slice her flesh open. This is described on p. 222 of **Changeling: The Lost**.

## WEREWOLF: THE FORSAKEN

A question that the Lost occasionally raise is: why don't the Gentry steal other supernatural beings? Surely they'd make for more interesting pets than humans. But that makes a number of assumptions, one of which is that the Others *can* steal such beings. Perhaps they have bargains with the supernatural that prohibit it, after all.

Changelings that have seen packs of werewolves hunt offer another explanation — the Others don't want such creatures near them, and understandably so. Werewolves are vicious hunters and killers, barely contained on the best of days, and they take very poorly to being used, chained or controlled. Werewolves travel in packs, and to offend one werewolf is to draw down the pack's ire. But still, rumors persist of Gentry accompanied by huge, slaving wolves with silver collars. Are these hapless monsters fae hounds, or hobgoblins tamed by the Others? Or were they born human, changed under Luna's light, and subsequently captured by the Gentry?





Werewolves might accompany changelings into the Hedge to rescue a pack member, or to retrieve a family member (a wolf-blood) who has been captured by the Gentry. Not all Uratha care about their human family, but many do, and a great number of them would find the notion of anyone carrying Father Wolf's blood being enslaved to be unacceptable. Beyond that, however, it's possible that a pack of werewolves might chase their quarry into the Hedge and be unable to leave while he still lives. Consider: the Hedge is psychoactive, and the reason that the Lost can find their way out is because of some strong memory, some image powerful enough to act as a guide. If the werewolves are so focused on their quarry, no path will lead them out of the Hedge (unless the quarry leaves).

### CONCERNS

Changelings don't have much truck with spirits, but werewolves are just as much spirit as they are flesh. This protects them in the Hedge to a large degree; their Morality is safe from the mind-altering effects of the Hedge because they, like changelings, are focused on balancing one side of themselves with the other (spirit and flesh, in this case). The thorns don't strip away this Morality (called Harmony) because the Hedge has no power to do so — their souls are already marked by a higher power, Mother Luna.

The problem, though, is that a werewolf in the Hedge is badly out of his element. The Hedge isn't like the spirit wilds, and hobgoblins aren't the Jagglings and Gafflings they are used to. Acquiring Essence is difficult, because spirits don't respond to rites in the Hedge. Indeed, there is no Gauntlet in the Hedge, and Gifts like Two-World Eyes and Read Spirit that involve looking past the Gauntlet or getting direct advice from a spirit simply don't function. A pack of werewolves retains its totem bonuses, and a totem spirit can accompany a pack into the Hedge, but the spirit becomes immediately Materialized (whether or not it knows the Numen) and is vulnerable to physical attacks as long as it remains in the Hedge.

Note, too, that werewolves run an increased risk of Death Rage while in the Hedge (see p. 222 of *Changeling: The Lost*).

### MECHANICS

Gifts, for the most part, function in the Hedge, subject to the restriction listed above. Spirits don't venture into the Hedge — the Hedge is a barrier between Earth and Faerie, and the spirit world has no dominion here. A spirit forced or tricked into the Hedge Materializes, and over time, Glamour can replace ephemera, making the spirit into a hobgoblin (indeed, some theorize that this is



how the Hedge become “populated” in the first place). A spirit bound into a fetish is safe from this effect.

Rites, like Gifts, only work if they don't rely on direct intercession from a spirit. As such, Shared Scent works in the Hedge, but Blessing of the Spirit Hunt does not. Gifts that affect animals, such as Beast Speech, are subject to the same restrictions as the Animalism Discipline mentioned above — they only work if the hobgoblin in question is truly animalistic in nature.

Werewolves can eat changelings for Essence (and, of course, face the same possibility of Harmony loss as for eating people), but derive no such empowerment from hobgoblins, no matter how human- or wolf-like they might seem.

## MAGE: THE AWAKENING

The burning question for enthusiasts of both **Mage** and **Changeling** is, of course, whether Arcadia refers to the Supernal Realm to which Acanthus mages Awaken, the surreal nightmare-paradise of the Gentry, or both. This question is explored in greater detail below. Our initial discussion of mages focuses on why a mage, or a cabal, might choose to accompany changelings into the Hedge.

Discovery, of course, is one possible motive. Mages are driven by, among other things, a lust for knowledge, secrets and the power that these things can bring. Learning about the forbidden realm of the Fae would fill volumes, and there are certainly scholars among the Awakened who would love to be the ones holding the pens. Naturally, wise mages would balk at this fact-finding trip if they knew all the facts, but a motley of changelings that just wants some cannonfodder might not bother with full disclosure.

Revenge is another likely spur for mages. A mage might lose a loved one to the Others, or even to the Lost, and follow that fell creature back through a gateway. He might even see the gateway close as his lover, brother, or child is dragged off into the Thorns, and spend hours or days throwing every spell he knows at the doorway, trying to get it to open again. Mages are dangerous foes at the best of times, but when they have time to prepare their spells and research their foes, they can bring the wrath of the Supernal down — provided they can *find* their foes, of course.

The most important thing to remember about mages, though, is that they are human. Any motive that could conceivably be applied to a human being for entering the Hedge can be applied to the Awakened. A mage might wish to reclaim a loved one, to follow a

beautiful faerie back home, or to obtain immortality by making a deal with the Fae. She might be tricked into entering the Hedge (either by changelings or the Others), or stumble in by using a key.

## CONCERNS

Since mages are mortal, they must eat, drink and sleep. The Hedge can make these things difficult (though mages can, of course, compensate for these necessities with magic). Consuming goblin fruits has the same effect on mages as on changelings, and the Fae are just as likely to snatch up a mage in the Hedge as one of the Lost. The Thorns strip a mage of his soul, and thus his Wisdom, and without a soul he cannot perform magic.

## MECHANICS

Mages suffer the baleful effects of the Hedge just like mortals, barring the use of magic. But there's the rub — mages *do* use magic, and their magic can mitigate many of these effects.

The magic of **Mage: The Awakening** is dizzying in scope, and we can't hope to come up with every single possible scenario or spell that a **Mage** player will think of for his Hedge-bound character. All we can do is provide some of the theory behind our rulings on the matter, so as to provide the Storyteller with a foundation for making her own judgments.

- **Plant Life:** A mage might think to alter the plant life of the Hedge using Life magic. This can have positive results. For instance, the mage might wish to cause a tree to bear fruit, hopefully producing goblin fruits that allow for healing or some other beneficial effect. Fortunately, most plants in the Hedge act like normal vegetation (whether that's because they *are* normal vegetation or because they are just under Contract is another question). A Life spell using the Knowing practice might determine the effect of a goblin fruit (but remember that perception-based magic in the Hedge has a maximum dice pool of the mage's Wisdom; see p. 212 of **Changeling: The Lost**). A Perfecting Life spell could cause a few goblin fruits to blossom forth (one per success on the casting roll seems fair). Likewise, spells that change plant life into animals, matter, or energy work in the Hedge.

The barriers of the Hedge, though, are *not* plants, no matter how much they might resemble them. Life magic has no effect on the high Briars, on seaweed that delineates the paths of the seaside Hedge, of the mangroves of the Hedge near a swamp, or the dense thickets of the countryside Thorns.



• **Ingress and Egress:** It is impossible for mages to magically exit the Hedge, something that frustrates them to no end. Even a master of Space cannot open a portal out of the Hedge. A Shaman cannot step into the Shadow from the Hedge, nor can a mage use Death or Spirit magic to enter Twilight. Mages speculate as to why this is the case, but as with all things Fae, the answer lies in oaths.

Entering the Hedge is an oath. By entering, no matter *how* one enters, a person agrees to be bound by the laws of the Hedge. Among those laws is the promise only to leave through a proper gateway (that is, a doorway, mirror or other aperture made available to access the Hedge through Glamour, as described in **Changeling: The Lost**). The laws of the Supernal hold no sway over this agreement (and a good thing, too — if the laws of the Hedge were to be broken, what need would the Hedge serve? Arcadia might butt up against the mortal world in an instant, and all within the Hedge would be lost forever!). This does mean, though, that a mage can teleport *into* the Hedge, if he has the power to do so. Of course, finding a sympathetic connection into the Hedge might be difficult, but if the mage is following someone who was kidnapped, he might be able to use Space magic to locate the unfortunate. Any attempt to open a gateway into the Hedge is vulgar in aspect, and the player suffers a -2 penalty if the target is still within sight of the mortal world. This penalty increases to -3 if the target has turned her back on the mortal world and is well and truly ensconced in the Thorns, and the roll is automatically reduced to a chance dice if the target has left the path. If the target is in Arcadia, Space magic cannot find her from outside the Hedge.

Opening a gateway with magic is impossible unless the gateway has a key. If it does, the mage can, of course, use the key normally (more about keys can be found on p. 216 of **Changeling: The Lost**). Another option is to fool the Hedge into thinking the key has been fulfilled. This requires a Veiling Fate spell (similar to the Fate 3 “Fabricate Fortune” spell). This spell is considered vulgar in aspect. If the spell succeeds, the gateway opens for a number of turns equal to the caster’s successes.

Supernal magic cannot be used to create a gateway into the Hedge. Only Glamour can do this. If a mage could find a way to store or manipulate Glamour, it’s *possible* that he might be able to use it to open a gateway.

• **Hobgoblins:** Hobgoblins can be affected with Life and Mind magic as though they were animals, for the most part. As mentioned for the Animalism Dis-

cipline (p. 72), some hobgoblins are just as self-aware as human beings, and cannot be controlled by spells meant to work on lower beings. Spirit magic does *not* work on hobgoblins, as they are not spirits.

## ARCADIA: SUPERNAL REALM OR HOME OF THE GENTRY?

The important question is this: is the place that changelings call “Arcadia” the same place that mages refer to when they use the word? Do mages venture to Arcadia to Awaken, and are the strange creatures they glimpse there the Fae (or, perhaps, changelings-in-progress)?

There is no mandated “canon” answer to this question. The games are designed as if the two *could* be the same — that is, we’ve avoided material that would clearly prove that they aren’t, as well as concrete proof that they are — but the answer is something that every Storyteller needs to decide how, and whether, to answer. The latter issue, that of whether the question needs an answer at all, might be the most important. After all, if your chronicle never includes mages, you don’t have any call to consider where they go when they Awaken. (And, for any **Mage** Storyteller who’s picked up this book, the reverse is also true — if you aren’t dealing with the Lost, who cares where they come from?) But assuming that Acanthus mages and changelings might, in your chronicle, interact and that you need to figure out the metaphysics of venturing to “Arcadia,” you have two simple possibilities, each with a lot of potential in the details.

### Separate Realms

The first is that Supernal Arcadia and Fae Arcadia are different places. They are sufficiently similar that inhabitants of both are referred to as “fae” or “faeries,” but a person can’t find a Watchtower in Fae Arcadia and a changeling can’t reclaim his original soul by going to Supernal Arcadia. Acanthus mages might have an easier time detecting changelings, but this is because the Gentry play merry hell with both Time and Fate, which, of course, are the fortes of the Tricksters anyway.

If you want to delve into a little more detail on the similarity between these two realms, though, consider drawing a connection between them. Maybe Supernal Arcadia was a copy created by powerful mages (Oracles or Exarchs) who somehow witnessed Fae Arcadia, perhaps through the memories of a changeling. The Supernal Realm, then, is a duplicate, a “fetch,” if you will, of the original Fae Arcadia. Might it, therefore, be subject to some of the same rules as a changeling’s



fetch? If a changeling or some other reminder of the Fae Arcadia could be taken to Supernal Arcadia, would the Supernal Realm become aware of its false nature and turn on its Awakened constituents?

Or maybe it's the other way around. Maybe Supernal Arcadia came first, and Fae Arcadia was a neutral place, a Domain colonized by creatures that escaped from the Supernal Realms. Would that make the Acanthus mages and their progenitors indirectly responsible for every life shattered by the Gentry? Could the mages have prevented countless kidnappings, murders and rapes by simply leaving well enough alone?

### One and the Same

There is only one Arcadia. This possibility opens up a great number of story possibilities, but it also raises a lot of questions. For instance, can a mortal enter Arcadia through the Hedge and wind up Awakening? Can a mage be dragged *back* to Arcadia through the Hedge, and what effect would that have? Can a changeling Awaken by finding the Watchtower of the Lunargent Thorn and signing her name? What are the Fae, and what relationship do they have with the creator of the Watchtower?

As you've probably guessed, we aren't going to definitively answer these questions, though we'll certainly consider them and help the Storyteller to come up with logical answers.

First, there's the issue of changelings becoming Awakened. From a design standpoint, the World of Darkness games don't generally allow "template stacking," partially due to issues of game balance, and partially to keep the systems compatible but relatively uncomplicated. The in-story reason that changelings cannot Awaken, even if one should manage to find the Watchtower (which would make for a fantastic story; see below) is that Awakening requires a strong connection between the mage's soul and the Supernal Realm in question. But a changeling's soul is a tattered demalion of Glamour, shadow and a few scraps of the original. It doesn't have enough strength to hold a connection to the Watchtower, and should a changeling try it, she might gain some brief insight into the nature of reality (especially Fate) before her signature fades from the tower. This brief insight shouldn't be overlooked, though — it might be the only way a changeling can resolve a question that has plagued her since her return to Earth. Perhaps she is looking for a lover or child, someone who was taken through the Thorns with her but who she lost. The Watchtower might hold the answer she's looking for.

Next, let's consider the idea of a mage returning to Arcadia or a mortal becoming Awakened by reaching Arcadia through the Hedge. Mages don't have universally positive experiences of Awakening, and a trip to Arcadia, even if it leads to enlightenment, might be a nightmare. But assuming that the mage did enjoy (or at least, was intrigued by) her trip to the Abode of Faeries, she might wish to return. Reaching Arcadia is difficult in itself, due to the Hedge's ability to strip Wisdom from mages. Note, too, that the effects of the Hedge to strip Morality away mirror the effects of soul loss (these can be found on p. 276 of **Mage: The Awakening**, and are summed up in the sidebar), and that a mage without a soul can't perform magic. All of this in mind, a mage even getting to Arcadia with her Awakened soul intact is difficult (see Chapter Three for more on entering Faerie). If the mage should manage it, she's likely to be in a very different part of the Realm than she remembers. The reason for this is that the Watchtower of the Lunargent Thorn was constructed specifically to act as a beacon for souls on the cusp of Awakening. Once a person has become a mage, the Watchtower isn't really meant to serve another purpose.

Of course, a story in which a mage fights (alongside a group of changelings) to reach Faerie in order to find her Watchtower again, and then discovers it's got nothing to offer her, isn't likely to be very satisfying. The mage character needs a strong reason to go back to the Watchtower before embarking on the journey (this kind of focus is emblematic of such a quest anyway, and very much in-theme for both **Changeling** and **Mage**). It's also possible that the mage fights her way through the Hedge, finally manages to arrive at the Watchtower, and discovers that she *doesn't* have a good reason for it — she's left behind everything that she knew and loved in the Fallen World for a goal that she can't even name. This kind of endgame is tragic, but perfectly valid.

If a mortal in Arcadia somehow finds the Watchtower and signs it, does she become a mage? It's possible, but it doesn't leave the newly Awakened person in a very good position. Consider: most Awakenings take the form of astral journeys. The body doesn't go anywhere, only the soul travels to Arcadia (or another of the Supernal Realms). The experience is dreamlike, and enables the nascent mage to experience things on a cerebral level, rather than the bloody, jagged horror of the Thorns that changelings have to experience. Magic requires focus, and summoning



that focus after or during a durance is near-impossible. Even if it does happen, that still leaves the mage stuck in the middle of Arcadia. A changeling can fight her way back through the Hedge because the Hedge doesn't strip Clarity away from the Lost. A mage crashing through the Thorns is probably going to be insane or dead by the time she finds a path. Does that mean this sort of prelude for an Acanthus mage is impossible? No, of course not — but it does mean that this sort of mage would probably be damaged, and likely suffer from a few derangements (to say nothing of having a low Wisdom rating). She would also probably have holes in her memory. And, what's worse, she might well have a fetch.

### *Soul Loss in Brief*

It's possible for a mortal's soul to be removed quickly, rather than stripped away by a long, slow walk through the Thorns. If this happens, the character loses a dot of Morality once a week. A mage without a soul cannot use magic, and any living being without a soul grows listless, depressed and possibly suicidal. It's possible to reaffix a person's soul with magic, and it's not inconceivable that a changeling could forge a Contract to do so.

Even if Arcadia is Supernal, many things fae are not. Tokens are clearly not Artifacts; no changeling powers register as Supernal. If the realm of the Gentry and Supernal Arcadia are one and the same, there must be something in the interface between the two worlds that dilutes the Supernal — perhaps a trait of the Wyrd, perhaps a facet of the Hedge. An Artifact of Arcadia would have to have made its way back to the Fallen World in a way other than the paths through the Hedge to retain that Supernal nature.

Finally, consider the relationship between the Fae and the Oracle that created the Watchtower. In order for anything to be constructed inside Arcadia, some kind of agreement had to be reached. The question is, who took advantage of whom?

It's possible (and thematically appropriate, from a **Mage** perspective) that the Oracle that built the Watchtower of the Lunargent Thorn took advantage of a loophole in an agreement with the Fae. Perhaps she promised the Fae a tithe of souls — maybe those "too weak for Awakening." But since Awakening re-

quires signing the Watchtower, those who are too weak to do so don't remain in Arcadia. This kind of bargain might explain why the Fae are hostile to humanity as a whole (and raises the question again: did mages *start* the kidnapping cycle that changes people into changelings?).

Another possibility is that the Oracle walled off a section of Arcadia somehow. This might have been accomplished by mimicking the Fae's ability to craft Domains, out of the reach of most mages, but possible for an Oracle. This means the inhabitants of Supernal Arcadia (since many mages report encountering "faeries" when they Awaken to this Realm) are beings that were trapped there. Were they simply hobgoblins who were unlucky enough to be in the area when the walls went up? Were they Gentry sold out by their fellows to this strange interloper? Were they Gentry who *agreed* to remain in the Realm, in exchange for some favor that only the Oracle could provide? If this is the case, getting into Supernal Arcadia from the Hedge would require entering Faerie, finding the walls to the Realm, and then getting over, under or through them somehow. Is there a gatekeeper, some awesomely powerful or elusive Fae creature that knows the secret? Is it only possible by forging a Contract with the Acanthus Path? And, as always, what is the point? What goal would propel the characters to take on this task?

## PROMETHEAN: THE CREATED

Prometheans are unpredictable. Each one is on a personal quest to become human (though granted, some Prometheans do ignore that urge), but that quest can take the Promethean down some truly strange paths. The Created approach humanity as outsiders. What they know about humanity is gleaned from pure observation or, perhaps, a kind of reflexively "muscle memory" lingering in the flesh used to make them. Humanity is cruel, selfish, spiteful and murderous, and Prometheans are quite capable of mimicking these traits.

But human beings are also kind, noble, courageous and loving, and Prometheans can ape these characteristics, too. A Promethean might find the notion of stealing human beings as slaves completely unacceptable, and be willing to brave the Thorns to right this wrong (especially true for the Golems, who have an inborn fascination with the notion of servitude). One of the Created might also note that the Gentry can create fetches, which, for all intents and purposes, are



artificially created living creatures — much like Prometheans. Might the Gentry's creations contain some link to the elusive New Dawn? Possibly, but learning the truth would require meeting the Gentry, and that involves a long walk through the Hedge.

In the end, Prometheans are extremely rare and each has its own Pilgrimage. The reasons why a given Promethean might enter the Hedge vary from Created to Created. A Promethean's Refinement might hold some clues (a Titan, for instance, might be searching for the ultimate battle — and incidentally, isn't there some superb dramatic potential in bringing a creature following the Refinement of *Iron* to fight the Fae?), but at the end of the day, the Promethean takes the step through the gateway for his own reasons. It might be as simple as befriending a motley of changelings, and being unwilling to abandon his friends.

## CONCERNS

Of course, it's *hard* to be friends with a Promethean. Disquiet affects changelings, meaning that sooner or later the motley is going to turn on their Created compatriot. The fact that fetches don't suffer Disquiet means that Prometheans often wind up in adversarial positions to the Lost. This generally only lasts until the Promethean learns the truth about the relationship between the fetch and the changeling, at which point the Promethean typically becomes appalled or intrigued (or both).

Prometheans can eat anything remotely organic, and so finding food in the Hedge isn't too much of a problem. Regaining Pyros, however, can be a major sticking point (see Mechanics, below).

## MECHANICS

Prometheans do not cause the Wasteland effect in the Hedge. This might initially be a cause for celebration from the Created, but the reason for this "mercy" is only likely to make them feel more isolated than ever.

The Hedge has no agreements with the Divine Fire. The Divine Fire has will and agenda, but no Contract has ever been struck between it and the Fae. As such, the Hedge doesn't know quite what to do with Prometheans. Creatures born purely of Arcadia or of the Hedge ignore Prometheans (meaning that hobgoblins and the Gentry don't suffer Disquiet), and while the Divine Fire scorches the land back on Earth, the Hedge just doesn't acknowledge it.

This also means, however, that Prometheans don't have a good way to regain Pyros in the Hedge. The sunlight here isn't pure sunlight, and no deal exists be-

tween this light and the Divine Fire. Hence, the Created cannot regain Pyros when the sun rises. Storms, likewise, provide no benefit, and a Promethean who sleeps in "his" element in the Hedge regains no Pyros from it. In the Hedge, a Promethean is more alone than ever, because now the land around him doesn't recoil. It just refuses to notice him.

Of course, this *can* have some benefit. Prometheans gain 8-again to any contested roll to hide or sneak past a hobgoblin or True Fae (this doesn't apply to changelings, obviously; they are still human enough to respond normally to the Divine Fire). Fae creatures attack Prometheans last in a fight (if at all).

The Hedge has no effect on Promethean Morality (called Humanity, but approached very differently than a vampire's — vampires try to *retain* Humanity, while Prometheans try to *mimic* it). The dreams, fears and desires of the Created don't impact the Hedge, and the Thorns only cut a Promethean's flesh (one lethal damage per hour, ignored if the character has any kind of armor), not his soul.

Finally, a Promethean in the Hedge loses one of his greatest advantages, and worse, he probably has no way to know it until it's too late. Prometheans can return from death — once. The Divine Fire flares up and returns the Created to the strange semblance of the life he possesses. But in the Hedge, some vital connection to the Divine Fire is missing. Azoth might flare, but it cannot call back the Promethean from the brink of death. The area of the Hedge in which it happens is scoured with a rain of fire (if you have access to **Promethean: The Created**, you can use the rules for Firestorms found there), but the Promethean remains dead; however, the Osiran Bestowment Revivification works normally.

## HUNTER: THE VICIL

Brave people occasionally take up arms against the crimes that supernatural creatures perpetrate against humanity. Some of these stalwarts do their work under the auspices of a governmental organization, some join societies that are hundreds of years old, and some merely find kindred spirits from their area and try to right a wrong without losing their lives in the process. Whatever the scale, any hunter cell would agree that few acts are so unconscionable as abduction and slavery.

Except, of course, that the Gentry *have* the right to steal humans. If they didn't, they couldn't do it. Humanity must, at some point in the past, have given the Fae permission to take them (though it's probably a fair



bet that the Others twisted the deal somehow), and as such, does humanity really have a right to complain?

This kind of semantic double-talk doesn't interest the hunters. Their concerns are, usually, much more concrete. Kill the monsters. Rescue the helpless. Protect humanity. That in mind, it's highly possible that a cell of hunters might follow a changeling or a motley into the Hedge, possibly all the way to Arcadia. This is especially true if the changeling hinted that there might be a way to end the Fae menace permanently. For an endgame chronicle, maybe this kind of world-altering event is exactly what you need, in fact.

### CONCERNS

Hunters are human beings. They suffer all of the problems that any mortal does in the Hedge. These are detailed on pp. 210-222 of **Changeling: The Lost**.

### MECHANICS

For the most part, hunters don't require special mechanics for dealing with the Hedge or other fae creatures. They are, again, mortals, and the game systems work accordingly.

Tactics work normally in the Hedge, but circumstances might dictate modifiers beyond what the cell would face on Earth. The Storyteller needs to use common sense and determine whether a given Tactic would suffer penalties (or, indeed, bonuses) based on the target, the surroundings, and the specific conditions.

Advanced Armory, Relics, Thaumatechnology and Elixirs work normally, keeping in mind that ghosts and spirits don't naturally exist in the Hedge and therefore items that affect such beings aren't useful. Note, too, that as a hunter approaches Faerie, man-made devices become unpredictable, and the superior technology of Task Force: VALKYRIE or the arcane quasi-science of the Cheiron Group is no exception (see **Changeling: The Lost** p. 210 for more on this effect).

Benedictions work normally in the Hedge, but as the Hedge is a place out of time, with regards to the mortal world, the bonus for performing one of these rites on a given saint's feast day never applies.

Castigations likewise function normally, except that the effects of the Hedge on Morality mean that if a hunter's player receives an exceptional success on the Castigation roll, he can forestall checking for the derangement until after he leaves the Hedge.











It was the Poet Who Walked on the Sun this time, jet with burns and carnelian in the joints as the blood welled up. Dark-armored in the marks of suffering, he took step after step through mist and noted some cool comfort: her Mercy Clouds, sent to the ground. The Poet smiled at this stratagem, designed to heal him and lessen his sacrifice, but he was already at the foot of her jagged cliffs.

Now, the Lady must resolve a conundrum. She might heal his wounds and give him easy passage (the Poet noted the gulls circling nearby, big as dragons from the Forgotten Days, and he could imagine riding one to the top), but he might formulate some new, secret pain during the trip, and brought before her, would be able to say his fearsome words. The clouds were ill-timed; he still had too far to go and suffer, so she would try to just stop his passage instead.

The mist lifted; the great gulls attacked with hungry cries. But sun-fire still burned inside him, and though the birds dug new wounds with beaks and talons, their feathers burned seconds later. They fell, smelling sweet as burned fowl as the Poet pulled his broken body up the shale, eyes on the green firelight in the distance.

Later, the Poet conquered the cliff and broke his arms to squeeze through the bars of her stone gate. He took the guards' swords and spears as plundering body-gifts: more wounds for his work. Most of them melted and burned from the sun inside him, but one spear of sculpted granite pierced his side and stayed. It made his right foot stamp heavy as he dragged it into the throne room with him.

She waited there, beautiful enough to make a mortal put his eyes out so that he'd never be insulted by any lesser sight. Her slaves followed this recommendation; bronze orbs decorated their empty sockets. The Poet smiled, pleased that the sight of her, dressed in clouds and emeralds, was for him alone.

So the Poet crawled to the foot of her throne and looked up at her with ice-blue eyes. The only cold thing in him: windows to a mind that could shield any fire with the verses it invented. That gaze was the poem this time, an epic sun in a second. It told her how he'd burned for her, bled for her and made himself the wounded king of this little world, all for her.

All for her.

The poem in that glance was as mortal-maddening as her beauty, so despite herself, the Queen of the Mercy Clouds leaned down to listen when she saw the Poet's burned lips part.

He said "I love you" as sharply as an eating knife, and made a meal of her soul.



# CHAPTER 3

## Faerie

*"Fool!" said the man, stamping his foot with rage.  
"That is the sort of talk that brought me here,  
and I'd better have been drowned or never born.  
Do you hear what I say?  
This is where dreams — dreams, do you understand —  
come to life, come real.  
Not daydreams: dreams."*

— C. S. LEWIS, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

## THE TRUE FAE

The Kindly Ones. The Others. The Old Gods. The Gentry. The True Fae. Such names don't truly describe the powers of Arcadia, but don't dismiss the power of names themselves. A True Fae's name is a promise made to Arcadia. *I vow to exist*, she says, challenging the Wyrd to make it so. Birth is the hardest, mightiest oath of all. It screams at Arcadia, setting raw will against absolute, passionate chaos.

Life is a Contract, and it brings obligations as fundamental as mortal breath and blood — and deeper still, for in Arcadia, living existence is more than mere appearance, solidity or even speech. Given the proper oaths, *anything* can populate the land of Faerie. A monster might talk, eat, even bleed and scream when cut, all without being alive in the way the Others are. For the Fae, life is more than metabolism and movement. It's the difference between being a subject and an object: someone who acts, versus something that's acted upon.

They say the Old Gods are immortal and by some standards, this is true. Given enough time, any fragment of Wyrd might erupt into breath and speech, even if it was "killed" beforehand. Nothing can stay the Wyrd when it shapes Arcadia. By these standards, the Gentry are immortal, in the classic sense: no force can make any part of Arcadia absolutely lifeless. This is no comfort for the True Fae, though. There's life, and there's *life*. They prefer some versions of immortality to others. To move and respawn like an idiot child of Faerie's power means nothing to them. True life is mastery of the Wyrd, ironclad Contracts that

bulwark a Kindly One's identity and make it a lord of Arcadia who commands, and is not commanded.

This is the primal passion, the true life of the Old Gods, whose eyes are green-clad, living moons and whose fingers are the blades that end royal dynasties.

## THE STORYTELLER'S CURSE

Storytellers are cursed. Where players immerse themselves in a multi-layered world, Storytellers define it. They give everything a structure, working out causes and consequences. From her perspective, an epic setting — and few settings are as epic as Arcadia — shrinks into something manageable for the sake of play but from a reader's perspective, a bit less breathtaking.

This section delves into the secrets of the True Fae. It's a risky thing for us to do. As vague myths, the Gentry are vast, inscrutable and impressive. Pinning them down with a structure and even game systems threatens to take some of the charm away. But even though vague myths make for a fine backstory (and the occasional *deus ex machina*) we want you to actually *play* with the Others.

You can run an entertaining chronicle where you dictate what the True Fae can do and how changelings might oppose them, but it means characters succeed and fail on your sufferance alone. The Other can do whatever it wants. It always has a reason to win.



As an alternative, we offer tools to make stories with the Kindly Ones more authentically interactive. If they learn the Gentry's deep secrets your players can think strategically — and perhaps even turn the tables on their former Keepers.

Even though this section has elements of theme and mood, it's mostly focused on practical matters: what the True Fae need, why they behave in certain ways, and how changeling characters might affect them. Never forget that even though we talk about powerful things in stride, they're *still* powerful. A faerie can manifest as a vast forest, a giant and a staff made of congealed lightning. You can see the logic and limits, but the players can only infer them. Use that to your advantage.

Of course, this could all be lies. The True Fae lie all the time.

## NAMES AND TITLES

A faerie's name is the heart of its being. Gentry have many kinds of names, from a simple "Ayesha" or "John" to the sound of waves breaking against an ice shelf, or a picture of the *wadjet*: the Egyptian symbol of magic. Strange sounds and images don't especially protect True Fae's names. Once heard (or otherwise experienced) a substitute title is as good as the name itself, provided the speaker witnessed the faerie's real name and uses the substitute with an honest, true intent.

A Keeper's name is his promise to be a will that binds the Wyrd, but existence is more than ambition. Just as a mortal needs a body to express his thoughts, a faerie uses Titles to make contact with his world. Titles are abstract (and even enigmatic) concepts but they always refer to an emotion, sensual experience or object. One Fae may be the Prince of Weeping Rats, while another is the Acolyte of Screams on the Mountain.

Titles are deep Contracts with the Wyrd. Their obligations and purpose are high mysteries. Some Fae brag that they're the guardians of Arcadia (or in a few ambitious boasts, existence itself) and that every Title is a shard of Faerie that's theirs to protect. Then again, the Fae lie all the time.

Most Fae have more than one Title. The more powerful the faerie, the more Titles they possess. Titles are channels through which the Gentry manifest. Every manifestation incorporates a Title in some distinct way. This shape or theme is called the *Title's tell*. The Prince of Weeping Rats appears as a rat-headed crying man holding a scepter, or becomes an endless, filthy high-rise, whose human-looking tenants weep whenever the ruling rats eat their food or steal unattended children.

Enemies and disasters deprive a faerie of Title. Some Fae are left with nothing more than their names. These wretches are devoured by their betters, exiled or mutate into mindless monsters. Arcadia reclaims their unprotected souls.

## *Always, Never Born*

It might be said that every faerie is as old as Arcadia but as young as the blink of an eye, for Arcadian time is no steady stream. It stops in stagnant pools, runs fast, turns widdershins and even splashes backward. Then the end of time was yesterday; she was born tomorrow, and remembers it in prophecy.

Fae also lack the landmarks that define ordinary life and death. The borders of their existence can only be vaguely defined. A Keeper can be a person, place or thing. She can think in a dozen minds at once. One of these might blossom into a noble faerie itself, lose itself in the Hedge or attach itself to a changeling as a mad whisper that sounds in his dreams.

Despite these difficulties, the Gentry themselves think of their birth as the time of their naming, and their deaths as the moment they lose their names and Titles. This definition serves changelings well enough, because it's the span when True Fae may hunt mortal slaves.

## NATURE AND NEEDS

True Fae don't have bodies but adopt them when the occasion demands it. They don't need nourishment and rest unless these are required by an oath. They don't age or feel pain unless they promise to experience those things. The Gentry dine on stories and vows. Flesh is a game. If a mortal was thrust into existence as one of the Gentry he might exult in the power and scope of his new existence, but would quickly learn it has its own vulnerabilities.

For all the power of the True Fae, their fluid nature is a weakness. Like humans and changelings, Gentry are defined by a basic duality: subject and object, Self and Other. But unlike mortals, Gentry are not *guaranteed* duality. They only have a tenuous ability to set themselves apart from Arcadia. At the whim of material existence, mortals cannot help but experience a separation between themselves and their world. Tensions between the Self and Other drive their lives. They remember conflicts, link them together and forge life stories.

By contrast, True Fae *are* the places they dwell and the things they experience. Without duality there's no conflict and without conflict, they cannot truly exist. Instead of air, water, food or shelter, the Gentry need to struggle. They need adversity, surprise and risk. They can't create these conditions by themselves. Fae can simulate all of these things, but it's a meaningless exercise.



A Keeper creates a fiery mote between herself (really, the body she's created for the occasion) and a trapped lover — another extension of her desire. She leaps the mote and rescues her love, but it's not real conflict. She is the mote, so leaping it is insignificant. Even if she fell, the fire would persist, and she would live as the fire. She is her rescued love. His peril — her peril — is voluntary. The love itself is false. None of it sustains the faerie. At best, it's a diversion, like daydreaming or masturbation. At worst its autocannibalism; the desperate faerie mimics a true conflict to deny her own starvation. In fact, the most spectacular vistas in all Arcadia are often created this way, by desperate Gentry on the verge of fading away. The True Fae need conflict to survive, lest they succumb to the Dwindling, when their will disperses into Arcadia. Some say that many of Arcadia's leaderless Realms are the remnants of Dwindled Fae: corpses made of unclaimed Titles and stillborn conflicts.

This fate may not be death, but Gentry fear it. They create Feuds to stave it off: covenants of Gentry who vow to plot against each other. Each faerie in a Feud sends manifestations of itself against others, where they play out tales of genuine peril and difficult victory. One Keeper plays the hero of our last example, but another plays the fiery mote and a third, the imperiled lover. This time, the fire *can* burn the questing faerie. Her lover might spurn her, too. If she can't overcome these obstacles, their ruling Fae win the right to devour a bit of her essence, but if she *didn't* take up the challenge, she would fade away. Some Winter Court writings call these story-battles *Legends*: a code word designed to confuse Gentry agents about how much the Coldest Court knows.

Feuds are not the only way True Fae create conflict. There's also the Hunt: an expedition beyond Arcadia to alien realms like Earth, human dreams and the Hedge. Natives challenge the Others with strong wills and strange ways. Changelings know the Hunt. Often as not, they were the prey. Mortals are valuable commodities: a free will is precious. Human duality grows stronger before Arcadia. Mortal fear, hate and disorientation strengthen psychic boundaries and feed a Keeper's needs. Resentful slaves are the most valuable kind. When they rebel, they trigger Legends of their own, and True Fae revel in them. These conflicts sustain them, too.

## WHAT CHANCELINGS KNOW

Changelings are in a better position to understand the True Fae than anyone else, but that doesn't always count for much. They were slaves, seeing only what their masters wanted them to see. So many manifestations are possible that it's hard to trust perceptions. A single Keeper can appear as a man or woman, a bleeding flower or ramshackle mansion. Only tells reveal that these manifestations are one entity, and if the faerie uses different Titles for each there's no evidence that these are all one being.

Some changelings believe the Gentry are virtually omnipotent. Mountains (the faerie in Realm form) move for them. They build armies out of ochre mist and castles from misshapen bones. Who dares oppose them? The Winter Court tends to believe the Fae are truly omnipotent. It's better to hide and run; only fools and suicides fight the Old Gods.

Others underestimate the True Fae. One sees his master "die" in Actor form and think she's a corporeal being. Another flees while his Keeper's distracted by Feud politics or mistakes apathy for weakness. Summer changelings are particularly inclined toward this point of view. Summer courtiers swap stories of the Gentry's supposed weaknesses, how one flees at the color blue or another can't hurt anyone who feels true love. Sometimes the True Fae enjoy spreading lies about their vulnerabilities but every once in a long, long while the stories are true; the Other's bound by oath to flee or even "die" before some strange tactic.

Nevertheless, there are scholars from all Courts who are better informed. The Autumn Court is perhaps best versed in the lore of the True Fae, but the Spring Court's elders know much about the Kindly Ones' social customs. No Court shares its faerie lore freely, because all fear the knowledge would send changelings on foolish quests. They might storm Arcadia and bring the wrath of the Others on the whole world, or despair at the Fae's full power. They might surrender, even turn traitor. Uncertainty's better. It makes changelings cautious but not cowardly.

## MUTABLE AND IMMUTABLE FORMS

The True Fae are vast beings, born from a Realm that is ultimately unknowable, even to its inhabitants. To the inexperienced, (in other words, almost everyone) the Gentry seem to be born of chaos, beholden to passion alone. But if this was truly so, changelings would have no hope. Keepers would secure eternal service with a thought. They'd lie perfectly, break minds like dried straw, and utterly crush their slaves. If the Fae followed no laws, nothing would be safe from them, and even the mortal world would lie suspended between the Gentry's jaws.

The Fae are difficult to comprehend. Their true nature is beyond imagination and their might is matchless in the mortal world — but they can't always do as they please. In exchange for self-identity, they obey powerful obligations. What laws bind the True Fae? Even the Lost don't know for sure, but they've learned fragments and patterns of behavior. These rare consistencies offer some clues, but there are no guarantees that these, or laws that cause them, are stable facts. Perhaps Arcadia's laws change from time to time. Even if there's a fixed form, it's hard to see it behind the Others' puzzling, maddening ways. Even when a Fae lord *must* do something, observers don't necessarily understand *why*.

The Storyteller ultimately decides which rules are only habits and which are strict laws. Make these decisions care-





### *Title and Contract*

The difference between a Fae Contract and changeling Contracts is like the difference between a mundane Contract and a national constitution. One defines strict tit for tat services; the other provides a framework that allows people to come to legally enforceable agreements. The True Fae make particular agreements with a thought, but they get the power to do so by swearing on their name and Titles. Powers similar to changeling Contracts devolve from particular Titles and from there, trickle down into the Lost's hands. For example, the Lord of Wolf-Snows momentarily bargains for powers like Contracts of Eternal Winter or Fang and Talon to empower an Actor or give to a changeling.

Powers match the Title, but a Title is more than a set of changeling-style Contracts. True Fae customize agreements from moment to moment and aren't bound to a rigid ladder of abilities. Titles also allow feats far beyond what any changeling can accomplish and have a deep nature, with rights and responsibilities beyond mortal ken. Some say that noble Entitlements are weak attempts to ape this power. Legend has it that only the legendary Court Founders ever gained true Title while refusing the full mantle of Faerie nobility. If this is true, then such a feat has yet to be duplicated in the modern age. It might be a difficult but worthy goal for a powerful changeling.

fully, however, as they determine how much power the Others hold in a chronicle. Fae who can do anything are boring antagonists and overbearing allies. No player-created plot can stop them. Their help makes the characters' efforts meaningless. Think about strategy and story logic. If changelings can entangle their former Keepers in contradictory oaths or read their intentions from certain manifestations, it gives the players a way to act effectively without belittling Arcadia's lords.

### OATHS AND CONTRACTS

A faerie can never intentionally violate a Contract he swears on his own name. When an Other commits to a namebound Contract, obeying it defines his existence. If he breaks his word, he destroys his name — and for the Gentry, namelessness is obliteration.

Many Gentry cannot even conceive of breaking such an oath — it would be like asking a mortal to grow a new head. On the other hand, a faerie who makes a casual promise and later breaks it doesn't necessarily believe that she made a promise at all. A Fae lord might entertain a mortal with something that *sounds* like an oath, but a real oath is defined



by its enforceability. If it's not enforceable, it's not a promise. To the Old Gods this truth is too obvious to mention.

Gentry who've dealt with mortals understand the human perspective better, but this is no help to anyone who bargains with them. Sheltered Gentry can't imagine *bending* oaths, either, but their better-traveled cousins can. They insert diabolical loopholes into their promises and know that most mortals don't know what a real oath is. They consciously make false vows to cheat humans.

The Others can *accidentally* break namebound Contracts. This might be their greatest vulnerability, but exploiting it requires incredible ingenuity. True Fae usually make namebound oaths out of absolute necessity. A Feud requires a namebound oath; for many, it's the only such Contract they'll ever swear. Some Fae cement other alliances with them, or beg for Immortal Mercy (see page 91) when one of their Actors is close to death. Still, it would be premature to say all Fae swear on their names carefully. The Gentry have their fair share of gamblers, impulsive personalities and desperate ploys. Some Kindly Ones' names are bound to a tangle of obligations to the point where they might even ask visitors to help them sort it all out. If enemies trick a faerie into breaking a namebound oath, his immortal existence ends.

True Fae can swear upon their Titles, too. This is less risky than a namebound oath. If they violate a Titlebound Contract it costs them the connected Title. It's a major blow, but it won't obliterate them. A mortal analogue might be agreeing to guarantee a promise with a pound of flesh. You can break your word and survive, but it's *painful*.

## MANIFESTATIONS

Gentry weave particular Titles into different forms. This is how they manifest before visitors. The True Fae can assail others with huge, strange visions too — skeletons the size of cities and singing lattices of fire, for instance — but these all appear to have an unreal quality, even to a casual glance. None have been known to trick or harm witnesses, though they can frighten them. (On the other hand, this might mean that nobody who witnesses a more effective phantasm ever survives.) The Fae are limitless beings, but it seems that they must restrict their powers to meaningfully interact with others. This, perhaps, is the hunger for conflict manifest. There must always be some risk for the Other when she appears in force, or the appearance is meaningless.

The chosen Title's tell colors every manifestation. There are four common manifestations. There might be more, but the Kindly Ones have never revealed them to outsiders. Rumors abound that some Fae travel as poems, rhymes and stories, even. Changelings take them a bit more seriously thanks to the rise of memes and mass media. Until evidence to the contrary arises, however, the manifestations are:

- An **Actor** is the faerie's living avatar. It could look like a human, an animated elemental vortex, a walking tree — anything consistent with the Title. Changelings are usu-

ally most familiar with the Actor form, and often falsely believe that this is a Keeper's true self.

- **Prop** is an object. It might be a weirdly carved stone, a bone spear that whispers violent suggestions to its wielder, or even a laptop with an odd user interface. True Fae often become Props to spy on slaves and rivals. Every Prop still has its faerie tell, however, so an educated eye sees the Fae behind the form.

- A **Realm** is a place: ocean, a forest, mountain range, city or anywhere else, but always with a tell influencing its features. Realms can be lifeless, or filled with phantom people, animals, plants and changeling slaves.

- **Wisps** are fragments of an Other's will, given a dim consciousness and a few minor powers. They might be the sprites and house-elves of legend. In the hierarchy of servants, a Wisp is the lowest of the low; Fae treat them like autonomic functions, not slaves. Nevertheless, a flock of Wisps is as much a manifestation of the faerie as an Actor. A single Wisp manifestation is a group of creatures, not an individual.

While even the weakest Gentry have tremendous power, there are still limits to their manifestations. A True Fae can only commit a Title to one form at a time. A faerie with three Titles can appear as an Actor, Prop and Realm simultaneously (as a king in a castle, wearing an enchanted crown, perhaps), but she can't command a household of Wisps at the same time, or make herself into another Prop. No manifestation can disguise its tell completely, though it might alter it slightly. The Lord of Weeping Rats might shift from having a rat's head to a naked tail, or opt for a human body with a particularly "rattish" look, but he can never banish the rat from any form that uses that Title.

## BEING'S BORDERS

Nothing born of a Fae lord can oppose its creator, or his other creations. An Other's Prop sword cannot slay his Actor. The Actor can't burn down his own tree-Realm — not in any way that counts, at least. True Fae can make these things appear to happen, but these are purely cosmetic affairs. The Actor falls upon his sword, but he can stand up and calmly pluck it out whenever he wishes. The tree turns into sea of ashes but a single thought makes it a tree again. Within the boundaries of a faerie's being, nothing can truly destroy or constrain anything else. This limitation is a serious problem for the Gentry. They cannot experience constraint, conflict or limitation within themselves. They need Fae rivals, changeling rebels and other worlds to hunt. A Kindly One dwindles without nourishing conflicts, losing Title and power until he vanishes back into Arcadian chaos.

No True Fae can stand against herself, but external forces may alter or even destroy her manifestations. Fae battle each other to generate Legends and live — but to fight, they need each Other's permission. Arcadia's ruled by oaths and Contracts; dire enemies must negotiate their wars. These agreements create Feuds: alliances of enemies that dominate Gentry society.



## A FAERIE'S DOOM

Can the Others die? Even they don't know the answer, but they treat some fates like death. They're loath to discuss them with visitors, especially former slaves who'd love to destroy them. Of course, True Fae also use outsiders against their rivals. Free changelings need not ask permission to attack.

To that end, they've revealed a few vulnerabilities, but they frame them with lies whenever they can. They tell changelings that a rival's weakness is unique and doesn't reflect a general truth about the Kindly Ones. Thanks to the vagaries of Titles and manifestations, these deceptions are highly effective. A Fae lord says, "Crush the purple rose that grows on the tallest peak, for it contains her vital essence." He doesn't say that this is only true because his enemy's taken the form of a Realm, or that this particular weakness is driven by the Legend the enemy's playing out. Form and context vary so much that it takes a clever investigator to see a common thread. But behind the illusion, some things can degrade a Fae noble and perhaps even annihilate her.

### DEVOURING

The Gentry battle constantly; vying for each other's Titles, for each Title contains a shard of immortal essence. These conflicts take many forms. In one, an Actor searches for the hidden gemstone: his enemy's Prop form. If he wins it, he steals the Title it represents. The rival's been wounded; if she felt mortal pain it might be like losing an arm or burning alive. She's been weakened. Other members of her Feud might attack again, creating more Legends to channel their assaults until she's left with nothing but her name. If she loses *that* to a final Legend, she's been devoured. Her rivals have eaten every part of her spirit. Whatever survives is no independent being, but a fragment owned by one of her conquerors.

This "death" is the end a True Fae is most likely to suffer. The Others sustain themselves through rivalry. Some Feuds maintain a balance of power by enforcing complex oaths between members. These stipulate who can be attacked and when, in the hope that this will merely shuffle Titles in a controlled conflict. These arrangements rarely survive for long. Invariably, one faerie blunders. She's weak, vulnerable. Her Feud companions hunger for her power and set upon her.

No mortal knows all the ways a faerie duel lays out, but there's always a specific order of injury. A True Fae's name is sacrosanct until she's been stripped of every Title. Without them, the unfortunate faerie must take an Actor form. Her Titles are gone, but her new, static shape contains remnants of them all: tells and certain Contracts. In a final Legend, she fights for her very identity. If a Feud-mate wins it from her, he devours her completely. Gentry often flee to Earth to escape this fate.

### DWINDLING

Without conflict, the Gentry have no purpose. They don't have the luxury of an objective cosmos that supports their existence. Struggle sustains them, whether it takes





the form of a lover's quest for satisfaction or a gunman's fear-shaken aim. They play with forms and stories, forging Legends that fuel their lives. When the True Fae have no battles to fight, loves to win or any other conflict, they have no purpose, no tale to tell Arcadia — and no right to exist. With names, they promised to act, to rule. If they immerse themselves in illusions, instead of forging Legends, they're mere objects. They dwindle.

Where being devoured might feel like progressive amputation, dwindling is a kind of starvation. Oaths and energies exhaust themselves. Titles erode away one by one. First, symbols of corruption work their way into every manifestation. Actors look old and tired. Prop swords are rusty. Mountains crumble into battered hills. It takes a clever observer to tell signs of dwindling apart from intentional manifestations, but it can be done. The decrepit Actor acts like a vigorous young man; people in the Realm speak of huge, jagged summits, but point to squat drumlins.

One by one, Titles collapse. On occasion, they reappear as independent entities, tucked in some odd corner of Faerie. A lost manifestation appears as an autonomous region, personage or artifact, beholden to no True Fae. Perhaps this is part of Arcadia's ecology, and every island in the chaos owes its origin to a long-dead Kindly One, but no one, Fae or mortal, knows for sure.

Few Gentry die by dwindling alone, because there are always opportunities to fight and eat. A faerie without a Feud to challenge is either the survivor of some unthinkable catastrophe or is no starveling, because she's grown fat in Titles after eating every enemy. But even without the

Feud, Gentry can always take up the Hunt to refuel the fires of Legend. The Others only starve to death if they can't or won't play the Feud or ride out of Arcadia for nourishment. More commonly, a dwindling faerie will perish because she's too weak to fend off danger. A Kindly One starves to the point where she has one Title left — or even just her name. She tests herself against an enemy or adventures outside Arcadia, and it goes badly. Alternately, enemies have devoured much of her power, and have plotted to cut her off from further nourishment by imposing certain Contracts or attacking her manifestations. These situations are properly combinations of dwindling and devouring, however.

If dwindling takes her Titles and leaves her with nothing but her name, she suffers the same consequences as a Fae who's been devoured to the same point. She's forced into an Actor form shaped by faded forms of lost Titles. She might try her luck on Earth. If she doesn't, she gradually loses substance until she's only a ghostly presence. Eventually, that fades into a voice and finally, naught but a shiver passing on the winds of Faerie.

## OBLITERATION

Obliteration is rare, but it's such a dramatic end that the myths give it a disproportionate amount of attention. Obliteration is instant nonexistence, leaving nothing but a memory. In Arcadia, certain memories may turn into living things; once again, this might not be "death." Then again, some True Fae forget the obliterated ever existed, or at least pretend to forget. Obliteration leaves no trace of the faerie except for any Titles that other Fae have previously devoured.

There are three paths to obliteration — maybe. There might be more, or one of them might be a longstanding lie. The legends say they are:

**Namebreaking:** If one of the Gentry breaks an oath sworn on her own name, she obliterates herself. Some tales describe horrific, spectacular scenes of destruction at the moment of obliteration, but there are those who say that the Other vanishes, snuffed like a sputtering candle.

**Mortal Doom:** If the Other's killed while his entire essence dwells outside Arcadia, he is truly dead. This fate usually befalls exiled who've had their Titles stripped away. Most of the Old Gods only extend a portion of themselves beyond Arcadia's borders, leaving at least one Title manifestation back in Faerie. Some proud True Fae visit Earth arrayed in all their glory, risking a final end. This makes them potent but vulnerable, for if they die in the mortal dirt, they die like mortals do. Lost loremasters believe this is the only way to really kill a Fae lord.

**The Nemesis:** Some Kindly Ones have living reflections. They're perfect opposites, fiery where the original is cold and loving where she's hateful, near-duplicates who copy their sisters down to the last Title and personality trait or something in between. An entity like this is a *Nemesis*: a potent danger to a Fae's immortal existence. Despite

### *The Forgetful*

When the Fae manifest as Actors in the mortal world for an extended period of time, their powers fade. Some of them even pick up mortal thought patterns. They learn Clarity. They even forget who they are, and construct delusional memories of a human life. They're still sensitive to the Wyrd and seek out its presence. Instinct leads the way; rationalizations come later. In short: given enough time, a fallen Fae lord might resemble nothing more than a young changeling.

Storytellers can explore this idea through a supporting character. She looks like a changeling but pulls the players' motley into dangerous situations. Old enemies know her better than she knows herself. Former slaves seek revenge. If you really want a challenge, you can give this role to a player's character instead. Just remember to give every character the spotlight in turn, so that the secret Kindly One doesn't push everyone else's fun to the sidelines.



what a typical faerie would like to believe, a Nemesis isn't an imperfect, weak counterpart, but a genuine Fae, equal in power and privilege. Educated changelings note the resemblance to their own fetches, so some believe there's a relationship. They say the Others learned eldritch secrets from their twins and used them to craft their slaves' stand-ins.

No matter what appearance it takes, a Nemesis has the same true name as its enemy. It's an independent, alternate identity with its own will and desires, tied to the same foundation as its twin. If one swears a namebound oath, its obligations and benefits applies to both of them. If one loses its name, they both suffer the consequences. This doesn't apply to Titles, however. One might have more or different Titles than the other, and Titlebound Contracts don't transfer between them. When one of them loses a Title, the other one isn't affected.

A True Fae's Nemesis often fights its twin for power over their shared name. Titles offer no protection; the Nemesis has no obligation to devour them in turn before assailing her enemy's name because it's *her* name, too. This makes the Nemesis more dangerous than any other Fae the "original" might encounter. She's just getting rid of the "extra" will. When one wins, the other's obliterated.

Most Fae don't have Nemesises — or don't *know* they have them. A Nemesis doesn't always spring into existence when his twin's born. They say Nemesises can erupt part of the way through an immortal's life, born of malformed oaths or malefic rituals.

## THE FEUD

Once mortals get used to the nature of Arcadia, the Feud seems reasonable — inevitable, even. In a realm defined by deception and perversity, it only fits that the Kindly Ones' society is the reverse of everything that unites human beings. Hate is love. Vendetta is romance. Destruction is a gift. The Feud is family, pantheon and nation to the True Fae, which means that, as faerie perversion demands, its members vow to bully, insult and eat each other alive.

Feuds aren't *intentionally* perverse. They're logical institutions for a mad Realm. Like changelings, the Fae are bound to promises. This restriction even applies to warfare. No faerie can assault another without permission. Without struggle, the Others starve for lack of a Legend, so they need enemies. To accept the risk of a rival's assault, a Fae needs the promise of a reward, should she prevail. So the Others gather, give each other permission to war for name and Title and build the foundations of Gentry society: feud-sworn Fae vie for supremacy and give birth to Legends.

Fae create Feuds with a common namebound Contract. The oath might specify an order of challenges, themes and permitted tactics, but at its core the agreement gives Feud members permission to attack each other's Titles. Without permission, the Kindly Ones can't directly harm each other. True Fae create Legends to contest a Title. One faerie cre-

ates a challenge; another manifests to conquer it. These are bitter battles for survival, but they don't always manifest as violence. Romance and riddle conflicts are as common as Wisp-soldiers, marching into a bloody melee.

Feudal ties often manifest in a common theme. Some battle through romance alone. There are Feuds of hellish modern warfare and monster-slaying quests, Feuds where every story is played out by swarms of insects or cursed Props and their hapless owners. There might be some secret, mystical reason for enemy Fae to specialize in particular Legends but for the most part, the Feud's Gentry simply have common tastes. The Others don't have friends and lovers as humans understand them, so they share their emotions and artistic aspirations with enemies. Only sworn enemies merit such intimacy.

When a Feud forms, its pact takes on a life of its own. A group of True Fae united all their powers to make it. Even if the end is mutual destruction, the means is a powerful creative act. The oath is a Feudal Court: a special realm that isn't a part of any particular Fae but sustains itself through the efforts of all. It serves as a meeting place for Feud-bonded Fae, who usually visit in Actor form to trade polite jabs or discuss a rare matter of common concern. The Court is neutral ground, so Fae often receive visitors there.

## OMNIPOTENCE CONSTRAINED

A True Fae is incalculably powerful. Their mightiest Contracts can level mountains, but the True Fae *are* mountains too — and trees, and flights of birds, if they wish. They are worlds unto themselves, populated with god-kings and items of power. To encounter one of the Gentry is to step into a land where a war arrays itself in stories. Some changelings are the fifth business of an endless opera, playing spear carrier, chorus member, and heaped corpse in the demesne of an inscrutable soul.

The Gentry are vast beings, but they have boundaries — paradoxically, their vastness *is* a boundary. Kindly Ones thrive on struggle and meaning: things which their power can only destroy unless it's given strict limits. No True Fae can be a hero without fighting hard for a prize, so an Actor needs finite capabilities. If a mountain can't be climbed, it's no mountain at all, but a false representation: a phantom image with no bearing on the faerie's legends. Therefore, Realms are places of cruel fantasy, but never impassable hardship. True Fae bind themselves to rules and limits as naturally as a mortal's heartbeat.

Like a heartbeat, it might be possible to bend or even command the reflex to take lesser forms, but it isn't a common skill. Some Storytellers may want a faerie capable of breaking the rules, but we assume that introducing a faerie with such command over its essence is a major story event, not to be undertaken without a very good reason, and never to be used just to bully players with overwhelming force.



Therefore, Gentry characteristics depend on the form encountered: Actor, Prop, Realm or Wisp. Each form carries the essence of a Title, so the manifestation's fate is the Title's. Killing a Fae's Actor severs his Title, but his other Titles and name are still safe. Like a Feud enemy, the killer cuts away one part but hasn't harmed the remainder.

Every form has its own rules and conditions. The Kindly One chooses her form's characteristics at the moment of manifestation. In Arcadia, she must retain a form for a significant period of time as determined by story events — usually a scene, at least. This is an arbitrary period of time from a materialist perspective, but to the faerie, this is as objective a standard as mortal seconds, minutes or hours. Away from Faerie, the Others can't change or abandon manifestations. Live as a sword and break as a sword.

Save for the weak Actor made by a faerie left with nothing but her name, every manifestation coalesces around a particular Title. The Title determines the form's tell, and the form can't manifest without it. Tells modify themselves to suit the form if they must. When a Lord of the Vengeful Fire makes his Title into an Actor he has burning red eyes, but when he becomes a Realm, the eyes are huge twin suns of the same hue.

Aside from these limits and the following, all manifestations have one other firm rule: none of them can create cold iron.

## ACTORS

An Actor is a living corporeal manifestation. It experiences fleshly limits. It's only so strong, quick and smart. A faerie might play a human-like Actor, a natural animal or some sort of monster — even a thing of stony flesh or living fire. The Actor can change shape to a degree to shift between kiths or add a new flair to his appearance, but without additional supernatural aid The Fae maintains a core form. He can't grow extra limbs when it suits him, but he might change the color of his eyes or body-flames.

Actors are creatures of restraint. Without its boundaries, a Kindly One can't meaningfully interact with others. Omnipotence makes communication difficult as well. A Fae lord might appear as a thousand foot tall demon of liquid bronze, immune to all mortal attacks, but by his own standards, such a thing can scarcely be said to have happened at all. Enthroned in the full power of his nature, a True Fae can no more speak to mortals than humans can to microbes. Legends are pointless too; he always wins, or suffers a stalemate against an equally magnificent foe. That's why he becomes an Actor. He promises the Wyrd that if he wears flesh, he'll live by some of its rules. In exchange, he can enjoy conflict, communicate with inferiors and even bend them to his will. He's agreed to "play fair" at the game of power, so his form has enough solidity to beguile mortals or punish them with raw force.

Thus, Actors have definable game traits. Create an Actor as you would a changeling, but with the following changes:

## THE BASE ACTOR

An Actor is a fragment of an immortal essence, woven of Wyrd-matter and elements. This newly-formed creature is limited, but more powerful than starting, human **World of Darkness** protagonists. Assign the following game traits:

**Attributes:** Prioritize 9/7/5 among character Attributes. Add 1 dot to each priority for every Title the Other holds. Attributes can rise as high as 5+ the number of Titles held. Don't charge double for the fifth and higher dots.

**Skills:** Prioritize 20/12/6 among the Actor's Skills. Add 1 dot to each priority for every Title the Other holds. Skills can rise as high as 5+ the number of Titles held. Don't charge double for the fifth and higher dots.

**Advantages:** True Fae possess Virtues and Vices, but only have Morality scores if they pick up human habits — a rare situation for most, but a distinct possibility for long-term exiles. The Others can adjust Actors' Size and Speed species factors' at the moment of manifestation. Begin with a base of 10 dots to divide between each factor (minimum one dot each) and add 2 more dots per Fae Title. Otherwise, calculate their Advantages as you would for a human.

**Other Traits:** All Actors possess the *Immortal Flesh* and *Ruled by Passion* traits listed on p. 279 of **Changeling: The Lost** under the entry for the Arcadian Huntsman (who represents an experienced Actor born of a three-Title True Fae).

## FAERIE TEMPLATE

Changelings reflect their Keepers; like the Others themselves, they drink from the limitless well of Wyrd, taking shape according to its patterns. Actors fix their fluid natures in an Actor's vessel, so they become much like their slaves, but where a changeling's static nature is a mortal necessity, that of the Actor is a deliberate choice. Apply the changeling template with the following modifications:

**Seeming:** The Actor has one seeming but can switch kiths at will, even adding unique "kiths" that represent a particular shape or attitude. Add an extra die or two to an Actor's pool to represent these dynamic, minor gifts.

**Court:** Actors don't have Courts in the changeling sense, though members of a Feud often exhibit similar powers and attitudes.

**Contracts:** Give the Actor 20 dots of Contracts. Ignore Seeming and Court; simply give the Actor the Contracts he desires. Actors can freely alter the cosmetic aspects of their Contracts (turning ice into a chilling fire, for instance) and at the Storyteller's discretion, might have even broader control over their powers. (See the sidebar below.)

**Wyrd:** Actors have a Wyrd of 5 + 1 per Fae Title.

**Glamour:** Actors begin with maximum Glamour. In Arcadia, they automatically recover Glamour points equal to their Wyrd at the start of every scene. Otherwise harvest it as changelings do.



## Negotiating Power

Actor Contracts represent an instinctual process where the True Fae bargains with the Wyrd for the precise limits of his quasi-mortal shell. As we've said before, a Fae's Titles are "constitutional." They create a structure that lets the immortals negotiate on the fly. True Fae communicate with the Wyrd instinctively; it's a medium through which they make promises to the Earth, sky and everything else. This is a mysterious process (only the Storyteller knows the exact details) but it plays out faster than a mortal can think.

With this principle in mind, you might allow Actors to create new Contract abilities at will. The Actor adds and changes clauses but works within the existing agreement, making his listed Contracts the basis for a new power.

If you go this route, look at existing powers for inspiration but keep to the Contracts' themes. No new clause should ever be more powerful than the standard powers the Actor already exercises within his Contracts. If you have access to **Mage: The Awakening**, you might adapt the systems for improvised magic (called creative thaumaturgy) there, but strict rules aren't necessary because the Actor is almost always a Storyteller-controlled character.

## EXPERIENCE AND EXILE

The Gentry create and dispose of Actors as they see fit but many grow attached to a particular personality. Infirmary, pain, and ignorance are novel things; the struggle to overcome them is even more fascinating. Therefore, a True Fae can earn experience as a particular Actor and use them to improve the form's traits. These benefits don't extend to other Actors, even if they're only variations on the Other's favorite. Most Fae have one or two beloved manifestations that play the lead roles in their Legends, and a hundred others to satisfy fleeting fancies.

Actors who've been on Earth for a long time start to lose their powers. Their ties to Arcadia fade, diminishing their traits over time, making them no better than powerful changelings. Some even acquire Clarity. There are many myths about Fae who forget their true natures. Once an Actor learns the way of Clarity, she loses dynamic control over the Wyrd, and can't switch kiths or renegotiate Contracts. She's subject to the full weaknesses of the flesh and an earthly psyche, loses the Immortal Flesh, and is Ruled by Passion traits. If her form had fantastic traits, these shift to her mien; her worldly form becomes that of a human or animal. Long-time exiles sometimes believe they're really

changelings, normal humans or even the animals on which their beast-Actors were based. There's no hard and fast rule for these transformations. Some of the Others degenerate after days, but many must wait years or even centuries to lose the potent Wyrd within them.

On Earth, Actors can't communicate with the faerie aspects they left in Arcadia. At home, the True Fae doesn't know what happened to her Actor. Some True Fae send new manifestations in search of errant Actors, but many would rather not throw more of themselves into danger. They wait for the Actor's return or send someone else to do the job. Changelings who dare Arcadia might be asked to perform this very task.

Losing an Actor does have one advantage, however: If the Actor's on Earth, its Title can't be claimed in a contest unless an attacker finds the errant manifestation and steals it back to Faerie.

## The Banished

The Banished (see **Changeling**, pp. 272–274) are often Actor-form faeries who've lost all their Titles. Stripped of everything but their names, they were either thrown out of Arcadia on pain of devouring or fled to escape a Feud-mate's attacks. Without Titles, Fae Actors degenerate faster, losing power and gaining Clarity, but if they survive they can learn to earn power the hard way, as changelings do, balancing Wyrd and mortal perceptions.

## DEATH OR IMMORTAL MERCY

An Actor is like a limb or sense organ made of its creator's Title, or name (if the faerie's out of Titles). Kill the Actor and destroy the immortal's investment. True Fae hate losing Titles. Weaker Fae would rather parley at gunpoint than let an Actor go. Thus, any Actor can offer a name-bound oath in exchange for mercy. The myth that a clever mortal can force a boon from a cornered faerie is accurate — a merciful drop of truth in a sea of lies. True Fae supposedly make promises to the wind and Earth itself to avoid natural disasters — and changelings who defeat them in battle. They offer the Pledge of Immortal Mercy.

In theory, this pledge is much like the pledges changelings use themselves, but it's more powerful than the ones changelings use (as described in the **Changeling** core book). The Other vows on his name to perform one single task or abide by one restriction. In exchange, his assailants may never move to harm him, directly or by some indirect plot, until the Fae's Actor manifestation ends.

If the True Fae disobeys his side of the agreement, he's obliterated, as he would be for disobeying any other name-



bound promise. The other parties *cannot* disobey the conditions. The Wyrd enforces this pledge absolutely and due to the disparity in power, the True Fae has the upper hand — not that this means much. The mercy-givers must obey. The Other can freely choose to obey or die. Summer Court sagas record the most famous pledges: “You must free all of your slaves and never take others.” “You are forever banished from this world.” “You must make a part of yourself into the mightiest bow in the world and give it to me, to use as I please.”

## PROPS

As a Prop, the faerie becomes an inanimate object. He could be a ring, sword, cabinet, firearm or PDA. Changelings often assume the Gentry only take archaic forms, but the Others love any object that invokes strong feelings. Props don't always function according to normal mechanical, electronic or chemical principles. One a Fae gun fires human teeth. Wads of dried blood provide explosive force. Not every Prop is so strange. Some look perfectly ordinary, save for the Fae's tell, and it might blend into the Prop well enough to avoid notice.

## THE LAW OF COMMAND

A Prop is more than a shell for its Fae intelligence. It's an object as the Wyrd defines it: something that doesn't act of its own volition. Someone might rouse it with command words, verbal instructions or certain emotions, but these are specific conditions and from the Prop's perspective, inescapable. If an Other takes the shape of a spear cursed to stab kin-slayers in the back, then it *must* do so whenever one appears, even if it would be more useful to let the victim live. The Fae is conscious of everything it does and can perceive things around it, but it can't initiate events outside of the conditions she set for her Prop. Someone else must pick up a Fae sword to make it cut, or hit the buttons on a weird remote control to let an Other present nightmarish TV programs.

Some Props can exercise a great deal of discretion when they obey commands. It all depends on how the Kindly One “designs” the Prop form. These rules can never be so loose as to make the Prop a free-willed being. Still, unless the rules are strict, Fae guns tend to kill innocents, and Prop books tell readers mind-wrenching things they should never know.

## SUBLIME POWERS

A Prop has one power, plus one more for every Title the Fae holds. Each power functions *perfectly* within a narrow purview. It conquers anything defined by dice pools or other mortal-scale game systems. One power almost never implies another. This inflexibility is a function of its symbolic nature as an object, not a living thing — though from the Fae point of view, it's as alive as an Actor or Wisp legion.

For instance, a Prop orb that displays the location of any single person the user visualizes cuts through every power capable of misleading lesser artifacts. Magical bans and stealth-enhancing Contracts won't stop it at all. On the other hand, this orb does exactly what it has manifested to do — nothing

## Pledge-Bound Props

A Kindly One can make Prop functions through pledges. The Prop performs a lesser task (–1) by unleashing its power for the wielder. The power is a greater boon (+3). Design the rest of the pledge to taste. Props inflict greater sanctions (–3) when “owners” fail to live up to their end of the bargain and suffer them when they fail to do so themselves. The latter is a rare event, because it's in the Prop's nature to automatically obey a command. If the Prop breaches the pledge, it's immediately destroyed. The True Fae loses the Prop's Title.

more. If it doesn't have the power to penetrate disguises, the quarry might hide in a crowd wearing a false face. A Prop's powers never encompass the object's every important function. For instance, a Fae dagger could kill anyone it struck or never fail to strike an enemy, but it never does both.

Prop powers usually don't use dice pools, but some powers might require them as a yardstick by which to measure the strength of an effect. In these cases, use the wielder's dice pool and add an equipment bonus of 5 dice +1 for every Title the faerie possesses. If the Storyteller needs to measure successes, don't roll these dice. Each die automatically generates 1 success. If the power would still fail, increase the number of dice and/or successes until the power scores one success.

These dice and automatic successes only apply to the Prop's special powers when it's absolutely necessary to gauge a power's effects this way. Whenever possible, the power should just work. When a character uses the Prop for a function that isn't covered by a power, treat it like a normal piece of equipment with a standard bonus, and roll dice as usual. For example, a Fae toolkit that fixes any engine doesn't require an activation roll. Successes determine the needed labor time and job quality. If someone uses the Prop to fix a house, it provides a normal equipment bonus and requires a dice roll.

When two Props work against each other, either the Prop providing a purely defensive or nullifying effect works, or neither Prop functions. The powers cancel each other out.

## VULNERABILITIES

Props are almost indestructible: no hammer can smash a mirror made of faerie essence; no fire can burn a tree filled with the focused will of the Gentry. Nevertheless, this property isn't innate; it is the result of a Contract with the Wyrd. By its terms, the Fae's Prop form resists every form of damage but one: the Fae can't choose his Prop's weakness. Fae blades that stand up to the hottest forges might melt when children laugh. The Wyrd lays clues of its weakness where they might be found (though they're never easy to find). If the weakness was so secret as to be impossible to exploit, it wouldn't be a weakness at all.



Like an Actor, a Prop's native intelligence can only communicate with the rest of the True Fae while it resides in Arcadia, so a Fae doesn't necessarily know his Prop's location when it's gone astray. As Props rarely have the ability to find their own way home, the Gentry hate to go to Earth as Props. But in the mortal world, a Prop can keep one of its master's Titles safe from the Feud. Props are tough and easy to hide, so they're a viable way to preserve the Other's essence against Fae attack. An earthbound Prop's Title can't be seized through Arcadian Legend-combat.

Props occasionally change after spending years outside Arcadia. They might get weaker; their powers and shapes might change. A Prop's Fae awareness could go crazy from isolation or pick up mortal ways of thinking. Not all Props change this way, but those that do transform more slowly than Actors, evolving over centuries of exile.

## REALMS

True Fae are worlds. When they choose to manifest as such, as Realms built from their thoughts, they can support civilizations, ecosystems, and myth-cycles spun from the Titles and Wyrd energies. Realms obey the rules of dreams and minds, not physical laws, and do so to accommodate visitors, including fellow Fae and foreign visitors. Realms can challenge visitors, but not utterly vanquish them. As always, free will is meaningless unless it can be exercised against the Other's desires, so she must disarm them to an extent to allow opposition.

All Realms have at least one gateway. This always features a symbolic threshold: a door, bridge or even just a tattered sign

that says, "Now Entering the Land of Tears." A Realm isn't a Realm unless it can be visited. By definition, anything else would just be the inaccessible depths of an Other's mind. True Fae can't lock their Realms away but they do appoint guardians to keep slaves in and unwanted visitors out.

Note that this isn't the only way a True Fae can rule over an Arcadian fief of his very own. For faerie domains that are less... intimately attached to their rulers, see p. 108.

## THE LAW OF HOSPITALITY

Realms must be hospitable. They can have dangerous features, but the Realm can't be an inescapable death trap for visitors. This doesn't mean they have to resemble the mortal world. Instead, they're livable regardless of appearance. If a Kindly One takes the form of an ocean without end, guests can breathe its water. The law of hospitality isn't universal: dangerous places do exist, but they can't encompass the entire Realm. Unusual phenomena and hostile encounters injure or kill travelers just as comparable phenomena would on Earth. In the mortal world, it's suicide to swim in molten lava. In a Realm dominated by lava it does visitors no harm, but strange veins of impossible ice inflict terrible burns. It would be as easy for an informed visitor to avoid the latter as the former, but changeling invaders don't always know what to look for. They'll find it hard to identify hazards until they understand the Realm's themes and nature. It doesn't help that the natives lie all the time, either.

The law of hospitality doesn't apply to anything born of or ruled by the Fae herself. She can kill entire Realm-





born species with a thought and holds the power of life and death over her changeling slaves. Former slaves need not worry; they broke the master's bond when they escaped.

## THE LAW OF PATTERNS

Fortunately, travelers can understand Realms if they uncover underlying signs, metaphors and rules. Realms *must* have them; the law of patterns demands it. Consider the strange, lethal ice in that volcanic Realm. Nothing on Earth is like it, but its *meaning* is easy to understand. In a realm with seas of fire and ash, ice represents a radical temperature extreme, just as an active lava field would be the same thing for someone on Earth. In one Fae Realm, anger lights fires and true love makes the air fragrant with sweat and cherry blossoms, but there's never a moment where anger suddenly makes trees grow instead — unless *that* change is also part of some underlying, comprehensible pattern.

The Others are born of chaos but must strike a balance between it and the goal of creating a shared environment. A faerie could create a closed space to indulge any desire. She could fill it with flesh-eating air and storms strong enough to tear moons in half, but nobody else could actually enter such a place. It would be a preserve for intimate flights of fancy, just like a mortal's private thoughts. Realms exist to be experienced by other beings, including changeling slaves and Feud rivals.

Fae Legends unfold in their Realms, sustaining the Gentry through their measureless lives. Others shape them to follow Legend themes. If one faerie challenges another to pursue an office romance, the Realm turns into an endless office building filled with cubicles and computers. Posters feature company slogans and a logo based on the master's Title-tell. Another True Fae enters in Actor form. He's the protagonist, searching for love amidst the daily drudge. Encountering an Actor in the midst of Legend play can be a hazard or an opportunity, depending on the situation. One or both Fae (Actor and Realm) might recruit changelings to influence the course of events.

Realms also support a Keeper's changeling retinue. Not every Faerie lord swallows up slaves in a Realm but most at least manifest as the "master's estate" to admit servants and their dues from time to time. Merciful Gentry support most of their slaves in a Realm, because it's the only place where the Taken can find comfort without striking a Contract. The changeling has already paid for her lord's "kindness" with her service. A Kindly One can withhold his Realm's grace from his slaves whenever he pleases, for the law of hospitality doesn't apply to them. Holding Realm form for the sake of the slaves is onerous but secure. It occupies a Title with the business of keeping the form, but the changelings within are utterly confined by their master's power and can always be spied upon.

## THE KING IS THE LAND

True Fae are potentially aware of everything that happens in their Realms, but unless a pressing need arises they don't bother with every detail. Just as mortals don't con-

sciously examine every thought or sensation, the Others, while dimly aware of everything, concentrate on a few special concerns, such as a Legend's progress or a slave's amusing escape plan (provided the latter is especially amusing).

As a Realm, a Kindly One can reshape herself with a thought, but no matter how radical the changes are they must accommodate the law of hospitality. He can't put impassable obstacles or unstoppable threats before visitors. The rules depend on the desires and destinies of visitors too, so situations that are not so much dangerous as unacceptably inconvenient aren't allowed, either. If a motley searches for a city in the Realm, its lord can move it to the moon, but a flying ship will inevitably appear to take travelers beyond the clouds — whether the Fae wants it or not. He can make it rain heavy stones, but he can't throw a million-ton block of supersonic granite. Realm-shaping obeys the law of patterns, too; changes can't be instantaneous and always follow some kind of detectable processes. The lord can send winged giants to fly the city to the moon, surround it in magic fog, or get the citizens to build a bizarre teleportation machine around it, but he can't make it vanish in the blink of an eye. The land moves like water or rebuilds itself like a giant machine, but never changes at the snap of a finger.

Because they're necessarily finite, Realm hazards (of whatever sort) can't provide an opposing dice pool greater than 15+ triple the Other's total Titles, or impose a dice pool penalty of more than 5+ the Fae's Titles. Use the maximum values for extreme situations, where the Realm concentrates on stymieing particular visitors or making a single location truly perilous. "Unconscious" threats that are just part of the Realm's scenery aren't as hazardous.

## LIVING THINGS

A Realm's inhabitants belong to three categories: independents, extensions, and slaves. Independents are free-willed inhabitants. This category includes visitors from Earth, other True Fae and other forms (Actors, Props or Wisps) of the same True Fae as the Realm itself. They can leave the Realm at any time, assuming they overcome intervening hazards. The laws of hospitality and patterns apply to independent visitors.

Extensions are parts of the Realm. They're animals, plants, people, and less easily defined entities that were created with the Realm. They cease to exist when the Realm ceases and they can't leave. Storytellers can treat them like standard hazards when they swarm visitors or work up individual traits. If you pick the latter option, a human-like champion's best dice pools should be about two thirds the Realm's maximum hazard dice. Huge monsters and very specialized creatures might have higher pools in a narrow range of actions, along with significant vulnerabilities. Extensions are never as powerful as Actors born of the same faerie. Plant (and some weird animal) extensions bear goblin fruits from time to time. In an exception to the normal rules for extensions, characters can take these out of Realms, though they can't take the things that grew them.



Slaves are changelings who belong to the Realm's creator. They can leave and can't be forced to act against their will, but they can be reshaped or killed whenever their master desires, as they dwell within her.

## WISPS

Wisps are servant legions, monsters that are both creation and creator. An Other is his Wisps as much as he's a Realm, Actor, Prop or the entity behind all such manifestations. They are weaker than Actors but stronger than a Realm's living extensions. True Fae even give their Wisps true independence from time to time, by severing them from the Fae souls. Wisps are strong in numbers: enemies must kill every Wisp in a pack to destroy their bonded Title. They can travel beyond Arcadia, so Gentry use them as agents and "hounds." On the grandest forays, a faerie might appear as an Actor with a pack of Wisp-wolves as her retinue.

Court sages say that when the world was closer to Faerie, the Others visited humans in Wisp forms. They were house-elves and hearth gods for anyone they favored — and monsters for anyone they hated. True Fae know the old tales, too. They make Wisps that look like the little fairies and gnomes of old, but these are rarely the kind, hidden folk of old stories. The old hearth-bonds are gone, or people don't know how to call upon them, so Wisps are as cruel or kind as they please.

## NUMBERS

By investing a single Title, a faerie weaves the Wyrd into a number of Wisp forms. Give the Other 20 "Wisp points," +4 per Title she possesses. To keep this number from being too exact and contrived, roll one die and add the result (the 1–10 number on the die, not whether it succeeds according to the rules) to determine the number of available points per manifestation.

Spend these points on each Wisp's Wyrd score. Wyrd 1 costs one point, Wyrd 2 costs two points, Wyrd 3 costs four points, Wyrd 4 costs eight points and Wyrd 5 costs 16 points. No Wisp can have a Wyrd higher than 5. For greater powers, the Fae must manifest an Actor.

A single litter of Wisps all share the same tell, but otherwise, they can be as different from each other as the Other wishes — or so similar that no mortal eye can tell them apart.

## POWERS

A Wisp's Wyrd dots indicate its general power level. A Wyrd 1 Wisp begins with five dots of Contracts or equivalent abilities; it's about as competent as a newly-escaped changeling. Wisps often resemble the Lost, but they don't have to abide by Court or Seeming Contract restrictions. Many Wisps are monsters: huge beasts, mythical creatures or amalgamations of humans, animals and elemental forces. Nevertheless, use changeling traits as a starting point. Add

seemings and kiths to taste. Like changelings, Wisps are vulnerable to cold iron. Every Wisp also has the same Ruled by Passion trait as an Actor, but they lack Immortal Flesh. They don't have Clarity scores.

Customize stronger Wisps with bonus experience points: 25 per Wyrd dot past the first is a good guideline, on par with the parameters for experienced characters according to the **World of Darkness** core book.

### *Open Your Books*

Wisps are fragments of chaos. Players never portray them, so feel free to relax the internal logic of supernatural powers in your quest to design cool creatures. We're pretty sure anyone reading this owns the **Changeling** core book so we've used the Lost's rules to model Wisps, but there's no reason you can't pull in traits from other books. Give a Wisp Disciplines, Arcana, Gifts, spirit Numina — anything that fits its concept. You can even steal innate supernatural abilities from other games. Flesh-eating, predatory Wisps might use "meat" points like vampiric Vitae. They could assume huge, toothy war forms nicked from **Werewolf: The Forsaken**. Substitute the relevant supernatural trait (like Blood Potency, Primal Urge or Gnosis) with the Wisp's Wyrd when you need to and make cosmetic changes to provide the right look and feel.

In other words, you have our full permission to create crazy monsters with the crossed-over powers you'd never allow in other situations. Make Wisps weird any way you can

## MOTLEY MINDS AND SEVERED SPIRITS

A True Fae is her Wisps — mostly. In Arcadia, Fae's manifestations share a common mind. Implementing an idea falls within the realm of each Wisp's individual mental capacity, however, while a Wisp is bound to the sublime mind of a Faerie, it can still make stupid decisions.

Like Actors, Wisps who leave Arcadia lose this connection. Traveling Wisps have a separate group consciousness that follows them wherever they go. What one knows, they all know. This bond also prevents Wisps from dividing themselves across different spiritual realms. Ten Wisps under the same Title could dwell on Earth, in Arcadia or roam the Hedge, but they couldn't scatter across these Realms simultaneously. Wisps freely roam different regions of the same Realm, however. In Arcadia, a Wisp litter can divide itself between multiple domains and Fae Realms.



While it might seem possible for a clever changeling to hold one Wisp hostage to keep the others in a particular Realm, the pack always has the power to sever a Wisp from the whole. Fae sometimes do this intentionally, giving birth to free-roaming monsters. Severed Wisps have individual minds and can never rejoin the pack, but they also have free will and might even develop a sense of Clarity. They can disobey their old masters if they choose, but many stay loyal and become the Others' agents in far-flung places. The Severed can accumulate experience and improve their abilities, so they're usually more powerful than their old litter-mates. Bonded Wisps do not improve over time, however. They are static, disposable forms, so unless something threatens an entire pack, Fae think nothing of sacrificing them, leaving a few safe to hold their Titles.

## LAWS OF ARCADIA

There aren't many rational reasons to try returning to Arcadia. The odds are highly in favor of being captured, slaughtered, or simply lost forever along the way. But sometimes a changeling or even a whole motley will play those odds anyway. Sometimes desperation or hope will drive them to risk everything.

One changeling cannot rest easily unless he finds a way to hunt down and kill his Keeper. Another remembers precious and wondrous objects that she hopes to steal. Most who dare the Thorns a second time are driven by the most poignant need of all — rescuing someone, a recently-abducted friend, loved one, or someone who they left behind when they escaped. These Lost hope to travel back to Arcadia, accomplish their goal, and then leave as rapidly as possible. It's rare that any are heard from again. But it's possible.

## THE JOURNEY TO ARCADIA

While less difficult than escaping from Arcadia, going back is far from simple. However, there are several ways to ease the journey, at least to some extent.

### GUIDES

Using a guide is simultaneously the most reliable and the most dangerous way to return to Arcadia. The problem is that the only reliable guides back to Arcadia are the Gentry themselves. Most True Fae are only too happy to return one or more of the Lost to Arcadia, but they usually make certain that these changelings are disarmed and securely bound with both physical restraints and powerful magic that prevents them from using Contracts. For obvious reasons, few Lost consider this option unless they believe they have found some trick to make it seem they are far more helpless than they actually are.

An only slightly safer option is persuading one of the Fae to willingly guide a group of free and well-armed changelings back to Arcadia. While exceedingly risky, this can be accomplished in a number of ways. Changelings who have somehow extracted a favor or promise from one of the Gentry can

use it to compel that Fae to escort them and their motley safely back to Arcadia. (It may also take a second favor or promise to keep their guide from immediately announcing their presence to the other Arcadian nobles.) Such a guide will avoid taking the Lost to its own domain, but is willing to lead them anywhere else, and may even provide useful advice if the changelings wish to travel to the domain of one of its rivals. If the changeling with the favor does not specify to which domain he wishes to go, the Fae will always lead him to the domain of one of its enemies.

Extracting such a promise is... difficult. The Faerie Favor Merit from *Rites of Spring* (pg. 90) is a sufficient shortcut. Most changelings must trade one of the Gentry something it wants sufficiently badly to make this deal. Freedom is good; if the motley has managed to capture one of the Others, it may be willing to swear a promise at cold iron knife-point. And while the True Fae are most focused on themselves, they also pay quite a bit of attention to one another. A motley might gain favor by swearing an oath to kill, disgrace or otherwise cause trouble for their potential guide's worst enemy. The wisest and luckiest changelings bargain for a guide both to and from Arcadia. Unfortunately, each leg of this journey requires a separate favor. Two changelings who each possess the Faerie Favor Merit could manage this; otherwise, the changeling is almost certain to have to make one or more deals with one of the Gentry, and each deal with the Gentry carries its own, often high price.

Fae can take changelings to (and perhaps from) Arcadia in one of two ways. They can either lead them there or back along one of the wide and easy roads they favor, or they can give the characters a potent travel token that opens the way to or from Arcadia. Each of these methods has its own advantages and drawbacks.

A Fae guide automatically attracts more notice, but changelings in the company of such a being may not, being often assumed to be part of its retinue. However, once in Arcadia, the Others prove willing to demean themselves in the presence of their fellows by acting as a changeling's guide or protector. While the changelings are in Arcadia, they are on their own. The Gentry may have provided them with advice and possibly even tokens, but the deal stops at protection. Also, once the changelings wish to leave, the one who made the deal with the Fae must find a way to call the guide to her. It is a trivial matter for one of the Gentry to make a one-use token that allows the bearer to convey a short message to it anywhere in Arcadia, but the Gentry are never experts at conforming to one another's timetable. Alternately, the changelings can make their own way to the Gentry. However, that plan carries its own risks. Neither option allows for a swift exit from Arcadia, and in many cases, simply fleeing into the Hedge is by far the safest option.

### TRAVEL TOKENS

The fastest and simplest way to travel between Arcadia and the mortal world is by using a travel token. These rare



and potent items instantly transport a changeling and her companions between Arcadia and the mortal world, without any necessity of traveling through the Hedge. These tokens can take many forms, but all of them can only be used once — much like trifles, but far too powerful to be called by that name. Some are cakes that can be broken into parts, with everyone traveling eating a piece, at which point they are instantly transported. Or they can be a candle the user sets in a doorway and burns to enter or leave Arcadia; the characters must merely step through the doorway and over the candle to leave or enter Arcadia.

Regardless of the particular form it takes, to activate it, a changeling or True Fae must touch it, spend three points of Glamour to activate it, and then use it in the indicated way. A single travel token can transport no more than six changelings, mortals, or Gentry. Any portion of it that is not used crumbles to a fine dust. Changelings who journey to Arcadia in this fashion must either have another travel token to return to the mortal world or be prepared to make their way home through the Hedge. Rare as these items are, it's unlikely for any motley to see more than one in their time. Therefore, some plan to make their own way to Arcadia and use the travel token to make their way home. However, for changelings held captive in Arcadia, a travel token is a pearl beyond price, and most would sell their children into slavery to possess one. Anyone carrying one in Arcadia would do well to keep its presence a secret. Also, these items are not without their risks. Using a travel token is far easier and swifter than calling upon one of the Gentry, but if a token is lost or stolen, then it is useless.

Changelings can sometimes acquire travel tokens without making a deal with the Gentry. Some loyalists have them, as do changelings who are still enslaved to their Keepers. Changelings who hope to travel to Arcadia sometimes attempt to stage raids on loyalists in the hope of finding one. However, these items are sufficiently rare that players cannot ordinarily purchase them with the Token Merit at character creation.

To use a travel token, the changeling initiating travel must state a desired location in either Faerie or the physical world (such as “my home” or “the lands of my Keeper”), spend three Glamour, and roll Resolve + Wyrd to determine success for the group. Everyone who shares the same travel token arrives within a few yards of one another. Travel tokens may not be used if anyone attempting to use it is carrying cold iron or hand-forged iron. They can be used only to travel between one world and another; a travel token will not carry its user from one Earth location to another, or from one portion of Arcadia to a location within the Hedge.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The changeling and those accompanying her ends up in an exceptionally awkward and potentially dangerous location. If returning to the mortal world, they might appear on the window ledge of the 30<sup>th</sup>

story of a tall office building, or inside a locked bank vault or an in-use submarine. If traveling to Arcadia, the user might appear in her Keeper's home or potentially even in front of her Keeper.

**Failure:** The changeling and those accompanying her find themselves in a random location far from where they hoped to be, perhaps deep in the Thorns or lost in the deep wilderness.

**Success:** The changeling and those accompanying her find themselves roughly where the changeling wanted them to be. If the changeling wished to arrive in the same room as someone, she might end up merely in the same building, on the same floor, or standing next to that changeling's dwelling. Regardless of the exact details, the changeling's precise target is no more than 50 yards away.

**Exceptional Success:** In addition to being exactly where the changeling hoped to arrive, the travelers arrive at a time when no one but anyone they were traveling to see is present and so everyone who arrived has at least five turns to hide, sneak out, or otherwise ready themselves for someone else's arrival.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Traveling to an exceptionally familiar area, like the changeling's home or his Keeper's Palace
+1	Traveling to a well known person, like the changeling's parent or Keeper
-2	Traveling someplace based only on descriptions or photographs

### DEALS, PAWNS, AND CAT'S-PAWS

Some Gentry are cast out from Arcadia by their peers. The safest alliances (relatively speaking, of course) are those where the changeling makes a deal with one of these exiles. Since these Fae are for some reason unable to return to Arcadia, they are the most eager to make a deal with someone who is able to visit Arcadia and accomplish some task for them. However, all they can provide is information about hidden paths through Arcadia, the correct paths to take when walking the “wide road” to Arcadia, the location of potentially useful tokens, and knowledge of how to contact Gentry or changelings who will aid visitors who speak the correct name or phrase. Such information can be invaluable, but it may also no longer be accurate. Exiled Fae never possess travel tokens; if one did, he would promptly use it.

If an exile can't be found, though, there's still a chance of making a deal with a still-landed Gentry. The first difficulties are finding one that might be interested in such a bargain, and making enough of a show of strength and cleverness that the Fae is persuaded to deal fairly with the Lost. It's not an easy task, but working in the changelings' favor is the Others' often manipulative and darkly humorous nature. Sending former Arcadian slaves or pets to weaken or humiliate



a rival is an appealing form of one-upmanship. Even better, by using free changelings as cat's-paws, they can truthfully swear that neither they nor any of their servants or retainers were responsible for their rival's misfortune.

Changelings can be asked to perform almost any task. Most often, it involves stealing a particular object and bringing it to the Gentry with which they are making the deal. However, this task can involve everything from liberating as many of the target's changelings as possible, to breaking or defacing a particularly important part of the target's dwelling or lands, to delivering a single golden rose and placing it on the Gentry's bed. In a few rare cases, the goals of their Fae allies might align perfectly with those of the changelings who wish to visit Arcadia. Sometimes, having the changelings free a few of their fellows who are still enslaved or perhaps steal some valuable object is all that their ally wants. However, in such cases, the changelings can expect very minimal aid from the Fae since the changelings already want to do precisely what it wishes them to do. At most, the changelings can expect some information about easy ways to and from their destination.

Gentry never ask changelings to kill one of their fellows. Some consider the idea of a changeling killing another True Fae to be utterly horrifying; to others, it's an impossible notion. If changelings kill one of the Gentry while working with another, they make a relentless enemy of their tenuous ally.

Most often, Fae agree to provide their changeling cat's-paws with some methods of safe passage to and from Arcadia, as well as information about the location of everything they wish to find. On occasion, they can even provide the changelings with a token or two that provides them some other equally useful aid. In almost all cases, such tokens are between one and three dots. The changelings will also be provided with some method of potentially leaving Arcadia safely. As with many other fae, they may ask for a pledge that the changelings will do their best to accomplish the Gentry's goal before they leave. Alternately, the Other may arrange that the method of exit will only work once the changelings have attempted to accomplish this goal to the best of their ability.

On rare occasions, the Gentry actively seek out changelings and offer to make such a deal. These deals may be loaded, such as capturing one or more changelings or their loved ones and making it very clear that the price of refusal is dragging the captives back to Arcadia to serve as its slaves. Deals that changelings make because the alternative is involuntary return to Arcadia are always far from ideal. Sometimes, changelings who would otherwise never have considered traveling back to Arcadia end up making a powerful pledge to go there and perform some task there because the alternative is far worse. Occasionally, changelings must agree to attempt to steal some object from one of the Gentry who they have never heard of, in a completely unknown domain. These coerced pledges usually result in

the changeling obtaining nothing more than a pledge that the Gentry will provide her and her companions with safe passage to the desired portion of Arcadia and then some method of safe passage back to the mortal world once the mission has been accomplished.

Deals with the Gentry can provide great advantage, but are always perilous. No matter how much the Other may attempt to paint itself as their ally against a common foe, it inevitably sees its "partners" as disposable tools, and their safety is never of any concern to the Fae, beyond whatever pledge they make to ensure this. Also, the more information and aid one of the Gentry willingly provides to changelings, the more difficult the task they are asking the changelings to accomplish is. Offers of detailed instructions and several tokens provided without extensive negotiations always means that the task the Gentry is asking the changelings to perform is exceptionally difficult and risky. And, of course, the True Fae care little for the changelings' safe return home. They'll offer assistance to get the job done, but safe extraction of any non-essentials is up to the Lost in question.

## THE WIDE ROAD

Regardless of whether or not a motley has a guide, if they aren't using a travel token, the most important part of getting to Arcadia is choosing the road. The easiest roads are the wide and straight boulevards on which the Gentry travel. These are easy to find; getting to Arcadia merely requires following the road to its end. Unfortunately, these roads are also exceptionally dangerous. Changelings who travel this route are likely to be stopped, questioned, harassed or set upon by any Gentry they meet, and they are almost certain to encounter the Gentry. To represent the dangers of highway travel, roll a number of dice equal to the sum of the number of characters traveling along the road + the highest Wyrd score of any of the Lost who are going along. Both numbers and high Wyrd make changelings more noticeable to the Fae. Each success indicates one group of True Fae that notices the changelings. These Gentry likely leave the changelings alone if they are accompanying one of the Gentry, assuming they are the Fae's retinue. Particularly skilled changelings may be able to bluff the Others, such as by means of the Gentrified Bearing Merit from *Rites of Spring* (p. 92). Unaccompanied changelings or changelings whose deception has been discovered are valuable prizes for the True Fae, who hope to either claim them for their own or claim some boon by returning them to their Keepers.

Once they arrive in Arcadia, the journey along this road becomes slightly more complex. The road branches, with separate paths leading to each of Arcadia's many domains. There are useful landmarks for any who know the way. However, changelings who are traveling this road without advice or aid can easily become lost. Their only guide is to pause and look down each of the dozen or so separate paths into which the road branches. The changelings should all make Wits + Wyrd rolls to catch a glimpse



of what is down each road, with the appropriate bonuses or penalties for high or low Clarity. Down these paths, changelings see dense forests, Sun seared deserts, exotic Realms of air with floating palaces or lands of animate fire.

To find a particular domain, the changelings must choose the road where the glimpses they catch most closely resemble their destination. Then, their path branches either once or twice more, and the characters will need to do the same thing again. The problem with this approach is that the Gentry always know precisely where they are going and never need to stop to examine all of the possible routes. Any changelings who are looking around are automatically suspicious and must explain their behavior to any Gentry they encounter while deciding which path to take.

## THE NARROW ROAD

The safest way to Arcadia, if “safest” can be used to refer to any path leading to that inhuman Realm, is by way of the narrow and twisting paths through the Hedge. The only possible paths to Arcadia lead at least partly through the Thorns: as a result, the characters are virtually guaranteed to be completely devoid of Glamour by the time they make their way to Arcadia. Unlike navigating through the Hedge in order to travel from one portion of the mortal world to another, finding the way to Arcadia is relatively simple. The Hedge almost seems to funnel characters in this direction. As long as the changelings always choose the path that seems the most exotic and strange, they continue deeper into the Hedge and will eventually reach Arcadia. Unfortunately, managing to arrive at the desired portion of Arcadia is considerably more difficult. To navigate through the Thorns to get to Arcadia, the players each make an Intelligence + Survival roll at the beginning of the journey, just as if they were attempting to navigate through the Hedge to some destination in the mortal world.

## ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** The characters fail to find Arcadia. Instead, they end up in some location deep in the Hedge that is exceptionally dangerous. Options include arriving in front of a large band of hungry hobgoblins or stumbling onto one of the Gentry’s roads leading to Arcadia, immediately in front of a group of Gentry.

**Failure:** The characters arrive in Arcadia, but in a domain very different from the one they desired. Often, this ends up being a domain familiar to one of the characters, but not the one the characters were attempting to reach.

**Success:** The characters arrive in the desired domain, at a relatively safe entry point.

**Exceptional Success:** The path through the Thorns leads the characters to precisely the portion of the domain they are seeking. They arrive within earshot or so of the particular garden or building they were hoping to find. If the characters keep track of the place they exited the Hedge and

leave by the same location, they gain a +3 bonus to the roll to make their way back to the mortal world (see p. 107).

In addition to the obvious dangers waiting in Arcadia, the deeper into the Hedge changelings go, the more populated it becomes. Changelings and the Gentry are not the only inhabitants of Arcadia. The True Fae create a variety of hobgoblin servants, some from captured mortals or mortal animals, and some from the raw stuff of Faerie. Because most prove far less interesting to the Gentry than changelings do, the True Fae occasionally discard unwanted creatures into the Hedge and others escape into the Hedge. However, lacking the connection to the mortal world that changelings possess, hobgoblins wander the Hedge. Most learn to live there, but some cluster close to Arcadia, occasionally slipping in briefly to attempt to steal some useful trifle from the Fae or to feed on some of the exotic delicacies that they miss. Other hobgoblins are of less clear origins, descendants of unknown forebears or germinated life from the Thorns themselves.

The hobgoblins that live near the borders of Arcadia are the most desperate and dangerous of their kind, because they have not made an independent life for themselves. Some hope to win a new place for themselves in Arcadia, possibly by capturing changelings attempting to sneak into Arcadia and turning them over to the Fae. Others see changelings with valuable tokens and powerful abilities as either especially tasty prey carrying useful treasures or potential slaves. Of course, not all of these encounters are necessarily negative. Some hobgoblins make their living sneaking in and out of Arcadia and, for the right price, may be willing to work with changelings attempting to do the same.

Unfortunately, while a few hobgoblins can be exceptionally useful allies or guides, others are sufficiently treacherous or incompetent that they will be a danger or at least a serious burden. The least competent can accidentally betray the changelings to the Fae. Others are either secretly working for the Fae or attempt to lead their supposed allies into a trap or betray the changelings to the Gentry to win their favor. Pledges that are both carefully worded and sufficiently powerful can prevent disloyalty, but hobgoblins are masters of following only the precise wording of a pledge and avoiding dangerous incompetence is considerably more difficult. Also, hobgoblins are only willing to work with changelings in return for some service. The journey into Arcadia can easily be made considerably riskier and more difficult by having to stop to loot various portions of Arcadia, while also attempting to rescue a comrade or a recently-abducted child.

Other hobgoblins may have no interest in accompanying the changelings into Arcadia, but may have left there sufficiently recently that they possess valuable information, possibly even including the location of a newly-abducted captive or the fate of a friend who an escaping changeling had to leave behind. Changelings must weigh the difficulty of paying for such information with its potential value.



While their motives and intentions can vary wildly, any changeling attempting to sneak through the Hedge into Arcadia will encounter several hobgoblins as they approach Arcadia. Changelings who have studied Arcadia and those who claim to have snuck back in and escaped again all differ as to their advice on dealing with hobgoblins. Some advise avoiding them, others talk about how their aid can be invaluable, and a few suggest using them as a distraction by encouraging them to launch a raid on Arcadia that is completely separate from the changelings' venture there.

## IN ARCADIA

Once the journey has been completed, the changeling and her companions must now face being in Arcadia. It is every bit as terrible and as wondrous as they remember. Navigating this dreamlike Realm is just the first of many challenges. The details of the wonders they will see and the dangers they will face relate to the particular domain. However, some truisms apply to the entirety of Arcadia.

## CLARITY AND ARCADIA

Traveling to Arcadia exacts a terrible price on a changelings' Clarity. When the changeling first enters Arcadia, and every time that a number of days equal to her Wyrd passes there, she must roll two dice to avoid losing Clarity. In addition, every full scene that the changeling spends in the immediate presence of one of the Gentry requires another Clarity roll.

Fortunately, there are ways to mitigate this loss. Just as a changeling's ties to the mortal world allowed him to escape from Arcadia, more deliberate ties in the form of pledges can help prevent the changeling from losing Clarity while in Arcadia. These pledges must be struck with ordinary humans living in the mortal world. The pledges must be used to perform either a medial or a great endeavor for the mortal. In return, the changeling gains a +1 bonus on all Clarity rolls made in Arcadia either to resist loss of Clarity or avoid gaining a derangement. For a slightly greater bonus, the changeling can swear to rescue someone important to the mortal. Swearing to do everything they possibly can to rescue someone raises the bonus to +2. If the character defaults on the pledge (such as by refusing an opportunity to rescue the target), the pledge is broken, and the character receives no further bonus — including the degeneration check he may risk for breaking a pledge.

### Regaining Clarity

In addition to methods of mitigating Clarity loss, changelings can also regain Clarity from a trip to Arcadia. Reaching the mortal world from Arcadia a second time and successfully rescuing someone from Arcadia can both allow a changeling to regain Clarity. In both cases, the changeling rolls one die for every two points of Clarity (rounded up). Any bonuses from pledges are not added to these rolls. A success on either roll causes the changeling to gain one

## *Iron and Arcadia*

It is possible to bring both cold iron and hand-forged iron into Arcadia. However, doing either is difficult, and bringing hand-forged iron into Arcadia is nearly suicidal. Taking either of these materials into Arcadia forces the changelings to travel through the Hedge. Travel tokens do not work for anyone carrying cold or hand-forged iron. In addition, the Gentry can sense cold iron when they look closely at someone, just as they can sense hand-forged iron anywhere in their line of sight, including locations they cannot actually see. Since none of the Gentry would ever carry either material and they are even less likely to travel with servants who do, taking the Gentry's wide road into Arcadia is far too risky for sane changelings to attempt. Instead, the travelers must make their way through the Hedge and the Thorns. Because Arcadia rejects iron, carrying cold iron causes a -3 penalty to navigate to Arcadia, and the penalty for carrying hand-forged iron is -5. Fortunately, this penalty only applies to trips to Arcadia; characters can flee Arcadia while carrying iron with no penalty.

Once in Arcadia, both materials are very useful. Cold iron not only allows the bearer to penetrate armor, it also reduces the Durability of all ephemeral creations (see p. 103) to 0. As a result, the bearer can cut through a stone wall or metal door as easily as through paper or soft clay. Hand-forged iron is even more powerful, destroying all ephemeral creations that it strikes with one touch and causing aggravated wounds to the Gentry. However, the Gentry who control a particular domain can instantly sense when someone enters carrying hand-forged iron, and can pinpoint the individual quickly. This ability allows the Fae to easily avoid someone carrying it, and also to direct their changeling and hobgoblin servants to attack and kill anyone daring to bring this dreaded substance into their Realm.

While cold iron is considerably safer to carry, if one of the Gentry focuses its attention on someone carrying an item of cold iron, they can recognize the anathema presence. Some travelers are willing to risk carrying cold iron into Arcadia, but the few stories of what has happened to those who try to carry hand-forged iron into Arcadia are sufficiently horrible that very few consider doing so.



point of Clarity, while a failure on this roll has no negative consequences. Rescuing a mortal or changeling from Arcadia is worth a Clarity roll (only one regardless of the number rescued), and every changeling involved in the rescue gets a roll.

## ENTERING A DOMAIN

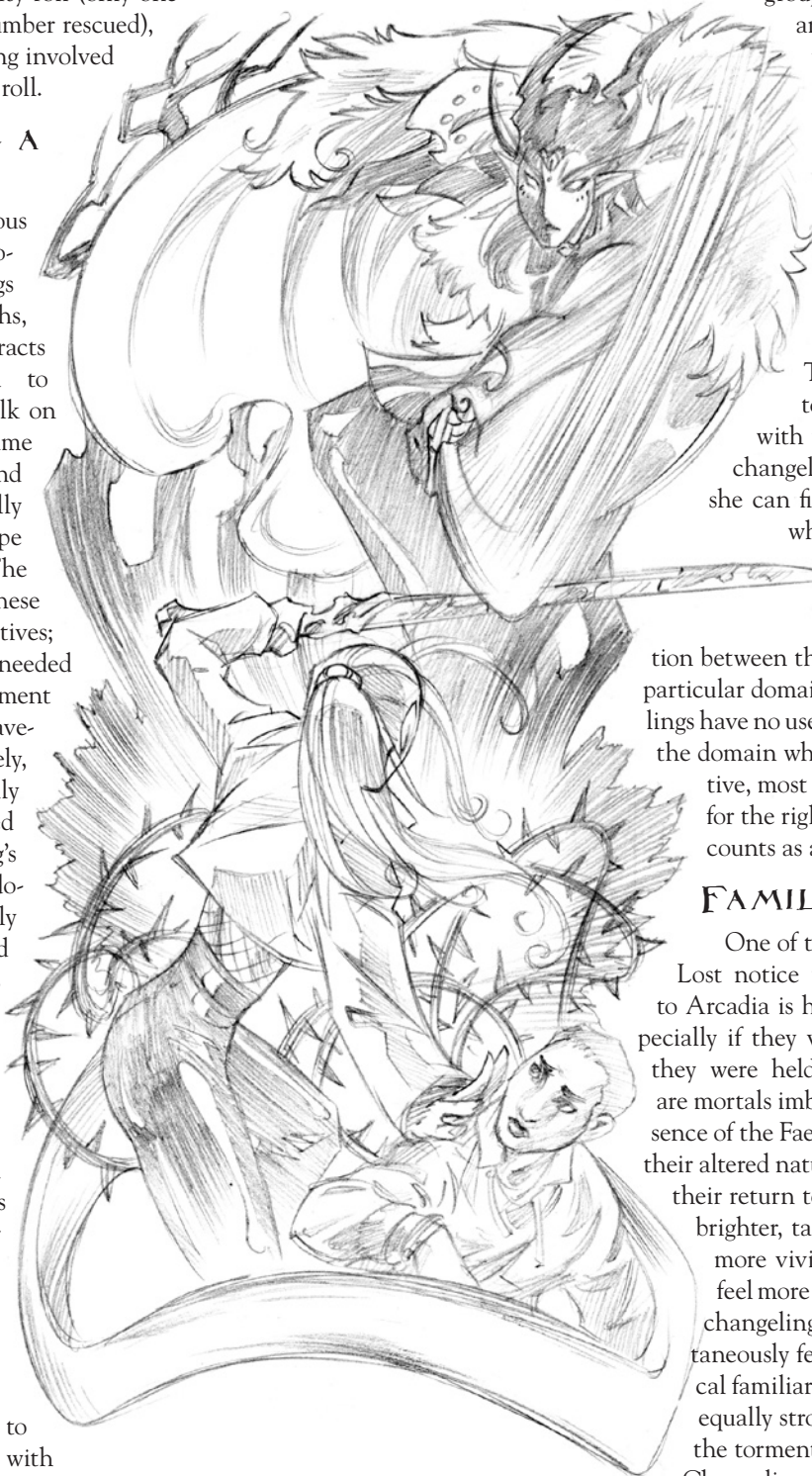
Their previous stay in Arcadia provided all changelings with the basic oaths, pledges and Contracts that allow them to breathe the air, walk on the ground, consume food and drink, and interact normally with the landscape and buildings. The Gentry forged these pledges for their captives; the changelings needed to make no payment beyond their enslavement. Unfortunately, these pacts apply only to the domain owned by the changeling's Keeper, those domains most closely allied with it, and any other domains the changeling visited during her captivity. Visiting a new and unfamiliar domain means dealing with ground that rejects your footfalls, water that flees your lips — in effect, a land that refuses you unless you pledge with it.

Pledges made to a domain are made with the very fabric of the land and not to the Gentry. Making them does not alert the Gentry to the presence of intruders. Once made, this pledge forever allows the changeling to enter the domain and interact with it normally. In return for agreeing to this pledge, the domain asks one of three prices. It desires a token of at least three dots, a dot of permanent

Willpower, or a medial service. The service typically involves providing some aid to the domain, such as stopping a group of hobgoblins who are harming it in some fashion, but could also include unusual efforts like promising to make and show a work of art based on the appearance and feel of this domain. Failing to keep this pledge is always punished by the sanction of the Flaw. There is an alternative to making such a pledge with the domain. Before the changeling leaves for Arcadia, she can find another changeling who spent time in the desired domain and make a pledge to obtain the connection between that changeling and that particular domain. Since many changelings have no use for their connection to the domain where they were held captive, most will gladly trade it away for the right price. This trade also counts as a medial service.

## FAMILIARITY

One of the first things all of the Lost notice when they first return to Arcadia is how familiar it feels, especially if they visit the domain where they were held captive. Changelings are mortals imbued with part of the essence of the Fae, and the Fae portion of their altered nature responds strongly to their return to Arcadia. Colors seem brighter, tastes and smells become more vivid, and the changelings feel more alive than before. Many changelings are horrified to simultaneously feel both a rush of physical familiarity and comfort, and an equally strong rush of memories of the torments they underwent here. Changelings simultaneously experience both feelings when they enter Arcadia, and the instant that these feelings occur is when they must make their first Clarity roll for being in Arcadia. All Lost also automatically regain one point of Glamour the instant they set foot in Arcadia, allowing them to have





at least some minimal power. The inherent power of Arcadia causes them to regain any lost Glamour at a rate of one point per scene. The Lost are somewhat more formidable in Arcadia, which causes far too many to become careless, because the True Fae are far mightier in their homeland.

## AVOIDING THE NOTICE OF THE GENTRY

The Others can be anywhere in Arcadia, but they are not particularly numerous. Even the large cities within Arcadia are primarily populated with hobgoblins or changelings. Much of Arcadia consists of wild areas with occasional palaces, hunting lodges, biodomes or hives inhabited by the Gentry. No known stretch of Arcadia is completely uninhabited, but the True Fae are greatly outnumbered by the other fae that serve them. Most of Arcadia contains large amounts of open and uninhabited space because the Fae prefer not to be crowded by their neighbors.

All of the Gentry possess sufficient power to constantly monitor their domain for intruders or any actions that are out of the ordinary. However, the Gentry are exceptionally hedonistic beings, and are usually unwilling to take the necessary time and effort away from their entertainments except when directly threatened or in cases of dire need. Moving humbly through Faerie can get one reasonably far.

Unfortunately, most actions that changelings come to Arcadia to accomplish automatically draw the attention of the Fae. Removing any of the Gentry's possessions, including both objects, like tokens or works of art or slaves like changelings or hobgoblins, attract the Gentry's notice the second the possession leaves the Fae's domain. The local Gentry are quick to notice if any of their possessions are destroyed, including if someone kills one of their changelings. They notice any attacks on them, including attacks that fail. Fairy tales are full of passages in which the hero must flee a witch or monster's lair after stealing a person or object, and the resulting chase scene. A visit to Arcadia frequently ends the same way.

## ARCADIA'S OTHER INHABITANTS

Mot encounters in Faerie are with other changelings or some of the various hobgoblins that the Gentry also enslave. While neither of these sorts of beings is nearly as dangerous as one of the True Fae in its home, each presents its own problems. Because changelings may occupy a higher position than all but the most favored hobgoblins, even visiting changelings can sometimes order these odd beings around. However, the more self-aware hobgoblins that become suspicious of the characters' actions sometimes attempt to earn favor by reporting their actions to their master. Other hobgoblins may seek rescue from Arcadia or a variety of other favors, including one of the characters making a pledge to protect the hobgoblin from the Gentry's wrath, in return for its aid. The aid of creatures typically ignored or considered little more than animate furniture by

## *Paying For Freedom*

Because the Gentry are mostly busy with their various entertainments, they rarely notice sufficiently minor changes in their domain. Stealing from the Gentry is never a minor change, but paying for an object or person can be. Leave a handful of nuts on the kitchen table, and you can take the roast from the spit without the lord of the manor noticing that his dinner has just gone missing.

The safest, if most terrible way to remove a changeling from her Keeper's domain is to pay for her. Unfortunately, there are only two acceptable currencies. The changeling can either offer another changeling or a mortal infant less than three years old in return. To make this trade, the changeling must make a pledge to trade the infant or changeling for a current member of the Gentry's retinue of changelings. If she desires, she can even pledge herself into slavery in return for another Freedom. Other changelings must either be willing to be traded to the Gentry or bound so that they cannot escape. The Gentry does not need to be present for the changeling to make such a pledge.

Few changelings make such trades. However, some are so desperate to return a beloved companion from Arcadia they will sell a captive from another Court, or even one of their fellows to the Gentry. Very few willingly return themselves to bondage to free someone they love more than their own freedom. Others attempt to salvage their consciousness by trading privateers, loyalists or other changelings who have committed crimes that would otherwise lead to their execution. However, no Court in the mortal world openly permits such trades, and even trading a condemned privateer criminal to the Gentry at best leads to the changeling being shunned by her fellows, and often results in her being expelled from her Court. Giving an unwilling changeling or mortal to the Fae is also a Clarity 2 offense.

most of the Gentry can be very useful to visitors to Arcadia, but always require payment for their services.

Dealing with other changelings is often more problematic. Many changelings are either jealous of their masters' attentions or fearful that they will be blamed and punished for any problem. As a result, they are often highly suspicious of a group of changelings who simply wander in to their master's domain. Many seek rescue, which risks the changelings promising to lead a dozen or more of their fellows from Arca-



dia. Others either have no desire to leave or are certain that the characters are some cruel trick concocted by their Keepers to build up hope of rescue that will then be dashed. These broken and deluded changelings may even attack the characters in fits of rage or simply do their best to ignore them.

It's easy to forget that most captives believe escaping is impossible. Escapes are relatively rare, and most changelings who vanish are assumed to have been moved or disposed of by their Keepers. Many who visit Arcadia in hopes of rescuing someone find that the changeling either does not want to be rescued or refuses to believe that rescue is possible. More than one would-be rescue has to be forcibly dragged into the Hedge.

## THE STRUCTURE OF ARCADIA

Arcadia is a land where the natural laws are the laws of dream and story. While the landscape and the inhabitants of Arcadia appear as complex and as real as the landscape and inhabitants of the mortal world, much of it is no more substantial than Hedgespun constructs of cobwebs and starlight. Other natural features and inhabitants are not just as real as their equivalents in the mortal world; they are in some ways more real because they are all intelligent beings with wishes and desires who can converse with changelings and other inhabitants of Arcadia.

## EPHEMERAL FEATURES

Much of Arcadia is effectively unreal, little more than an illusory creation of the Gentry who rule the domain, combined with the accumulated solidified dreams, memories, and unconscious whims of the various Fae who dwell there. Some scholarly changelings refer to these objects and beings as ephemera, but in Arcadia a sword made of ephemeral bronze is just as deadly as a metal sword brought by the changelings from the mortal world.

Most of these ephemeral creations are stationary objects like chairs, trees, or rocks, but a few are living creatures. None of these creatures display actual creativity or free will; the Gentry need changelings or hobgoblins for that. However, some move and interact in ways the Gentry find amusing and entertaining. Oddities like a flayed two-headed songbird kept in cages where it sings exquisite songs or caged and helpless infants that arouse the pity of all changelings who see them are two examples of such seemingly animate creations.

These creations, whether they are a flower the changeling plucks, a golden vase the changeling steals, or a young child who appears to have been recently abducted from the mortal world, can all be removed from the domain they are in without alerting the Gentry. However, when brought





into the Hedge they reveal their fragile unreality, gradually fading into ashes and moonlight within a few hours. Any who attempt to carry such creations into the mortal world discovers that when they step through the gateway from the Hedge, they are holding nothing at all. Changelings with a Clarity of 8+ can automatically tell that these features and beings are ephemeral, and any changeling of 3+ Clarity who examines one can do the same with a successful Wits + Resolve roll. The Gentry who rule a domain can instantly transform or destroy any ephemeral object with merely a thought, a fact that has resulted in the death or capture of more than one changeling.

## THE REAL PORTIONS OF ARCADIA

In amidst the various ephemeral forests, fields, furnishings and creatures, there are also a host of singularly real objects and creatures. In general, real features of Arcadia are those that a careful observer sees as being in some way important or singular. A mighty river that divides the two halves of a Fae's domain is almost always a real river, just as is the huge and heavily gnarled oak that sits alone in a field. Similarly, while the ranks of lovely but somewhat lifeless or dull tapestries or paintings that line the halls one of the Gentry's mansions are ephemeral, an especially large, exquisite, and imposing looking painting that hangs on the wall of one of the Gentry's favored rooms is almost always real.

Not everything real need be imposing; it must merely be singular and unique. Changelings and hobgoblins are all real creatures, regardless of whether they are grand and terrible or cringing and pathetic. Similarly, the huge kennel of hounds a Fae keeps may all be ephemeral beasts, while the lone scrawny cat that sneaks scraps is real. Ultimately, every real object in Arcadia is in some way singular, and everything that is part of an identical or nearly identical set is not. This applies as well to trees in a forest as much as it does to a set of tableware. One of the most important things to understand about real things in Arcadia is that they are intelligent and capable of communication. This truth applies not only to changelings and hobgoblins, but also to rivers, paintings, trees and mirrors.

Most real objects and creatures can be ignored if the characters have no need to interact with them. Unfortunately, sometimes these interactions are unavoidable. Attempting to cross a real river or even the occasional real creek without paying it for this service or having a pre-existing agreement with it can result in the river or creek suddenly becoming as wide as an ocean, at least for the changeling attempting to cross it. Arcadia has a wealth of other real natural features like wild animals or mountains of electricity and living crystal that changelings must move over or get past.

Dealing with real features of Arcadia must be handled in one of two ways. Contracts with the appropriate elements or facets of reality also count as Contracts with the natural features. A changeling who is attempting to cross

a stream can use a water-controlling Contract of the Elements to create a temporary ford, or even to change the stream's course. If none of the changelings have appropriate Contracts or do not wish to spend the Glamour, then they must find some other way to deal with the natural feature. Threats can sometimes work, especially for relatively powerful changelings, or at least changelings who can appear to be relatively powerful.

Alternately, changelings can make some sort of bargain or pledge with anything that is capable of making an agreement, which is to say almost any real object or creature in Arcadia. Most changelings do not wish to fill up their quota of pledges simply to cross a river. For these occasions, a singular payment works equally well. However, a pledge of alliance can be exceedingly useful for dealing with natural features like large rivers, which the changelings will have to deal with repeatedly, especially since a pledge of medial alliance means the changeling can ask the natural feature for advice about other nearby obstacles.

### *Goblin Fruit and Oddments in Arcadia*

All manner of goblin fruit and oddments can be found in Arcadia. Many of the Gentry cultivate such things in special gardens or hothouses. However, while the Hedge is a fundamentally wild and untamed land, Arcadia is parceled out in many domains. As a result, it's exceptionally difficult to find goblin fruit growing wild and free for the taking. Changelings who simply pick a goblin fruit will find one of two things happening. Particularly large plants or plants that grow especially powerful fruit will actively resist the character's efforts, doing things ranging from moving the fruit out of their reach, to physically attacking the would-be thieves. Weaker and more helpless plants cry out for help to their Fae master. Even if the changeling manages to prevent either of these acts of defiance, the second she either consumes the goblin fruit or removes it from its owner's domain, the fruit's owner will instantly become aware that one of his possessions was stolen.

The only way around angering the plants and alerting the Gentry is for the changeling to pay for the fruit. She must offer some appropriate form of nutrient, which may be anything from blood to some of her own memories. The Storyteller may adjudicate the desirability of any offer. If you possess *Rites of Spring*, the fertilizer offerings mentioned on pg. 129 of that book would be an excellent guideline for such payments.



## FAERIE TIME

The Lost are painfully aware that time passes strangely in Arcadia. A person can be kept there for years, decades even, and return to the mortal world mere minutes after her abduction. Conversely, a captive might escape after only a month or so, only to find that she's been gone for fifty years.

In Arcadia, time flows at a very variable rate relative to Earth. It can slow to a crawl or flit by like a mayfly's hours. It does not actually reverse its flow, however; there are rumors of changelings returning before they were abducted, but these stories have so far turned out to be the constructions of a confused, cracked perception. The Gentry may have some sort of control over the speed of time's flow within their domains, but even this is uncertain. The True Fae don't seem to perceive the passage of time in the same way mortals do, and their influence may be entirely unconscious.

Though we could provide a random system to determine just how much time passes in the mortal world while changelings are in Arcadia, at this point in the chronicle it's probably best to leave it to the Storyteller's discretion. You have the potential to make a bittersweet ending a little happier by having very little time pass, or to gut-punch the entire motley by advancing time another fifty years or so. You know better than we do which of these options, or any of those in between, would be most appealing and emotionally affecting to your group.

## CHANGE AND RESCUE

Although the process of becoming a changeling is half-remembered and different for every captive, this transformation typically requires at least several months to complete, and it's possible to rescue individuals at any stage in this process. Individuals rescued before they fully become changelings are considerably less powerful than changelings, but are also fundamentally mortal and are typically exceptionally grateful for being rescued before they were forced to endure further torments or transformations. In all cases, someone rescued before they fully become a changeling returns to the mortal world within six months (two seasons) of having left it.

The process of becoming a changeling consists of two parts, which can occur at different times. The first and most important involves the person being transformed so that they are permanently connected to Arcadia and all things Fae. This process of adaptation begins within a few days of them arriving in Arcadia and continues until the mortal becomes a changeling. The second process involves the mortal's Keeper altering and twisting them to fit its inhuman tastes and specifications. In some cases, the Keeper does little to transform the changeling's form, and all of the changeling's physical transformations are the result of adapting to a particularly strange portion of Arcadia. In others, the changeling's Keeper sculpts their body as a mortal sculpts stone or bronze.

In most cases, the two different types of transformation can be summed up as becoming a changeling and gaining a seeming and a kith. Each of these two processes can take place at different rates, depending both upon the particular nature of the locale and the wishes and whims of a Keeper. Because these two processes need not happen simultaneously, someone rescued from Arcadia before these transformations are complete is often at different stages of the processes.

### *Fetcher and Partially Transformed Mortals*

As long as the person rescued is not yet fully transformed into a changeling, the binding that holds their fetch together is not yet completely stable. The fetch of a mortal, an enchanted mortal or a fae-touched mortal (see below) falls to dust within a few hours after this mortal returns from Arcadia. The fetch feels very tired, finds someplace comfortable to sleep, and never wakes up. When it vanishes, the mortal automatically gains back the fragment of her soul or shadow that it contained, along with the general memories of what occurred in her absence. Only actual changelings must deal with the trauma of having a fetch.

## ADAPTING TO ARCADIA

Mortals begin to change simply by existing in Arcadia. Gradual though it is, the transformation is irreversible. There are stories that the Gentry can restore a mortal who has not completely transformed into one of the Lost, but there is no evidence that this is anything but wishful thinking. The first stages of the transformation are simply the result of a mortal spending a few days consuming the food and drink available in Arcadia and thus taking its substance into their body. Whether they know it or not, mortals who willingly eat or drink in Arcadia are making a pledge with various elements of Arcadia, one with profound effects. In addition, much of the process of adapting to Arcadia involves agreeing to more formal pledges with the changeling's Keeper. Without such pledges, not only can the person be freely abducted by other Gentry, but the Keeper's hobgoblins and even some of its more animate furnishings can freely attack or attempt to feast upon the changeling-to-be. This process of transformation has four distinct stages: mortal, enchanted mortal, fae-touched mortal, and changeling. Unfortunately, due to the vagaries of shifting time in Arcadia, there's no fixed way to track just how long the process takes.

### • Mortal

The individual remains fully mortal. If rescued and returned to Arcadia, mortals remember vague details of ab-



duction and a rescue, but only remember Arcadia and their Keeper in nightmares that gradually fade. On waking, they remember only brief images, which they may rationalize as being drugged by particularly twisted kidnappers. For the abductees, Arcadia, the Fae, and changelings remain nothing more than Faerie stories.

#### • Enchanted Mortal

Simply by the act of eating and drinking in Arcadia, a mortal quickly becomes permanently sensitive to Arcadia and all things associated with the Fae. As a result, this person is permanently ensorcelled. These mortals can see the mien of changelings and all other fae creatures and look through entrances to the Hedge as easily as one of the Lost. No pledges or Glamour are needed to maintain this ensorcellment, it is now an inherent part of the mortal's being. However, the individual is in all other ways an ordinary human. Changelings estimate it takes a relative week or so of Arcadian time to reach this state.

#### • Fae-Touched Mortal

Having lived in Arcadia a bit longer and made some of the most basic pledges with his Keeper, the mortal begins to adapt to Arcadia. While still essentially mortal, these individuals gain one dot of Glamour, which they can only use to open doorways into the Hedge, where they can also gather and make use of goblin fruits and oddments. In addition, some of Arcadia's timeless nature has entered them, and so they also gain the infirmity bonus and increased longevity (see **Changeling: The Lost**, pp. 174–175) possessed by changelings with one dot in Glamour. However, this individual is still fundamentally a mortal, and so has Morality instead of Clarity. In addition, they cannot make pledges or enter the dreams of mortals and they cannot learn or use any Contracts. The only way they can replenish lost Glamour by eating goblin fruit or by making pledges with changelings. Fae-touched mortals can also never raise their Glamour above one. The fae-touched do not possess Wyrd.

#### • Changeling

The person is no longer a mortal and has become a changeling. No one and nothing can alter this fact, and the character now uses all of the rules used by changelings. The only exception is that some changelings may lack a kith or even a seeming, and so may also lack both the physical transformations and the blessing, curse, and kith abilities these all grant.

#### • Fully Fae

Is there a stage of transformation beyond changeling? The Lost believe so. However, a captive that reaches this point becomes a hobgoblin, part of the Faerie Realm itself, or perhaps even a True Fae. At that point, the mortal is lost, the last of their human desires and memories bleed away as a necessary part of reaching this stage.

## PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

For many changelings, their physical transformation is the most difficult and painful part of what happens to them. Even once they return to the mortal world, they are reminded of their ordeal in Arcadia every time they look in a mirror or touch the fur, bark or metal that has replaced their skin. For some, these transformations are simply the result of living in a certain part of Arcadia and eating and drinking the fare available there. Many Woodbloods and Flowerings are confined in strange forests or exotic gardens where all the plants are more animate than usual and all the animals possess plant-like characteristics. Eating the fruit and drinking the sap gradually transforms the changeling into their current woody seeming and kith. However, for some changelings, their physical transformations are the result of deliberate and often terrible modifications by their Keeper. In either case, these transformations are not instantaneous. This process of transformation has three steps: unchanged, seeming, and kith.

#### • Unchanged

Everyone who returns from Arcadia is still an ordinary mortal; or an enchanted mortal is by definition unchanged. Mortal humans cannot suffer any physical transformations until they have at least become fae-touched.

#### • Minor Changes

Some changelings who return before gaining a seeming may be less obviously fae than others. The fae-touched might have a minor physical change to their form or two. Minor changes are covered by the Mask.

#### • Seeming

Individuals who return from Arcadia with this level of transformation already have a seeming, along with the blessing and the curse that accompanies it. Both changelings and fae-touched mortals can possess seemings without kiths. Fae-touched mortals who have a seeming have a mien and a Mask, just like changelings, and they also possess both the blessing and the curse provided by this seeming. The fae-touched do not have kiths, and cannot evolve them.

#### • Kith

The individual has a seeming and a kith. Only changelings reach this point.

## PARTIAL TRANSFORMATION MERITS

### FAE-TOUCHED

Instead of being a Merit, being a fae-touched human is treated as a lesser supernatural template. The character need not pay for this transformation as a Merit, but cannot gain another supernatural template. All fae-touched mortals were rescued from Faerie when their transformation into a changeling was only half-completed. In most cases, their Keepers are



still looking for them, hoping to capture them and complete this process. Fae-touched mortals exist on the fringes of the changeling community, being neither fully mortal nor fully changeling. At the Storyteller's discretion, fae-touched mortals can purchase Merits normally only reserved for changelings.

### MERIT: ENCHANTED MORTAL (••)

**Effects:** The character is an enchanted mortal who was abducted into Arcadia and was rescued before more than the most basic transformations could be performed on them. As a result, they are treated as if they are permanently ensorcelled. This Merit is lost if the character ever gains a supernatural template.

### MERIT: NO SEEMING (••)

**Prerequisite:** Changelings only

**Effects:** Your changeling lacks both a seeming and a kith. As a result, her fae mien is largely identical to her original human form; the fae changes she has undergone are not distinct enough to have rewritten her body into a full seeming. Your character lacks any seeming blessing or curse, as well as any kith. However, retaining her human appearance also gives your character a better grip on sanity. As a result, she gains +1 to all Clarity rolls to avoid losing Clarity or gaining a derangement. *Available at character creation only.* The basic form of a changeling's body is set once they come back from Arcadia.

### MERIT: SEEMING (•••)

**Prerequisite:** Fae-Touched Mortals Only

**Effects:** Your character has a changeling seeming, and possesses the associated blessing and curse. Only fae-touched mortals can purchase this Merit.

**Drawback:** Having been touched more deeply by the mad nature of Faerie, the character suffers a -1 penalty to all rolls to avoid gaining a derangement.

## LEAVING ARCADIA

Leaving Arcadia is often considerably more difficult than getting there. The characters are often pursued by either the Gentry or by a pack of well-armed servitors motivated by both the rewards they will reap if they capture the characters and the torments they will suffer if they fail. In addition, the means of leaving are more limited. Gentry watch individuals leaving on roads considerably more carefully than they watch those who use these roads to enter Arcadia, which means escape is generally impossible without the aid of one of the Gentry. Characters without travel tokens must usually flee through the Hedge, much like they did when they first fled Arcadia. Making their way back to the mortal world through the Thorns is considerably more difficult than traveling to Arcadia. Characters traveling from Arcadia to the mortal world must all make a Clarity roll to make their way back to the mortal world. Unless they

use an entrance into the Hedge that they used before, the characters suffer the standard -3 penalty for not being on a path. However, one character may guide the others, making this a cooperative roll (and helping non-changeling friends who do not possess Clarity to escape).

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The characters stumble back into Arcadia near to where they left, they also run directly into any pursuers.

**Failure:** If the characters were previously on a path, they wander aimlessly in the Hedge and must roll again, with the -3 modifier for not being on a path. If the characters are not on a path, they stumble into some danger like their pursuers, a pack of hungry hobgoblins, or one of the Fae roads leading to Arcadia. In either case, if the characters are being pursued, and their pursuers succeed in their roll to navigate the Hedge, they catch up with the characters.

**Success:** The characters successfully leave Arcadia and find a path in the Hedge. They must now make another normal roll for navigating the Hedge while on a path (see **Changeling: The Lost**, p. 220).

**Exceptional Success:** Not only do the characters make their way to a familiar gateway that leads from the Hedge into the mortal world, they also manage to confuse any pursuers. As a result, these pursuers suffer a -3 penalty to follow them.

## FREEING CAPTIVES

One of the most difficult truths of Arcadia is that not all changelings who are held captive there can be saved. Some either cannot imagine leaving or believe that all promises of freedom are cruel games played by their Keeper. If the characters lack the means to force these changelings to come along, they will not leave. Others are imprisoned in locations to which the character cannot gain access. However, the most daunting situation is when the characters bring a captive changeling to the edge of the Hedge or activate a travel token, only to find that the changeling they are attempting to free cannot go with them.

Any changeling who lacks clear memories of the mortal world cannot be freed. Changelings who were abducted when they were very young and those who have been in Arcadia for more than a human lifetime cannot leave either, because they lack a sufficient anchor to the mortal world to be able to return. Also, some changelings in Arcadia appear far less human than their comrades who escape. Changelings who stand eight or nine feet tall, with four arms or nests of tendrils instead of arms are simply too inhuman to be able to return to the mortal world. Such a dramatically altered person may be rejected entirely by the mortal world. If the characters are desperately fleeing into the Hedge or using a travel token, they return to the mortal world or enter the Hedge only to find the changeling they were trying to rescue did not come with them. If a character is holding onto the changeling who cannot leave or if the characters

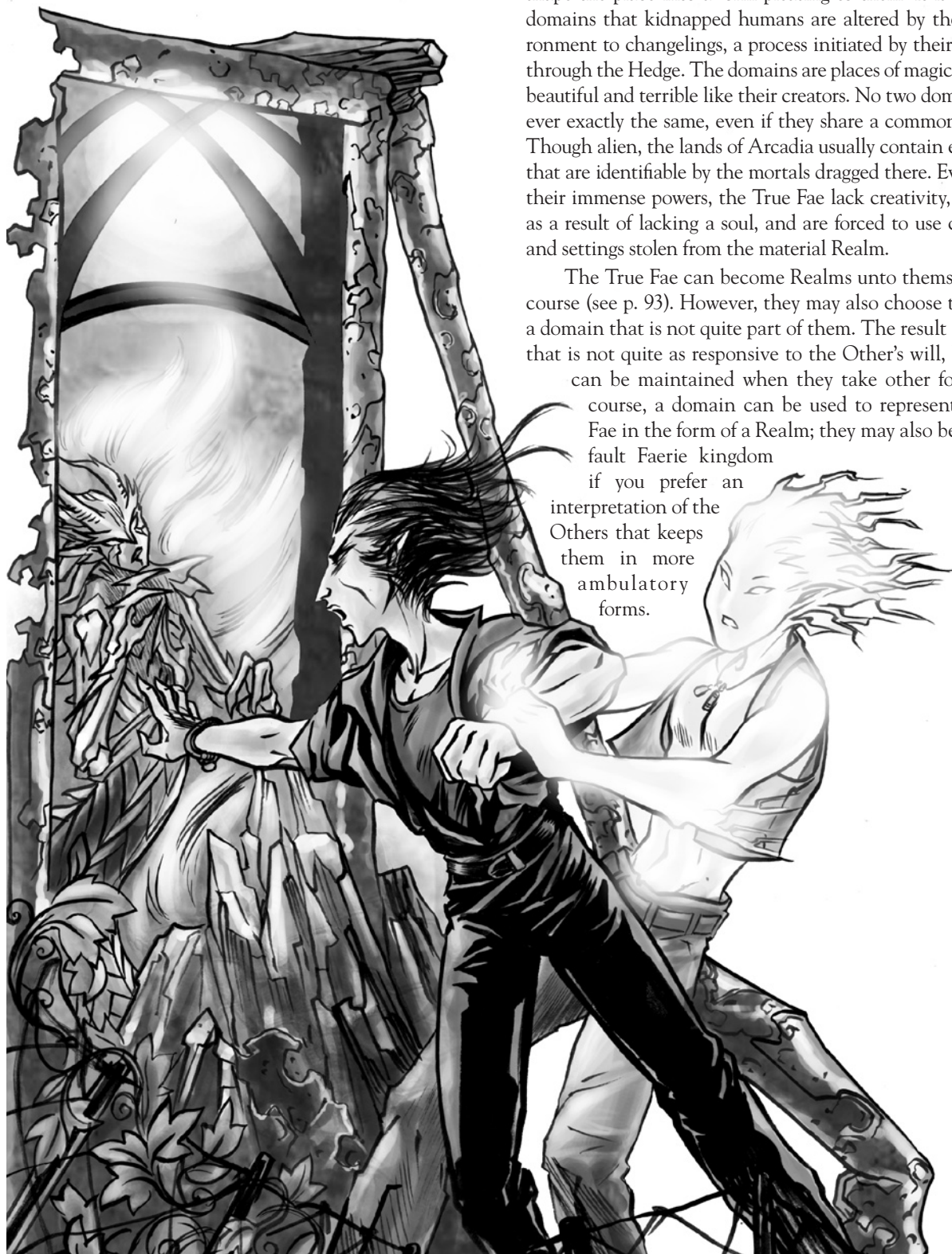


are able to pause a moment when leaving Arcadia, it is clear that the person they are rescuing cannot come with them. At this point, the characters have a moment to say goodbye, and then must leave their companion behind forever.

## THE SHIFTING LAND

The domains of Faerie are a shifting kaleidoscope of lands created from the pure energy of possibility. Each domain is home to one or more of the True Fae who mold and shape the place into a form pleasing to them. It is in these domains that kidnapped humans are altered by their environment to changelings, a process initiated by their journey through the Hedge. The domains are places of magic, at once beautiful and terrible like their creators. No two domains are ever exactly the same, even if they share a common theme. Though alien, the lands of Arcadia usually contain elements that are identifiable by the mortals dragged there. Even with their immense powers, the True Fae lack creativity, perhaps as a result of lacking a soul, and are forced to use concepts and settings stolen from the material Realm.

The True Fae can become Realms unto themselves, of course (see p. 93). However, they may also choose to create a domain that is not quite part of them. The result is a land that is not quite as responsive to the Other's will, but that can be maintained when they take other forms. Of course, a domain can be used to represent a True Fae in the form of a Realm; they may also be the default Faerie kingdom if you prefer an interpretation of the Others that keeps them in more ambulatory forms.





Listed below are a number of sample domains for use in existing chronicles or as inspiration for new ones. Every domain has been left open enough to allow room for tailoring to fit your chronicle. The domains are broken down first by archetype, then by specific domain example under the Locales heading. Following the sample domains is a section entitled Laws of the Land and a section entitled The Master's Will. Under Laws of the Land you will discover specific rules and ideas that work for that archetype, and under the Master's Will are rules for ways the Gentry can influence their domains to pose thematic challenges to characters.

## NOBLE MANORS

Changelings sometimes refer to the True Fae as the Gentry. In some cases this is just a non-specific descriptive, while in others it takes on particular meaning. Taking their inspiration from human nobility, landed Gentry build large, intimidating manors and ensconce themselves in luxurious estates with changelings and hobgoblins for their servants. As with other mortal things, their understanding of the institution of nobility is deeply flawed or simply warped as a result of their skewed perception of reality beyond Arcadia. A "noble" manor may be a mish-mash of styles and architecture from different eras, their changeling servants may be instructed to perform tasks that serve no purpose, just so they look busy or a changeling might be asked to serve in a role for which he has no experience or training. In many ways, the houses of the Gentry are a stage on which changelings play a role that has no meaning beyond the amusement of their Keeper.

Lacking the ability to create anything truly original themselves, the True Fae borrow ideas from around the world. An estate could just as easily mimic Japanese style nobility, with rows of interconnected single-story houses, as it could the classic European style of large manors or castles. The materials used to build these structures are limited only by the power and personality of the True Fae that built it. A house might be made from bleak stone, colored glass, mist made solid, laughter stolen from children, or even memories.

## LOCALES

### The Hall of Seasons

The Hall of Seasons is a large British-style manor that takes the shape of an equal-armed cross if viewed from above. Each wing is constructed from materials appropriate to the theme of season that wing follows. The walls of Spring are made from dew, the furniture from springy turf or half-frozen wood and the decorations from budding plants. Summer is constructed from hazy heat shimmers, furnished with flowering tables and chairs, and is bathed in constant noon-day light. The Autumn wing was created from the fragrant smoke of burning leaves, the chill of evening, and has furniture shaped from skeletal stalks of corn. Finally, Winter is formed from wisps of breath in cold air, furnished with the pure white of freshly fallen snow, and decorated by icicles.

Only one wing is ever inhabited at a time, the Gentry moving randomly from season to season as the mood strikes them. Servants are dressed to compliment the backdrop of the current season in attire that may not actually be functional for their environs. The costumes for the Winter wing are particularly cruel. They are woven from a shimmering white cloth and expose rather a lot of skin to the biting cold of the season. The Gentry find the chattering teeth, blue skin, and constant shivering of the changelings to be appropriate for Winter.

Changelings that begin to adapt to a specific season too rapidly for the liking of their Keepers are banished from the Hall to regain their equilibrium. The fact that most changelings never return after being ushered from the Hall doesn't seem to bother the Gentry much. They seem to enjoy idle speculation as to whether the changelings escaped or became a meal for the creatures that roam the boundaries of the domain. The changelings most often produced from the Hall of Seasons are Elementals, Fairest/Flowering and Wizeded; all resulting from the influence of a particular wing or of becoming accustomed to service. The True Fae that dwell within the Hall will intentionally alter their servants to serve a specific function if the need arises. Of course, need is a loose term with the Fae. Half a dozen changelings might be altered into crystalline forms because one of the Gentry decided he "needed" a new chandelier for the Winter wing dining room.

### The Manse of Forgotten Time

Shrouded in swirling mists, the Manse of Forgotten Time comes in and out of focus, never allowing visitors to see the whole of the structure. The building itself seems to be made entirely from wood, with different sections of the house featuring a distinctive theme of unlikely grains and shades. The house is appointed in a style that is best described as minimalist, featuring oil lamps on the walls that bathe the Manse in soft, flickering light. A visitor to the home won't require long to notice the silence that pervades the Manse. Footsteps echo dully on the polished wood floors, almost as though the sound was being swallowed up by the quiet. The lack of noise drives many new changelings brought to the Domain to distraction and it is at this point of near insanity that they first hear a faint ticking, like that of a clock. The ticking permeates the Manse and has no obvious source; the place itself contains no chronological devices of any kind.

Time simply does not pass in the Manse. A changeling could spend 100 years in the Manse and not age a day for the time that passed. The time elapsed between entering the domain and leaving it is so minimal that some of the Lost have caught glimpses of themselves entering the Manse as they were leaving. The changelings trapped in this Never-Never Land of wood and lamp-lit hallways theorize that the ticking noise they can all hear is actually Time itself trying to break into the Manse and assert its power over the place. They guess the Gentry that dwells in the Domain must have somehow offended Time and now he





hides within the Manse, protected by his refusal to acknowledge passing Time. As conjecture, the theory is quite interesting, but the changelings have no real idea of why the Manse ticks or why the True Fae seems so insistent on keeping it at bay. Not a single changeling that serves in the Manse has ever seen their Keeper. Sometimes they think they can hear him pacing the halls at what passes for night, his footfalls echoing down the wooden halls with a volume that the tread of the changelings can never match.

None of the Lost that populate the Domain have any clear memory of how they were brought to the house. It seems reasonable to assume their unseen Keeper was involved, but no one is willing to swear that is the case. Escaping from the house would seem to be a simple task as the front door is never locked and opens easily to the hand of anyone inside the Domain. It is what is outside the door, a swirling gray mist that might be the manifestation of Time, which keeps them inside. The mist covers any features of the land that might exist around the Manse. Attempts to illuminate the murk fail completely as any lamp, candle or lantern that is thrust into the mist gutters and is extinguished as soon as it passes the mantle.

The Manse of Forgotten Time most frequently produces changelings of the Fairest seeming, and the Bright One kith as a result of their unconscious desire to brighten their surroundings. Wizeden/Chatelaine and Elementals of various kiths comprise the bulk of the rest of the Lost who live in the Manse.

## The Estate

Unlike some Noble Manors, the Estate consists of grounds as well as the house itself. The architecture and decoration is an eclectic mix with inspiration drawn mainly from European noble houses. A classic British dining hall might sit next to a drawing room patterned after the elegant styles of 17<sup>th</sup> century France or a common room fashioned in the more utilitarian style preferred by western Russian nobility. The grounds around the Estate house feature the same mish-mash of styles and periods as the house. A hedgerow maze might lead to a Japanese garden or spill out into a small copse of Italian Cyprus trees. Of course, nothing, not the furniture, decorations or building materials, are constructed from the same materials as their more mundane counterparts. The pond that is meant for fishing is stocked with changelings that have been shaped into fantastic aquatic forms, the fine china in the dining room is actually made from dreams snatched from the sleeping minds of peasants, and the hounds that wander the house and grounds are idealized breeds that don't exist in nature. Some are changelings, some aren't. The house itself is constructed from blocks of stone hewn from gray storm clouds; the mortar is a mix of finely crushed black pearl and water drawn from the well of the Norns.

The Gentry that live in the Estate follow the patterns of the nobility whose house's they've emulated. They pass their time with such noble pursuits as hunting, painting,



writing and throwing parties for others of the True Fae. They dress in fashions that manage to capture the essence of the mixed designs of the Estate and carry themselves with airs that would do shame to mortal kings and queens. All of this is a sham. The True Fae lack the capacity to truly understand the underpinnings of the society and lives they attempt to mimic, it simply amuses them to do so. The best example of their lack of comprehension is the manner in which they treat their changeling and fae servants.

True nobility were (and still are in some places) served by people that likely learned their job at the feet of their parents. The butler is likely to pass on his skills, knowledge and position to a male child. All of that child's life is spent learning how to serve his master: first as a hall boy or footman, then as a manservant and lastly moving up to the position of butler when his father has passed away or grown too old for such duties. Such families become as much a part of any noble estate as the grounds and the house itself and it is a foolish noble that treats his servants with outright disrespect or scorn. The Gentry simply can't grasp this concept and even if they could, the sterility that strikes most changelings in Arcadia makes it largely irrelevant. The servants of the True Fae are shifted from duty to duty, seemingly at random and often for the amusement of their Keeper. If the Keeper decides he wants a manservant that he can punish for ignorance of his duties, that Keeper will swap his current servant for one that has no clue as to what is going on. Some of the Gentry prefer not to bother with the trouble of swapping retainers from position to position and simply give their current servant a new form and wipe their memory to start fresh.

The Estate can produce almost any kind of changeling imaginable. Beasts can result from a changeling that has been made into a pet or noble steed for a Keeper, Darklings may assume their form after spending months or years in the lightless basements of the Estate house, shoring up the foundations and hunting the minor fae creatures that infest such areas and so on. The least likely seeming to evolve on the Estate are Ogres. The Gentry that live at the Estate tend to find such creatures repulsive and any human that begins to show distinctive Ogre features will probably be quickly reshaped into a more pleasing form, traded to a different True Fae or just killed out of hand.

### **The House of Infinity**

In Arcadia, the laws of nature, time, and space are mutable and can be bargained with or ignored depending on the desires of the True Fae. The Gentry mold the forces of the universe like a sculptor might mold wet clay; bending and shaping them as they please in their domains. The House of Infinity domain ignores the quaint limitations of natural and physical law, extending its halls, rooms and courtyards forever. Viewed from outside its boundless constraints, the domain is entirely unprepossessing. Constructed from a strange rubbery cobalt blue stone, the House

### *A Side of Domains, Hold the Keepers*

For the most part, descriptions of Keepers in the domains are kept intentionally vague. Even when a Keeper is one of the main features of the domain (as is true with the Wild Lodge domain, below) an attempt has been made to describe the actions of the Keeper rather than launching into a full blown account of the Keeper's identity and motivations. Focusing on the setting of the domains, rather than the True Fae masters of those Realms, should provide plenty of leeway for Storytellers and players alike to add the domains provided, along with Keepers of your own design, into backstories or existing chronicles.

Another benefit of the minimal description is that it allows for interesting dichotomies between the Keeper and the nature of the domain. A True Fae with a bestial countenance might create a domain in the style of a Noble Estate for the sheer pleasure of terrorizing the more genteel changelings that develop there. A Keeper whose nature is obviously in conflict with the domain might also signal the beginning of a shift in that True Fae. Unlike changelings, the Gentry aren't locked into a single form. They can grow bored and restless with their current features and decide to mold a domain that will better compliment the shape to which they are transitioning. So a fire lord that rules over a domain like the Icy Wastes might be in the midst of a change or he might want to be the only source of light and heat in the domain or he might simply be contrary.

resembles a rude stone castle in miniature complete with crenellated walls, arrow slits, and small windows dotting its face. A single door, covered in what appears to be shining silver ivy, is the only visible entrance to the place.

Once past the simple stone façade, the unusual properties of the House aren't immediately apparent. Perceptive guests or newly won slaves might notice the House has no archways or portals that lead from one place to the next. Instead, each area of the House is connected to the rest with a simple wooden door which closes of its own accord as soon as people have finished passing through it. No two areas of the House are identical and the layout of the domain seems maddeningly random, as though the place sprang into existence rather than being consciously designed and no area of the domain has less than two doors that lead away from it. No sound penetrates the walls or doors, giving residents the feeling that each area of the House exists independently of each other.



Navigation inside the House is no trivial matter for new servants brought to the domain by their Keeper. Newcomers are given a crash course on the known and inhabited areas of the House and tips on how to remember which doorway opens to where. The House itself resists scoring or vandalism of any kind that might assist a wanderer in finding their way; such marks simply vanish without a trace as soon as the door to that area closes. Similarly, the doors cannot be wedged open (or shut) by any means, the fae forces at work around the doorways cause such impediments to simply vanish.

The “center” of the House is a set of twenty or so rooms and the like that are formed up nearest the entrance to the domain. Beyond the center, the House begins to grow stranger the further one travels. Instead of the more mundane sort of living areas one finds near the center, an explorer finds rooms filled with arcane gadgetry with no apparent purpose, hallways that stretch for a mile or more (curving ever so slightly as though to deny you a view of what lies ahead), courtyards filled with a tangible darkness so thick it has a taste or other unique oddities. The Keeper of the domain sometimes travels alone into the bizarre wilderness of space that extends beyond the center of the House, returning with wonders and horrors in equal measure. Changelings that brave the outreaches of the House seldom return and those who do refuse to speak of their experiences, a glint of madness appearing in their eyes when forced to remember.

The changelings most commonly produced by exposure to the House of Infinity are Darkling/Antiquarians that catalogue and study the *things* brought back from the wilderness of the House, Fairest/Draconic which are the result of wandering too far from the center and various kiths of Wizedened that have adapted, or been adapted, to a life of service in the domain.

## LAWS OF THE LAND

### Noblesse Oblige

By taking on the airs of nobility in their surroundings and their manners, the Gentry are also forced by their nature to uphold some of the ideals of the society they have copied. Feudalism, in general, is based on the idea that the nobility exists to protect the common people and in return for that protection the commoners provide the nobility with food and service. Mistreatment of servants is dishonorable in this kind of setting and can even bring censure for the most grievous offenses. In Faerie, no force exists (aside from other True Fae) that can truly bring censure to a negligently cruel master, yet the Fae are still bound by the manner in which they have shaped their domains to observe the proper etiquette in their own perverted fashion.

A human slave brought to one of the Noble Manors is forced to swear an oath of obedience to the Gentry of that domain. That oath is echoed by their Keeper to care for the new slave. That seems straight forward enough at first glance, but the *wording* is the important part. Disobedience to one's

master can be interpreted as something as simple as breaking a dish by accident or stepping into the master's shadow after noon. The rules are never fully explained and the Gentry frequently come down on offenders with both feet for any infraction, no matter how slight. Those of the Lost that eventually escape their Keepers are the few that figure out the oath works both ways. If a changeling can ever trick one of the Gentry into mistreating them, without cause, they have forced their Keeper to break their own oath. This is a dangerous path to freedom, however, and plays to the strength of the True Fae, who have had centuries, perhaps millennia, in which to practice their games of Keeper and servant.

It is important to note that simply changing the features of a slave isn't seen as a violation of the oath. If the new form allows the changeling to better serve their Keeper, the True Fae feel as though they have done the changeling a favor.

### Privilege and Prerogative

The laws of the Noble Estates are set in place by the Gentry and aren't easily thwarted by outsiders. Any technology brought into one of the Estates that could be considered an anachronism for the setting will simply not function. As an example, a fully automatic rifle brought into an Estate that is set wholly before the invention of such devices won't fire, though it could still be used as a club. Similarly, the Gentry that have invested so much effort into the intricate stylings of their Estates are loath to see them destroyed or seriously damaged. Contracts, or indeed magic of any kind or source, that have wholesale destructive qualities or that can negatively impact large amounts of a domain in one go cease to operate inside the boundaries of an Estate.

It is equally as difficult to run an Estate with no servants as it is to run an Estate that has been burnt to the ground. For this reason, no method of stealth beyond mundane cunning works in the Estates and most of the Gentry have packs of some kind of fae beast (or changelings) that patrol the bounds of their Estate to discourage unwelcome guests or runaway changelings. Conversely, proper etiquette, protocol and prompt service are highly encouraged qualities on the Estates. For the duration of their stay, any visitor or slave brought to an Estate has their Socialize Skill raised to five dots, with a specialty in Etiquette and any Contract (or the like) that is used to benefit the Gentry is automatically considered an exceptional success.

## THE MASTER'S WILL

As a rule, most of the Gentry that inhabit Noble Estates aren't excited by the presence or maintenance of large numbers of combat ready troops. They routinely keep a small number of household guards around to keep their changeling slaves in line, but keeping an entire barracks worth of a smelly, ill-bred, armed rabble offends their refined senses. Faerie being what it is, though, the Gentry realize that not having some kind of standing force is tantamount to suicide. Their solution to this quandary is the creation of



what they call Inanimae. The Inanimae are often created from artist endeavors, be they statuary, Hedge formations or works of art. Each Inanimae has been enchanted by the Gentry to come alive to defend his domain in the case of an attack. The activation signal can be as complex as a ritual working or as simple as a preset cadence of finger tapping by the True Fae that enchanted the Inanimae. Once they are activated, the Inanimae attack anyone or anything inside the domain that doesn't belong there. Inanimae are emotionless, implacable soldiers that will continue to fight until they are reduced entirely to rubble. Only by destroying one completely or by leaving the domain, can an enemy of the True Fae hope to escape them.

### Inanimae

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 5

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 7, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

**Social Attributes:** Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 5

**Mental Skills:** Investigation (Identify Antagonists) 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Crushing Blows) 5

**Social Skill:** Intimidate (Bellowing Roar) 4

**Implacable:** Inanimae can only be destroyed by filling their last Health box with aggravated damage. They suffer no wound penalties and cannot be knocked unconscious.

**Initiative:** 7

**Defense:** 2

**Size:** 6

**Speed:** 15

**Health:** 11

**Wyrd:** 5

**Contracts:** Artifice •••••, Elements (varies by materials used construct) ••, Stone •••

**Glamour/per Turn:** 14/5

**Weapons/Attacks**

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Brawl	2(L)	15
Grapple	0(B)	13

## THE PITILESS ELEMENTS

Many of the True Fae are creatures of elemental extremes, shaping their domains with little regard for what might be considered a livable or comfortable climate for anyone but them. Be they Kings of Frost, Czarinas of Stone or Khans of the Waves, these Fae surround themselves with the element of their choosing and expect their servants to adapt or perish. Though some Keepers expend the effort to transform the crude flesh of their human servants into changelings that have better odds at survival, most True Fae that take the form of the elements are as distant and unyielding as their chosen form. To their alien mindset a slave that doesn't possess the will to live and the adaptability to change isn't worth investing additional time and energy into.

The domains of the Pitiless Elements are some of the least habitable by mortal standards and the cause of greater human suffering by their very nature than some domains inflict by design. Desert suns burn away at unprotected flesh, constant winds wear at the nerves and mind, frigid waters leech heat and strength and lofty mountain peaks make every breath a battle. Only the mortals with the greatest strength of will and fortitude survive their exposure to the Pitiless Elements to be changed by their surroundings into something not-quite-human. Few escape these domains unscarred. The wastes of elemental fury that surround the domains particular to the Pitiless Elements are a greater deterrent and punishment combined than any wall, cage, or chain.

## LOCALES

### Icy Vastness

A freezing wind howls across frigid arctic steppes, passing packs of half-wild fae and changeling beasts without pause. It rushes through the pine trees of a small forest, slowing slightly as it causes the snap-crack of bursting branches, victims of its icy touch. The wind pushes on out of the forest, becoming a gale once more before it strikes the battlements of a fortress carved from hard packed snow and glistening ice. Bathed in the half-light of weary sunshine filtered through ever present storm clouds, the Icy Vastness domain is eternally locked in the frozen embrace of Winter.

Larger by half than many domains, the extra space exists to showcase the power of the perpetual deep freeze. No warming fires will burn in Icy Vastness and the only shelter to be found is that created from snow and ice. Dotted the domain, here and there, are small clusters of igloo-like burrows, nearly indistinguishable from the surrounding terrain, only identifiable by the paths cut through the snow that connect the dwellings and proclaim the place as a community of sorts. The communities grow steadily larger as they approach the center of the domain, becoming almost recognizable as small towns or villages. Multi-story buildings are constructed from large sheets of ice, tamped together with snow or bound into place with bones and sinew. In the very center of Icy Vastness is the aforementioned fortress, the seat of power in the domain. Towering over the wintry countryside, the icy fortress walls stand like frozen waterfalls, the tops of the wall barely visible from the ground. Blue pennants stamped with an alien coat of arms snap in the wind, their cloth perhaps the only things in the entire realm untouched by the cold.

The gates to the fortress are mammoth icicles, twenty feet wide at their bases that extend both up and down like giant shimmering teeth, to protect the gaping chasm in the walls. Like the teeth they so resemble, the icicles withdraw into the ground and walls of the fortress when the gates are open, before slamming shut again with enough force to send tiny slivers of ice spinning away like shrapnel from an explosion. Inside the fortress, hallways are carved through the ice of the place leading to grand dining halls, audience



chambers and living areas. Here the ice of the walls are cut and polished to a diamond sheen that refracts the pale luminescence shed by braziers of cold, blue fire into a dazzling display of beauty — a beauty that blinds onlookers who stare too long in fascination. In the heart of the fortress is the throne room of the True Fae that rules the domain, the throne itself set under a rift in the ceiling that extends to the top of the fortress. The rift ushers gusts of freezing wind and gently falling snow down into the throne room to wreath the Gentry as he sits in governance.

Life for changelings in Icy Vastness is a dreary, unending struggle for survival. When not set to tasks by their Keeper, they must hunt or trade for food, often staving off their hunger with handfuls of snow. Humans brought to the domain that don't acclimatize quickly enough to survive are buried deep into snow drifts or sunk through holes in frozen lakes: leaving the bodies too long untended risks drawing attention from the packs of wild fae beasts or mad changelings that hunt the frigid wastes. Sometimes two communities will come to blows over rich hunting grounds and fight short, brutish battles armed with weapons of bone, forged ice and Contracts. The True Fae enjoy watching these battles, like a sort of spectator sport, and will often arrange for rivalries to spring up between two communities to provide entertainment.

Beast and Ogre kiths that adapt well to cold environments are frequently produced by Icy Vastness, as are Elementals of the Airtouched and Snowskin kiths.

## The Deep

The oceans of Faerie resemble their material Realm counterparts only in so much as they both contain large quantities of water (or water-like substances) and act as breeding grounds for all manner of life forms. Beyond that, all matters that are normally decided by nature (such as tides, currents, depth or extremes of temperature) are instead created by the True Fae. Set in an area of the oceans that the Fae have decided to be tropic, the Deep is mainly an underwater domain. A few small islands break the monotonous, rolling blue of the waves, but these are mere adornments, like a ruby necklace set against the pale skin of a lovely woman, meant to draw attention to the overall effect. The waters of the Deep are a constant warm and comfortable temperature, though slightly thicker in texture than normal water. The combination of the warmth and density of the water can sometimes give the impression of swimming through a sea of blood or maybe amniotic fluid. Owing, perhaps, to the glutinous consistency of the water, visibility in the Deeps is reduced to no more than 50' in any direction when under the waves. Oddly, viewed from above, the water seems crystal clear and reflects the bright light of constant sunshine against the white sands of the ocean floor.

The majority of the permanent changeling inhabitants of the Deep find they can breathe the waters as easily as they do air, even without gills or other enhancements. Few of the Lost ever manage to discover the trick of underwater

breathing and eke out their existence on the small islands of the domain. Faerie plant and animal life of every description flourishes in the warm depths of the ocean domain. Some of these resemble their more mundane counterparts, but the vast majority could not possibly exist outside Arcadia. Vast aquatic predators hunt the Deep, mile-long masses of tentacles and biting mouths that can draw upon the power of the Wyrd to aid in feeding their constant hunger. These predators will set upon each other with equal murderous glee as they will other prey, filling the water around their struggles with sickly, green blood. Carnivorous plants hide among their more peaceful cousins, waiting patiently for their prey to come within reach of shooting thorny protrusions or poisonous, spear-like limbs.

The waters of the Deep are also home to less aggressive forms of life, though it is the rare specimen that is incapable of defending itself in some way. Sparkling fish made from sea-shells swell like blowfish if attacked, shedding their exteriors in a cloud of whirling, razor-sharp shells. Glistening sunfish that truly shine like a star, glow brighter under duress, threatening to blind onlookers and slowly heat the water around them to boiling. Even the smallest prey fish might have the ability to phase in and out of reality, materializing just long enough inside the body of a predator to neatly dissect its heart.

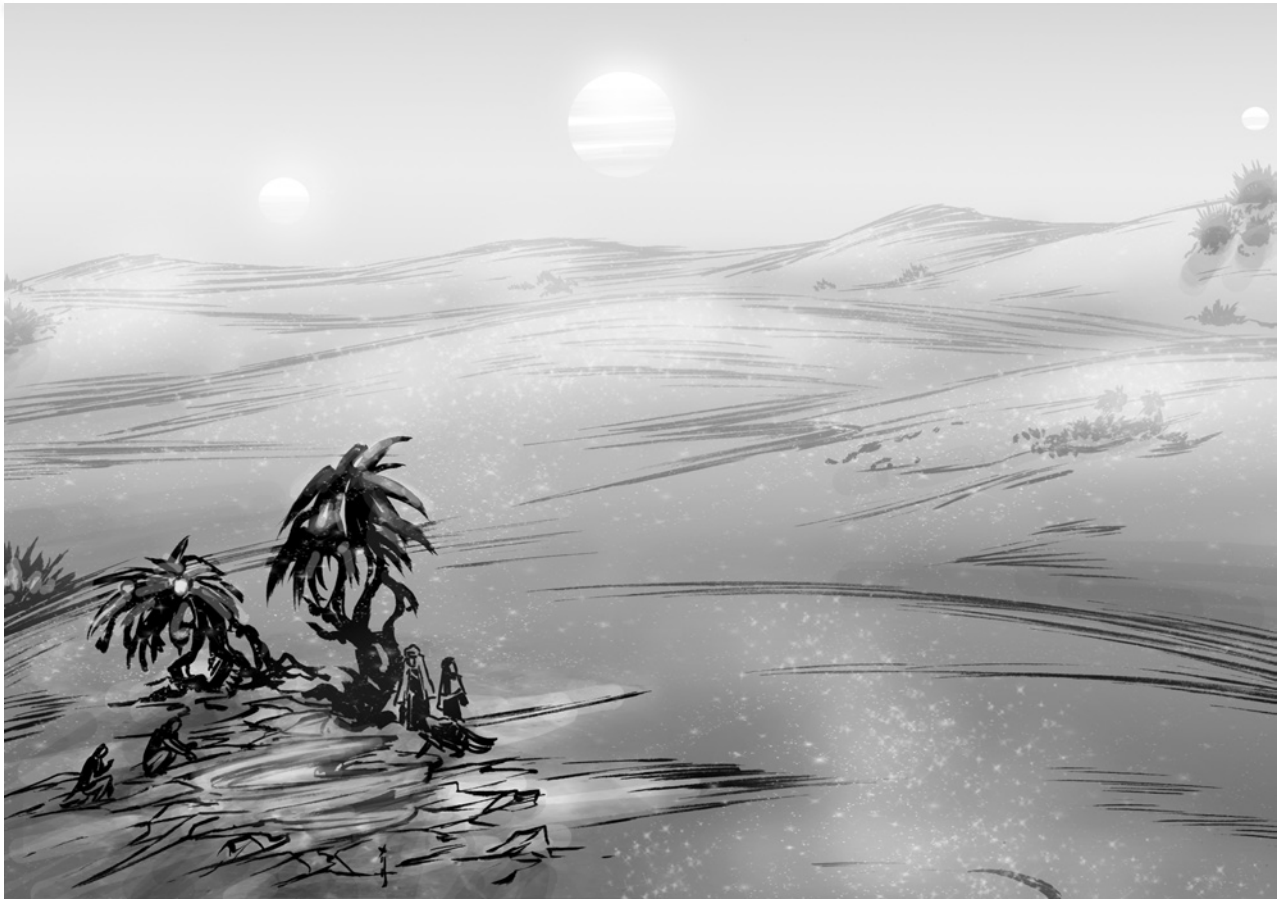
The changelings of the Deep work in beds of oysters, collecting pearls colored in every shade of the rainbow, construct buildings of coral or stone for themselves or their Keeper and occasionally are called to join their master in a hunt for one of the predators taking the part of hunting dogs or bait. Though the dangers of the Deep aren't always as obvious as those of the other Pitiless Elements, they exist nonetheless. Setting aside the possibility a changeling might be attacked or devoured at any point during their Durance, the real danger of the domain is far more subtle. Changelings that spend too long in the soothing waters of the Deep risk forgetting how to breathe air altogether, forever ending any possibility of returning to the mundane world. It is a short step from forgetting how to breathe air to true surrender to the domain. All too often the changelings catch an aquatic creature for sustenance that turns out to have human eyes or the stubby vestigial remains of fingers.

The Deep most commonly produces changelings of the Beast/Swimmersin, Elemental/Waterborn and Ogre/Waterdweller varieties, though other seemings and kiths are also possible if they have adapted to the water. Ogre/Gristlegrinders and Beast/Hunterhearts are typical among the few changelings that cling to the small islands of the domain.

## Burning Sands

The sobriquet Burning Sands is more than just a descriptive phrase. Twin suns circle the domain, one rising and setting slightly faster than the other. When both suns stand high in the sky, the clear crystalline flakes that make up the desert reflect enough heat to broil a man where he stands. Even when both suns have set (which seems to happen with





far less frequency than it should) the heat remains stifling as the crystalline flakes shed the heat they've stored during the day. Perhaps the only thing more dangerous than being exposed to the wrath of the twin sun's glare is being caught in the open during the rare, albeit powerful, wind storms that sweep across the landscape. The winds scoop up the flakes and whirl them in a frenzy that flays exposed flesh to the bone, leaving naught but grinning skeletons in their wake.

Travel across the face of Burning Sands is like a jaunt through Hell. The sands shift and stir underfoot like a nest of vipers, as though intentionally denying the traveler solid footing. The blinding, glimmering slopes of dunes conceal quicksand pits, where the lightest flakes have gathered and settled, covered by a thin crust of scree. The crystalline flakes sneak into every article of clothing, rubbing tender skin raw, and infiltrating food flavoring every bite with the grinding taste of grit. A few, scraggly plants eke out an existence in the desert, burrowing their roots deep in search of water. More common by far are the 2-inch diameter round balls of spikes that vaguely resemble cacti: named "wreckers" by the Lost, the plants roll with the desert winds of Burning Sands until they sense movement or smell blood. The reaction to either stimulus is the same; the wrecker turns and homes in on its target, seeking to impale its target and drink fluid from the body. The spikes on the plants often reach a foot in length and have the tensile strength of

spring steel. Changeling denizens of Burning Sands harvest wreckers to make crude knives or spears from the spikes and drink the liquid stored in the core.

A nomadic lifestyle is the norm of the domain. Changelings travel the desert in loose tribes, moving from one oasis to the next in a set pattern. Miscalculation can lead to death as the oases are filled with a finite amount of water and take a goodly amount of time to replenish. The oases are marked by crystal formations surrounding a natural spring where water collects in glassy depressions lined with fallen crystals. Plant life is somewhat thicker around an oasis, allowing sparse groves of trees to form that drop a tasty fruit. Even amongst the comparative luxury provided by an oasis, changelings must remain on their guard. The Lost aren't the only creatures that frequent the only free-flowing sources of water in Burning Sands and small herds of wreckers are drawn to the oases by the likely proximity of juicy flesh. Though the tribes might fight amongst each other over other resources, an oasis is considered neutral ground. The changelings have a legend that says the iron carried by blood will poison the crystal formations that surround an oasis and the precious water will cease to flow.

Other than changelings and a smattering of non-intelligent fae beasts, Burning Sands is home to a large number of great drakes: pets and steeds of the True Fae. Not true dragons, drakes are wingless, stand 8' tall at the shoulder and



measure 12'–20' long from nose to tail. They are equipped with large, flat, webbed feet that allow for rapid movement across the shifting sands, as well as razor sharp teeth and claws the size of sabers. Near immortality (drakes never die, though they can be killed) combined with a superior intellect and formidable natural weaponry make the drakes a force to be reckoned with. Fortunately for the Lost, the great drakes don't seem to require food and are normally willing to leave changelings alone. It is said that the drakes know the ways in and out of the domain and will share their knowledge for the proper offering. Exactly what the correct offering might be, no changeling in Burning Sands knows. Those that seek out the great drakes to gain their wisdom never return. One popular story is that the drakes are actually changelings and the price required is to take their place and shape, freeing the drake from their oaths to the Gentry.

Beasts of the Broadback and Venombite kiths, Elemental/Firehearts, and Ogre/Stonebones are the changelings most likely to be encountered inside the boundaries of Burning Sands. The rare Fairest/Draconics might also develop from interaction with the drakes combined with an inclination to horde more than their share of water.

### The Empty Wastes

The badlands of the domain are filled with narrow canyons, winding ravines, and towering rock formations cut into fantastic shapes by the ever-present wind. The ground is a mixture of packed clay, dirt and stone, riddled with cracks from the continual drought. Narrow streambeds wind their way through the terrain, no more than trickles of muddy water.

Echoing somewhat the vistas presented by the Painted Desert in the southwestern United States, the rock of the Empty Wastes is multi-colored and astonishingly beautiful when viewed from overhead. Unlike mundane badlands, the surface of the domain is ever-changing, making maps or memorization of passable routes impossible. If you sit at the base of any rocky outcropping for long enough you can actually watch as the rock grows out of the arid soil. The multi-colored aspect of the stone makes following the growth of the rock fairly simple. Over the span of five hours, those with the inclination can watch a specific band of color grow out of the earth and move up the rock face a good three to six feet. The stone is also much softer than would be expected and can be broken away from the surrounding rock in vertical strips with a minimal amount of effort. The constant winds of the domain cut into the malleable rock growths (the wind grows stronger the higher you travel) like the hand of a sculptor, pruning and shaping the rock as it grows. This process should result in a constant rain of rock chips and smaller debris, yet it does not.

For whatever reason, every so often a spur of rock arises that has greater density than usual. This harder stone is single-colored and grows much slower than the rock around it, taking years rather than weeks to gain full height. The

wind takes its toll on these formations in different ways. Rather than flaking off broad vertical strips of the rock, the wind instead tunnels *through* it, creating twisting conduits that channel the wind further through the stone. As these singular formations continue to gain in height, more and more conduits are formed in the rock and the wind flowing through it begins to moan and whistle. Once the tower of rock has stretched as near the sky as it can reach, the rock ceases to grow and the sounds formed by wind passing through the channels in the stone takes on a new characteristic. Changeling passersby hear the sounds of voices calling to them from the rock, carried on the wind. These are the voices of mothers and fathers, children and siblings, friends and lovers. The voices call out the names of the Lost, asking where they have gone, why they have abandoned their families or echo the plaintive cries of children, crying over a missing parent. Even changelings that led lives of solitude before they were taken hear voices in the wind, except these voices murmur that no one knows they are gone; no one cares if they return. The Lost call these formations the “Sobbing Towers” and avoid them as much as possible. Only madness can result from listening to the words on the wind, no comfort can be found in hearing familiar voices while trapped in an alien land. Eventually, even the harder stone of a Sobbing Tower will give way to the wind and crumble, silencing the voice of the wind.

The constant shifting of the terrain and scarcity of water makes the cultivation of crops next to impossible for any extended length of time. Changelings settle in an area for as long as it remains relatively flat, striving to eke out an existence in the inhospitable clime. Days in the Empty Wastes are hot and dry, driving changelings to seek out the relative cool of tents, shade or lean-tos during the mid-day sun. At night, the temperature dives to near freezing and makes the soft stone of the domain even more brittle, resulting in frequent night time rock slides and collapsing rock towers. More dangerous than the rock slides are the fae beasts that hunt at night. Chilling howls echo through the ravines, frustrating efforts to determine from which direction they originate. Hordes of insect-like fae creatures also scuttle during the dark, most bearing poisonous bites, seeking out carrion or the weak and wounded on which to feast.

The Empty Wastes most frequently produces large numbers of changelings with the Beast and Ogre seemings, middling numbers of Elemental/Stonebones and the small minority of the Lost that prefer the domain at night tend to the Darkling/Tunnelgrub or Leechfinger seeming and kiths.

## LAWS OF THE LAND

### Elemental Prejudice

Each domain in the Pitiless Elements is created around the dominance of one particular element over all the others. The chosen element can be found in abundance in that domain, while opposing elements have a lesser presence



and wield smaller influence in the place. Storytellers should choose which element is ascendant in the domain, sticking with the theme created by the environment. In the case of the example locales above, the favored elements are ice (Icy Vastness), water (The Deep), fire (Burning Sands) and earth (The Empty Wastes). An argument could be made for air being the dominant element in the Empty Wastes, but consider which element has the most bearing on the everyday life of changelings in that domain; that becomes the dominant element. Any form of magic or Contract that summons forth or influences the dominant element of the domain gains a +5 bonus. Similar magical effects that target elements with a lesser presence in the domain suffer a -3 penalty and effects that attempt to summon or influence elements that directly oppose the dominant element fail completely. Continuing to use the above locales as examples, the opposing elements would be fire (Icy Vastness), air (The Deep) and water (Burning Sands, The Empty Wastes).

### Seeming Harmony

Some seemings (and kiths) are more at home surrounded by a particular element than others. Certainly, the Elementals bear an obvious relationship with the element that helped mold their mien, but other seemings can also benefit or suffer from the conditions around them. If the general nature of a seeming or that of a seeming or kith blessing, favors the dominant element of a domain in the Pitiless Elements, the changeling may count rolls of 7 or higher as a success and require only 4 successes to gain an exceptional success. Alternately, changelings with natures that oppose the dominant element may only count rolls of 9 or higher as successes and require 6 successes to gain an exceptional success. Keepers will sometimes alter the mien of changelings that have disobeyed them or attempted to escape to that of an opposing element, as an example to others of the consequences of irritating their masters.

*Example: Three changelings find themselves in Burning Sands. One changeling is a Wizen/Soldier, one is an Ogre/Water-Dweller and the last is an Elemental/Fireheart. The Wizen/Soldier neither benefits nor suffers (more than usual anyway) from the dominant element of fire in Burning Sands and his dice rolls are unaffected. The Ogre/Water-Dweller finds that his skin blisters and burns in the extreme heat and so has his dice rolls negatively modified as a result of his nature opposing the dominant element. The Elemental/Fireheart is perfectly at home in the oppressive heat of the domain and gains a positive modifier to his rolls from Seeming Harmony with the dominant element.*

## THE MASTER'S WILL

### Soul of the Land

The command of their favored element possessed by the True Fae in their own domain is second to none. The Gentry can call up whirlpools in their ocean homes, light-

ning storms in bottomless skies, or earthquakes of shifting stone across mountainous terrain. Those who seek to challenge the lords of their domains on their home turf must first deal with the elements at their command before even coming face to face with the True Fae. Though immensely powerful, the True Fae aren't gods and lack true omniscience even on their own lands. To command the elements to attack their enemies, the Gentry must be able to eyeball the targets of their wrath, though this may be easily enough accomplished through scrying devices or other manifestations of personal power. Those unable to hide themselves from the gaze of the Gentry suffer nearly continual elemental attacks until the True Fae grow weary or bored of the game.

Each turn a character is under elemental attack she suffers a possible 7 dice of lethal damage. The dice pool can be reduced by Armor as normal, though not by Defense. Additional dice can be negated by reacting to the attack with actions appropriate to diminish the threat. What might be considered an appropriate action varies with the type of elemental attack underway. Changelings might discover a way of grounding the crackling bolts of electricity generated by a lightning storm by rolling Intelligence + Science. Escaping the pull of a whirlpool would require the character to roll Stamina + Athletics and figuring out someplace safe to hide during an earthquake could call for a Wits + Survival roll. Each success gained reduces the damage dice pool by one.

## THE UNTAMED WILDS

Faerie glades and mushroom rings are traditional elements in fairytales, often transporting the unwary into the Realm of the fae where they are alternately rewarded or punished for their unintended foray into Faerie lands. Forests in general have long been regarded as eldritch territory, offering wonders and terrors to people that wander off the beaten path. Like every other domain in the Shifting Land, the forests of Arcadia offer up sights that are bizarre, horrific and alluring; often all at the same time. It is in the forests you will find the Wild Hunt, an endless game of hunter and prey in which, on rare occasions, the hunter becomes the prey. Trees the like of which haven't been seen on Earth for thousands of years can still be found in Arcadia. Unspoiled by the hand of man, the woodlands are thick and verdant. A squirrel (or something that looks like a squirrel) can truly cross from one side of a domain to the other without ever needing to touch the ground.

Existing purely at the whim of the True Fae, these fae woods are arranged without apparent rhyme or reason, row upon row of elm trees giving way to tropical splendor without warning. Rivalled only by oceanic domains, the Untamed Wilds are home to a plethora of fae beasts of all shapes and sizes, some areas literally teeming with life. Everything from vicious predators, to skittish prey animals, to abundant insect life fills the woods to create their own, unique, cycle of life. At the pinnacle of the cycle are the True Fae, masters of the domains, served by their changeling retainers who



may, or may not, be the second most dangerous creatures to be found under the lush boughs of the trees.

## LOCALES

### Verdant Dream

Filled from border to border with trees similar to those found in temperate zones, Verdant Dream is truly a domain of fae magic. Well trod, twisting paths wend their way through the undergrowth, interrupted only by clear streams and the occasional changeling campsite or tidy village. Tiny fae insects that resemble the popular image of pixies — small, winged humanoids with diaphanous clothing and tiny bows — flutter in glittering swarms and squeak out greetings or warnings to the Lost that cross their path. Unicorns hide in the depths of the woods, responding warmly to a virgin's touch and dryads peek out shyly from behind their trees. In short, the place so closely resembles the sanitized children's adaptations of fairytales made popular on Earth during the Victorian era that one would almost expect to see the Disney version of Beauty come walking down the path, singing and followed by seven grumpy dwarves.

As might be expected, this is no accident. The Gentry that created Verdant Dream was so amused by the so-called fairytales spoken of by her changeling slaves that she decided to spin a replica of the stories into existence. Of course, no fairytale is complete without a villain, so she also stocked the domain with evil witches, cruel nobles and dastardly henchmen. Every human brought to Verdant Dream is given a role to play and a form to match that role. Changelings that don't perform up to their Keeper's expectations are replaced and transformed into hideous monsters ready-made to be slain by a dashing hero. With so much riding on behaving exactly how they are expected to, many changelings cross the line from simply acting their part to actually *living* their part, much to the Keeper's delight.

While reading a fairytale might be good fun, actually living that story is a different matter. The True Fae do not take sides in the battles between "good" and "evil" and the "hero" doesn't always win. A Beast/Runnerswift that is confronted by an Ogre/Water-Dweller while crossing a bridge *really* better have a fatter brother following behind him or giant horns if they don't want to end up as lunch. Bands of bandits lie in wait along high traffic trails ready to rob and likely beat, rape, and murder passing travelers. Depending on the part they have been given to play, the bandits might give a portion of their ill-gotten wealth to the poor or they may simply keep it for themselves to buy better weapons and armor. In most cases, the "heroes" are no better than villains themselves. The plucky Fairest that trades his cow for magic beans is just as likely to murder the sleeping Ogre/Gargantuan he finds at the top of a giant beanstalk, then steal the golden goose, as he is to simply swipe the fae beast and hope the Gargantuan trips and falls to its death.

Every culture has their own fairytales and the True Fae that created Verdant Dream collects stories from all around

the world. Consequently, any type of changeling might be created during their Durance in the domain.

### The Wild Lodge

Set deep in this forest domain, amidst trees that call to mind the Giant Sequoia, stands a motte-and-bailey castle that flies no banners. The wooden buildings and palisade of the defensive structure were likely constructed from lumber harvested during the creation of a dead zone around the castle. The dead zone provides a clear line of sight for archers and smaller siege weaponry, like catapults, for 200 yards in a complete circle around the castle. This is the home of the True Fae that controls the domain and for three weeks out of every month is a scene of rustic tranquility. At the start of the fourth week, the master calls his loyal changeling retainers to his side, gathers his packs of hunting beasts and mounts up on his magnificent fae steed. The gates of the castle are thrown wide and — accompanied by braying horns — the Wild Hunt rides forth.

For the next week only two types of beings exist in the domain: the hunter and the hunted. The Wild Hunt sweeps through the forest in a whirlwind of cruelty and blood. However they might act and appear for the rest of the month, during the Wild Hunt the riders and hunting beasts revel in an insane bloodlust, their features becoming twisted and nightmarish. The wide avenues of the forest created by rows of sequoia-like trees are perfect for the Hunt and are complimented by minimal undergrowth to impede their frenetic pace. No creature or changeling not part of the Wild Hunt is safe from their depredations once the hunting beasts catch hold of a scent. The more cunning and elusive their prey becomes, the more excited the hunters become. The Wild Hunt will spend entire days chasing a single target, to the exclusion of anything that doesn't fall directly in their path, in pursuit of especially wily game. Legends told by the changelings who hide, trembling in fear when the Hunt is on, say the only way to join the Wild Hunt is to beat the hunters at the game. They say the reward for the most devious prey is an invitation to become a predator.

As might be expected, any changelings that endure for any length of time in the domain (that don't serve in the Wild Lodge) become adept at survival. They create homes in the high branches of the trees, far above the notice of the Wild Hunt at the height of its lunacy. They burrow into the ground or take refuge in caves, concealing the entrances behind carefully constructed camouflaged doors. Despite their best efforts, these attempts at concealment still sometimes fail to protect them from the Hunt. Burrows and caves are discovered and their inhabitants are smoked out (literally) to face the fury of the Hunt. Hunting beasts halt and howl at the massive bases of treetop sanctuaries, before climbing the trees, claws sinking into wood, leaving the changelings watching from above with the choice of jumping to their doom or being dragged to the ground to face the waiting hunters. Some changelings attempt to survive by setting off





alone into the woods, reckoning their chances of survival improve without the presence of others to give them away. The only real difference this makes is that once the Wild Hunt discovers their spoor, they die alone.

The types of changelings (or their remains) most likely to be found in this domain are a variety of Beast kiths, Darkling/Tunnelgrubs (those who burrow), Elementals of both the Airtouched (treetop survivors) and Woodblood kiths, various Ogre kiths and Wized of the Soldier or Woodwalker kiths.

### Twilight Wood

Forever cloaked in the waning light of dusk, Twilight Wood is a marshy domain where slimy, gray-skinned things grow and flourish. Along the borders, clumps of trees grow on grassy mounds that begin the work of slowing the flow of water into the domain. As the water flows deeper into the domain it has its course divided again and again by shallow ponds, trees and other types of the abundant plant life that

flourishes in Twilight Wood. Eventually, the waters slow to the merest trickle feeding the swamplands that form the majority of the domain. Humans new to the place quickly get the feeling they'll never be completely dry again. The air is swollen with humidity and even the most solid looking ground is spongy and damp. Stand in the same place long enough and the depression created by constant pressure on the soft ground begins to fill with water.

Near the edges of the domain, the light that filters down is bright enough to read by. The further one travels towards the center of Twilight Wood the deeper the murk becomes. Most of the fae creatures that can be found in the domain have greatly underdeveloped eyesight, relying instead on smell, hearing or Wyrd-enhancements to guide them. Here a light is considered to be a sign of danger. Marsh gas Will O' Wisps glow the dull orange of campfires, luring the foolish or unwary deeper in the swamps to face an uncertain fate. Some changelings that live here insist the Wisps actually guide those willing to follow them out of the domain. If asked why



they haven't followed the Wisps if they are sure freedom is so close to hand, the changelings shrug, looking uncomfortable, and quickly change to subject. Hope is a strange thing.

Twilight Wood is positively infested with fae insect life. Lightning bugs blink purple and red in the dim, mosquitoes the size of a fist lull would-be victims to sleep with their buzzing wings before settling down to drain them of blood. Lizards and snakes of all shapes and sizes also exist in the swamps. Tiny chameleons, which can turn invisible, scamper up and down the trees in search of bugs. Ponderous monitor-like beasts, long as a bus and confirmed carnivores, wade through the shallows. Deadly venomous snakes, no longer than a tadpole, slither through the mud in packs, hissing shrilly to warn off predators. Changelings hunt the domain for the tongues of intelligent serpents that hiss only lies. Eating the tongue allows them to prophesize the future.

Most of the trees found in the Untamed Wilds have a degree of sentience; giving those who live in the domains the constant feeling they are being watched. In Twilight Wood this sentience goes a step further. The trees of this domain range in type from Cypress to Juniper and trail tangles of Spanish Moss from their branches. Changelings get the feeling that the trees believe they are the masters of the domain and maybe they are right. It is certainly possible that the True Fae have decided to manifest themselves in the forms of trees. Wherever the truth may lie, the trees here can move from place to place, pulling up their roots and resettling wherever their whim strikes them. The trees take a dim view of fires and changelings know that if they light a fire it had better be well tended. The trees will be watching. For the most part the trees are content to dig their roots into the soft ground and murmur their secrets to each other in the whispering rustle of leaves. Although the Lost have never actually seen the trees attack someone, they have all heard tales of missing changelings that dared to set axe to living wood.

Beasts, Darklings, Elementals and Ogres are the most common results of Twilight Wood, along with the though the occasional Fairest/Flowering or Wizeden/Woodwalker.

## The Savage Jungle

The poem *In Memoriam* by Alfred Lord Tennyson says nature is "red in tooth and claw." The description is apt in general and absolutely correct when applied to this domain. The Savage Jungle is a nasty, brutish place where life is cheap and plants feed well from blood spilled on the forest floor. From the moment any but the True Fae step foot within its bounds, they are locked in a constant battle for survival. Night and day, predators stalk the land, seeking fresh meat to satisfy their hunger. The triple-canopy that forms the roof of the jungle locks in heat and moisture squeezing sweat from every pore like a sauna and threatening dehydration. Many of the plants that litter the ground seem unwilling to wait their turn to drink in the blood of battling changelings or fae beasts and sprout thorns that lodge under the skin and cause infection.

Most unusually, the largest advantage that changelings have over the things that hunt them is their command over the Wyrd. Unlike many domains, the fae beasts, plants and insects in the Savage Jungle have only minor Wyrd-fueled abilities; the power to slightly alter shape and heal rapidly being the most common. This handicap seems unlikely to have developed coincidentally and the changelings figure that the True Fae limited the creatures of the domain to give the Lost a fighting chance. Even this advantage comes with a drawback. The biggest, meanest and most vicious of predators in the domain can smell fae magic and are drawn to the scent like a shark to blood. Use too many Contracts or spend too much Glamour in one place and one of these nightmares is bound to find you. The Lost call these beasts "horrors" and no changeling has ever seen one defeated.

The dangers of the domain foster a spirit of cooperation in the changelings that live there that amounts almost to a sacred bond. Changelings form motleys and larger communities based primarily on a desire for survival. They hack heavily fortified villages out of the jungle and man the defenses 24/7 against threats that can appear at any moment. To intentionally kill or harm another changeling is to be banished from the community. A pronouncement of exile is a death sentence: no one can survive the Savage Jungle alone. Even the strongest of these villages is eventually overrun by a horror, its occupants scattered or devoured. Those that survive and manage to reunite move away from the site of their last home as quickly as possible to start over.

The True Fae of the domain live in splendor on mesas that jut abruptly out of the jungle. No plant life grows on the cliff faces of the mesas and even the horrors can't climb to the top. Though separated from the ever present dangers of the domain, the Gentry occasionally descend from their lofty perches to call a changeling into their service. Witnessing a selection is a cause for celebration in the changeling communities. Even though no changeling has ever returned from the mesas of the True Fae, the Lost figure no service can possibly be more dangerous and demanding than daily life in the Savage Jungle.

No place exists in the Savage Jungle for changelings of gentle demeanor. Every human that changes here grows stronger, savage and brutal. The majority of the changeling population in the domain consists of Ogres, Beasts (especially Hunterhearts) and Wizeden Soldiers or Woodwalkers.

## LAWS OF THE LAND

### Dead Wood

Even though the True Fae can spin reality out of nothing in Arcadia, it is still easier to make something out of something else. In the case of the Untamed Wilds, the "something" to be made are the trees that fill the land. Because of their abundance, trees and the wood they produce are the most commonly used resource in the domains. Even in domains like Twilight Wood where trees aren't (usually)



directly harvested, their numbers are still diminished due to fire, abuse by fae beasts, or just by accident. Unlike the normal world, trees in Faerie don't reproduce by simply dropping nuts or sending out new shoots through the forest floor. Each tree that is destroyed must be replaced either through Contract or directly by the Gentry. Rather than waste their energy on constantly replacing the trees, the True Fae use what materials they have that are close to hand and are easy to replace: namely, the souls of dead changelings.

Each time a changeling dies in the Untamed Wilds, their soul (or whatever remnant of their consciousness they retain in Faerie) is transformed into a tree. The changeling retains limited cognizance in their new form and they remember just enough about their previous existence to know they weren't always a tree. It is this remaining spark of sentience that gives the trees their unusual qualities and when a living changeling, alone in the woods, feels like someone is watching her, she is right. The trees are watching. Exceptionally strong souls can influence their surroundings through emotion. A changeling cum tree that feels loss and sorrow creates a small area around it which manifests signs of that emotion. Tear-like sap might run down the bark of the tree, a stream that runs in front of the tree might taste bitter when it falls in the tree's shadow and fae beasts that are drawn to emotion will congregate around it.

Soul-trees also manifest oddities when they are cut into. The soul feels the pain of the axe or saw cutting into its flesh. Stories of trees with blood sap, trees that scream when felled, or use magic to dull blades all result from a soul-tree that was attacked. Living changelings seem to have no clue about soul-trees, which is probably just as well for their peace of mind. Who wants to know they are living in the wooden flesh of a dead changeling? It is possible for the souls to gain a new body if the wood of their soul-tree is used to create something with a humanoid form. The resulting Elemental/Manikin retains no memories of their tree form and only the vaguest memories of their human lives. If a soul-tree dies the soul used to make that tree is set free. Not even the True Fae have found a way to force a soul into a new shape a second time.

### Fear of Falling

A secret about the Untamed Wilds that is fairly well known among the Lost is that of falling. No changeling knows who it was that first learned the trick, but it is one of the first things they share with newcomers. The trick works like this. If a changeling is in a tree and he *falls* out (falls, not jumps) as long as he believes he'll land safely, he does. The trick works in different ways depending on circumstances. The falling changeling might catch his clothes on branches on the way down, slowing him enough so he lands bruised but alive, he might plummet into a handy pond or, most astonishing, another changeling could catch him. To master their fear of falling, the character must roll Resolve + Composure. If he succeeds, the character suffers only one point of bashing

damage regardless of how far he fell. Clever changelings have discovered they can make quick getaways with this trick by pushing each other out of trees. As long as the trip down isn't self-initiated, the trick works every time.

## THE MASTER'S WILL

### Twisting Paths

Other than trees, the one feature all the domains of the Untamed Wilds share is their paths. Some paths are the width of a two-lane road and others are barely wide enough for an Ogre. Not all the paths have any obvious source or purpose. Changelings have discovered stone-lined paths that start abruptly then end after a few feet and paths that run for miles, deep in the woods far from any habitation. Paths may be paved with concrete, bones, yellow brick, wooden corduroy or, frequently, not at all. Regardless of shape, length or function, every path in the Untamed Wilds pulses slightly with Wyrld. The paths belong to the True Fae.

The Others can change the paths in their domain at will. This includes destination, width, construction or any other feature of the path. The Gentry use this power to confuse and frustrate intruders in their lands, especially those who believe the stories that say you should never leave the path in Faerie. An annoying guest following a path that usually leads to an orchard filled with fruit from the Garden of Eden can easily be rerouted to the lair of a hungry fae beast. The Gentry can just as easily change the paths to reward as to punish. A wounded changeling who is desperately searching for someone to help him might find the house of a Wizeden/Chirurgion just around a sharp bend in the path. Not only can the True Fae alter the paths, they can, with effort, determine exactly where and who is walking their paths. This requires concentration and an alert changeling can notice the effort. Each time one of the Gentry attempts to locate a specific person on their paths, the target of their inquiries (that knows about the trick) can make a reflexive Wits + Wyrld roll to notice they are being located. This doesn't keep the target from being located, but it does let them know they've attracted attention.

## DREAD PURPOSE

Not every domain is simply a backdrop for the activities of changelings and the True Fae. Some are created with a specific intent or design. The domains of Dread Purpose all have a reason for their existence that is more unifying than the basic archetypes of most fae lands. The defining feature of one domain might be a massive gladiatorial arena, and everything else in the domain exists to support the arena. The True Fae master of another domain might have taken an interest in manufacturing — like a human takes up miniature train building as a hobby — and structured the entire domain around the business of production. Whatever the Dread Purpose of a domain might be, the whole of that domain is given over to supporting that purpose.



## LOCALES

### The Fell Mines

The True Fae squabble among themselves over changing slaves, perceived insults, or for no obvious reason at all. Most of the time, these quarrels are resolved with the fae one-upmanship of Arcadian magic (see the Appendix for details), but sometimes all-out wars are declared that only end in the death of one of the opposing Gentry. What happens to one of the True Fae after death is a mystery even to them, but the *bodies* of fallen Fae are frequently kept and preserved by the victor, as a kind of grisly trophy. The domain called the Fell Mines is the creation of a True Fae that went to war with her own kind and won. Her opponent had taken the form of a titan and, upon death, his titan's body fell across Arcadia with an almighty crash. The victorious True Fae immediately worked a magic that fossilized the body to preserve it, then set about thinking of ways she might further desecrate the remains. She contemplated beheading the titan and placing the head in her gardens or setting an army of fae ants to work at slowly devouring the corpse before coming to her final decision. She made a mine out of it.

The lady named her new domain the Fell Mines (and changelings think their Keepers have no sense of humor..) and went about "recruiting" servants to begin the work of mining. Over time a fair sized changeling community dedicated solely to mining the body grew up, around, over and beneath the fallen titan. In the normal course of events, the body would have been mined out to a hollow shell within a few decades, or at most a century, but nothing is exactly normal in Faerie. No matter how much material the Lost dug out of the corpse there always seemed to be room for new mineshafts. In a report to his mistress, the Wizeden mine overseer theorized that the inherent magic of the True Fae meant the mines were far greater in size on the inside than on the outside. With no end of the mining in sight (and having long since grown bored with the whole thing) the True Fae traded the domain to another of the Gentry and returned to her home.

The materials mined from the corpse vary in type and use. The fossilized flesh of the titan is cut like rock and hauled away for use in various construction projects. The thick veins of the titan are opened to reveal dense ruby-like gems and massive clusters of diamonds. Some veins are found that still hold the boiling hot blood of the titan. This blood is drained from the veins and left to cool in great vats until it hardens into a soft metal-like substance. When the cooled blood is mixed with bone dust gathered from the corpse, the result is a fae alloy, crimson in color, with all the properties of steel and none of the iron content. The rock hard bones are dug out and laboriously worked into new mining tools and equipment. The brains are perhaps the oddest material mined from the body. The lumps of fossilized gray matter can be burnt like coal and are used to power the multitude of devices used in the mines. Change-

lings can be heard to joke that the whole project is simply an example of mind over matter.

Life is hard in the mines and accidents do happen. It isn't unknown for an entire section of mine to collapse, leaving the changeling miners on the other side trapped or squashed flat by falling fossilized flesh. Unexpectedly cutting into a vein of hot blood can result in serious burns when it spatters over the changelings working a shaft. The body has been mined for so long that the shafts form a twisting labyrinth that is easy to get lost in. Then there are the rumors. Changeling miners that have experienced a cave insist they felt the ground shudder beneath their feet moments before the collapse, as though the titan were writhing in pain. Other changelings that have gotten lost in the maze of shafts and passages claim to have heard a terrible moaning or felt the walls of a shaft move ever-so-slightly in and out in a rhythm like breathing. Many of the Lost believe the titan isn't completely dead and their mining is the only thing that keeps it from healing and regaining consciousness.

The changelings most commonly found in the Fell Mines are Darklings (Gravewights, Tunnelgrubs), Ogres (Cristlegrinders, Stonebones), Wizeden (Chatelaine, Chirurgeon, Smith) and the occasional Elemental (Earthbones, Manikin).

### *Crimson Steel*

Weapons made from the fae metal that results from mixing titan blood and bone are highly sought after by the lords and ladies of Arcadia. Because of their legendary weakness to iron, most of the weapons made in Faerie are created from lesser materials such as silver, gold and bone or are forged directly from possibility. While these weapons are perfectly serviceable in Arcadia, they are less than ideal when taken into the Hedge or worse, the material Realm. Weapons forged from Crimson Steel and shaped by changeling artisans are much more reliable outside of Faerie. The keen edge of Crimson Steel weaponry never dulls, nicks, or rusts and the metal absorbs fae magic more readily than other materials. To wit, all Crimson Steel weapons can be made into powerful tokens with only minor catches.

Attempts have been made to construct entire suits of armor from Crimson Steel, but they have always ended poorly. Changelings suspect that by fully encasing a body in the metal, that body is bombarded with the decaying magic of the titan. Every owner of a full set of Crimson Steel armor has eventually gone completely insane and for the True Fae to notice insanity in one of their own, something has indeed gone awry.



## Grinding Gears

Owned by the same True Fae that traded for possession of the Fell Mines, the domain called Grinding Gears is where the majority of the materials mined are sent. Most of the domain is covered by a gigantic factory that sprawls across the land belching smoke and ash from its stacks. Even outside the factory, the clamor of machinery is painfully loud. Noise levels on the factory floor are literally deafening. Machines of every type imaginable run at full speed around the clock, requiring teams of changelings to maintain and service them. Raw materials from the Fell Mines as well as other domains enter one end of the factory and exit the other end after being molded, cut, shaped, forged, polished and assembled into a multitude of products. Probably a good half of the machinery does nothing but produce the tools and replacement equipment required to keep the domain in operation. Entire sections of Grinding Gears are given over to processing special orders from True Fae or the hob merchants that sell their wares at goblin markets. The factory produces keys that open one-way doors into the Hedge, guns that never need to be reloaded, instead stealing memories of violence to create new ammunition, dowsing rods that find your heart's desire for the low, low cost of ten years of your life, shark tooth necklaces that allow the wearer to breathe water if the tooth is used to draw blood, and all sorts of other items.

Outside the factory proper stand row upon row of worker tenements hearkening back to the worst excesses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Changelings trudge back to these dreary abodes after exhausting shifts, shielding themselves from the steady drizzle of acid rain as best they can. Roving bands of overseers wander the tenements, armed with whips to encourage lazy or tardy changelings out of their homes and back to the line when their shift is called. Only death or crippling injury excuse a changeling from work and no one has ever bothered to claim they didn't hear the shift change whistle. Even changelings that have been deafened by the noise of the factory can feel the vibrations of the whistle as it shrieks like a thousand air raid sirens.

Accidents are a fact of life in Grinding Gears. The Lost say that the wheels, gears, and belts of the factory are kept greased with blood. Not a day goes by in which some changeling or another isn't sucked into a machine or loses a limb or digit during their work. The True Fae owners of the place keep a small army of Chirurgeons at hand to deal with the worst of the injuries along with trained medics of other seemings to keep a wounded changeling alive until one of the Wizeden can get to them. Every changeling lost, even for a day, to death or injury reduces the production of the factory by a tiny amount and enough small losses begin to add up.

Changelings of every seeming and kith can be found working some job or another in Grinding Gears, whether they like it or not. One of the most common methods of payment to the Gentry that own the factory is trading changelings for goods. Some Keepers even threaten disobe-

dient changeling slaves with a "trip to the factory" as a way of keeping them in line.

## The Carnival of 1000 Delights

The domain named the Carnival of 1000 Delights, or more commonly just the Carnival, is an unusual place even for Faerie. The Carnival is open to anyone who can make their way to it, be they True Fae, hobs, intelligent fae beasts, freed and escaped changelings, or even humans. In this domain of blinking lights, questionable culinary delights and shoddily constructed amusement rides, everything the eye can behold is up for sale. The Carnival is the granddaddy of all goblin markets and the largest place of business this side of the material Realm. Anything that anyone could possibly desire can be found here.

Visitors to the Carnival are met at the gates of the domain by one of the True Fae called the Barker. His face hidden behind a demon mask, the Fae requires everyone to swear an oath on whatever they hold most dear to observe the neutrality of the Carnival and not cause mischief, mayhem, or murder within its bounds. After the oath is sworn, the Barker gives the visitor a ticket to the domain and allows them inside. Falsely sworn oaths carry no weight with the gatekeeper and he can smell them out before the speaker has finished a sentence. If a visitor seems indecisive about what to swear their oath upon, the Barker will lean forward and offer a suggestion, somehow always knowing exactly what that being values the most.

Once they've entered into the Carnival proper, guests have their choice of where to go next. The main thoroughfare stretches for miles and is lined on both sides by games of chance, food stands and purveyors of cheap, gaudy trinkets. Within a few short minutes of entering the domain a visitor could lose their soul at a game of darts, buy a frozen treat, a hot dog and a T-shirt bearing the logo of the Carnival (a coin bearing the faces of Comedy and Tragedy). The domain comes complete with houses of ill-repute that offer sex acts for every taste, cheaply constructed theatres starring performers thought to be long dead, gambling dens where the stakes are truly life or death, and a multitude of other establishments that cater to every known vice or desire. Amusement rides of every description dot the landscape of the Carnival, each bearing a sign of warning to potential customers that reads, "Ride at own Risk." Even taken together, all of these amusements are simply a sidelight to the main attraction of the Carnival: the Grand Market.

Lit with steadily glowing fluorescent bulbs, by flickering torchlight and more exotic light sources, the Grand Market is the vibrant center of the domain. Deals and bargains are made here every hour of every day. No prospective merchant is turned away, regardless of background or inventory. Each merchant is issued a lot from which to hawk their wares by changeling rousties that wander the concourse. No upfront fee is required from the merchants; instead, the Carnival gets a cut of any profit made or a



share in bargains struck. The manner in which a sale is conducted varies from merchant to merchant and also depends on the quality or rarity of a purchase. The price of a crystal sword that will cut through any enchantment might be all future dreams of happiness, a draft of water from the Fountain of Youth could be traded for the still beating heart of a lover or the granting of a single wish may well cost the customer everything he owns. Slaves of all kinds are sold here, of course, though changeling and human slaves comprise the majority.

The changelings that work for the Carnival can be of any seeming or kith. Though their Keepers are strict, changelings in this domain are offered the chance to buy or win their freedom. Some few changelings do manage to scrape and save enough favors, bargains, and valuables to eventually buy their freedom. The True Fae are as good as their word and will even escort the changeling back through the Hedge to the material Realm. Far fewer changelings manage to win their freedom; doing so requires them to beat their Keepers in a game of the Gentry's choosing. Changelings are given one chance, and one chance only, to defeat their Keepers. Victory gives the changeling their freedom, failure makes them an oath-sworn slave to the True Fae forever.

## LAWS OF THE LAND

### From the Ashes

Without a doubt, changelings face danger to life and limb on a daily basis in the domains of Dread Purpose. Even compared to other violent domains, the turnover rate caused by death or crippling injury of changelings in these domains would be untenable for the daily operations to continue. The solution to this problem is the deal made by the True Fae with the Phoenix. Though the exact details of the agreement are unknown to the Lost, the results are obvious. Any changeling that dies on the job, through no fault of their own, will awaken the next day fully healed and ready for work. Any changeling that suffers a permanent injury that would make them unfit for work, rapidly (within an a few hours) heals after voluntarily shedding a drop of blood into a fire. This might seem like a good deal for the changelings, but the devil is in the details. When a changeling awakens after death he finds himself in the exact same place as where he died, unless his body was moved. A changeling crushed by a collapsed shaft in the Fell Mines that hasn't had his body recovered finds himself dying the same death over and over again until he is discovered. The Lost tell tales about bodies never found that are doomed to live and die every morning as the sun rises.

### A Cog in the Machine

Changelings that live in domains of Dread Purpose quickly learn how to work in teams to accomplish even the

most ridiculously difficult task in far less time than seems possible. Natural leaders among the Lost are spotted and promoted to teach work gangs the most efficient methods of production and service. Whether the job is clearing a new section of mine, speedy repairs on a key machine or quickly serving a party of thirty guests in a dining hall, teamwork makes life easier for everyone. Any teamwork roll (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 134) made in these domains benefits from the 8-again rule, both for the primary actor and all contributors. Additionally, if the primary actor has been designated the leader of the group by someone of authority in the domain, the primary actor may add his Expression skill rating to the final dice pool. Finally, any successful teamwork action takes half the time it normally would.

## THE MASTER'S WILL

### Where There's a Whip There's a Way

The Keepers of Dread Purpose demand a lot from their changeling servants, sometimes more than flesh and blood alone can accomplish. Marginally aware the changelings are only flesh and blood, their Keepers have come up with ways to motivate and refresh them when weariness, depression or mind-numbing tedium has set in. If a Keeper decides a changeling needs to stay at their post even when that changeling is drooping with fatigue, the True Fae can motivate their slaves with grand speeches or dire threats and infuse their workers with a touch of the Wyrd to boost their energy. Any time a changeling suffers from fatigue (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 179) and are within earshot of the voice of one of the True Fae (including devices used to carry said voice over long distances), that changeling immediately rolls Resolve + Stamina + Wyrd. Each success on the roll allows the changeling to ignore the penalties associated with fatigue for one hour. Pushing the Lost past the limits of their endurance with the power of the Wyrd can have unfortunate side effects. If a changeling gains an exceptional success on the roll to ignore fatigue, the surge of Wyrd into his system distorts his perceptions and requires a Clarity check on four dice.

The True Fae can also use this power in a negative manner, reinforcing fatigue in those that can hear their voice. Generally reserved for use on changelings attempting to escape or on interlopers, the Gentry have caused entire changeling armies to hesitate and fumble their weapons, overcome by bone-deep weariness. The target of an attempt by the True Fae intended to sap their energy and will, can attempt to resist the effect. This is a contested action in which the target rolls Resolve + Stamina + Wyrd versus the will of the True Fae, who receives an unmodified dice pool equal to that of the target +1. If the target wins the contested action they are unaffected by the attack and gains a (cumulative) +1 bonus against fu-



ture attacks made within 24 hours. If the True Fae emerges victorious, the target suffers a -1 penalty for each success difference in the rolls, until they have a full night of rest. No limit exists to the number of successive times the True Fae may employ this power and penalties accrued are cumulative. If a target ever suffers from a total penalty greater than twice his Stamina, he slumps to the ground in an exhausted slumber.

**Example:** Trilly, a Wizeded, has made a break for the wall and is closely followed by her Keeper. The True Fae calls out to Trilly with threats of torture if she doesn't stop **right this**

**instant!** The voice of the Keeper is enhanced with the power of the Wyrld and Trilly feels waves of lethargy sweep over her. Trilly has Resolve 2, Stamina 3 and Wyrld 2. Her dice pool to resist the voice of her master would normally be 7, but Trilly really wants to escape, so she spends a point of Willpower to bring her total to 9. Her Keeper starts the contested action with a dice pool equal to Trilly's unmodified pool +1, which gives him a total pool of 8. Trilly gains two successes on her roll, compared to four successes by her Keeper, and suffers a -2 dice penalty to all actions. Trilly stumbles as the fatigue threatens to overwhelm her and the True Fae gains ground.

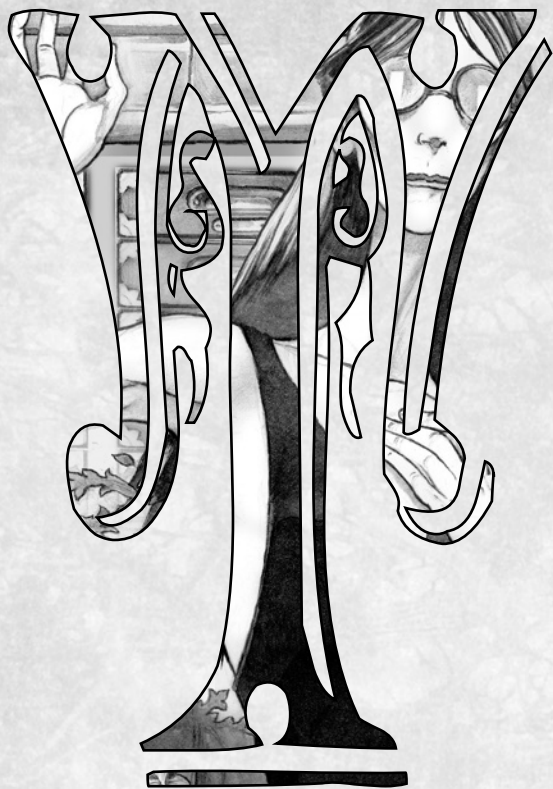






Holt





hat's it?" Sextus asked. "We light this and it will guide us to Faerie?" His motley mate, Bishop Erica Nightingale, eyed the candle suspiciously. The two were crouched in a cramped closet in the back of some abandoned lab in an aging University of Miami building.

Naamah, the Autumn Queen, a twig of a girl who looked like the merest breath might take her up and carry her away, glanced up from her work.

"No," she replied, her voice ancient and tired despite her obvious youth. "You speak the words, the rhyme, exactly as written." She tapped a long finger on the brown paper where her spidery scrawl spelled out six lines. "And it has to be you," she explained, looking at Sextus. "Then you light the candle, and it will burn as your guide until you reach your destination."

"Why does it have to be me?"

"Because you are the sixth son of a sixth son," she answered shortly, as if nothing could be more obvious. Sextus' brow knitted in frustration as

she folded the candle in the rough brown paper.

"What is it made out of?" Erica gestured at the candle.

"You don't want to know."

"Why are you helping us?" Sextus asked the Queen. The deal was entirely too easy and had cost them entirely too little for such a token. She looked at him for a long moment, pausing her work.

"That should be obvious, Centurion," she said quietly, turning back to her task and wrapping the package carefully in twine. "I stand to gain from whatever comes of this little jaunt." Sextus frowned as the girl completed her knot.

"I understand how you win if we don't come back," he muttered, half to himself. "It was one of your demands that we don't tell anyone we're going, so it looks as if we've just disappeared. Another vanishing, this time of an entire motley of experienced freeholders, which people will attribute to the Others. It'll fill the freehold with dread and drive another nail into Grandfather Thunder's grave. But what do you stand to gain if we succeed?" The Autumn Queen poured liquid wax over the knot, sealing it. She leaned over, whispered a quiet incantation, and then exhaled lightly over the viscous, cooling red liquid. She glanced up, examining him over the rim of her glasses.

"If you come back, you're heroes," she answered, her voice barely above a whisper. "You've won a glory that far exceeds anything the Summer King has ever tried, and it was I who enabled you." Her thin fingers slipped to her face, quickly adjusting her glasses on her long, thin nose. "But frankly, friends, I am playing the odds, and they are *not* in your favor."



# CHAPTER 4

## *The Hardest Road*

THOMASINA

*Pop, pop, pop... I have grown up in the sound of guns like the child of a siege.  
Pigeons and rooks in the close season, grouse on the heights from August,  
and the pheasants to follow — partridge, snipe, woodcock, and teal —  
pop - pop - pop, and the culling of the herd.  
Papa has no need of the recording angel,  
his life is written in the game book.*

SEPTIMUS

*A calendar of slaughter. 'Even in Arcadia, there am I!'*

THOMASINA

*Oh, phooey to Death!*

—TOM STOPPARD, *Arcadia*

Nothing is easier than entering Faerie. This truism rings in each changeling's mind each time she enters the Hedge, each time she thinks she hears the voice of her Keeper in a crowd, or each time she bolts, head down and biting her lips to keep from screaming, through narrow spaces in a Hedge reverberating with rolling thunder as she flees the stamping hooves of the Hunt.

Entering Faerie is so easy that it is almost always done by accident: at least by humans. It is so easy that most Lost spend an inordinate amount of time in their day to day lives performing little rituals (or pondering new rituals) to ensure that they *don't* find themselves back in Arcadia, Realm of the Gentry. The entire governmental system of the Lost is based on the supposed ease with which a changeling might find himself back among the Fair Folk. Because going to Arcadia is easy. It's the coming back that's hard.

And to an extent, the changelings are right. Traveling to Arcadia is as easy as turning oneself over to a loyalist or calling down the Hunt.

But for a changeling or motley trying to travel to (or return to) a specific Fae Realm armed, provisioned, and free of bondage, no road is less traveled, rough, brambled, and beset with danger than the Arcadian Road.

## THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Your characters began their journey in Autumn, newly escaped changelings, fledglings experimenting desperately with Contracts and pledges, flying in fear from the nightmares that plagued them. Then winter came. The characters hunkered down, hid among the changeling Courts and the oblivious mortal populace, coming to a better understanding of themselves and their plight as a result. With Spring they came into their own, mastering their powers and turning the table on their nightmares. And as Summer warmed the Earth, so too did they take up the glorious mantles of governance and knighthood.

Your characters have become like unto the Gentry themselves: sublime, beautiful, powerful, and perhaps even quite mad. Like attracts like, and their power now beckons across the gulf and into the Realm of Faerie, drawing the interest of True Fae who recognize in your changeling a larvae on the verge of chrysalis. Soon the Others will return for your characters. Autumn will come again, and the cycle will continue.

Unless you do something about it.



## ARCADIA: AN INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the endgame. Throughout this book we've discussed the finer points of the endgame chronicle. We've explored equipping experienced player characters to the point of bursting (or at least leaking Glamour at the seams). We've provided rules for crafting new Contracts, storytelling True Fae, and exploring Arcadia itself. This leaves only the question, "What do we do with all of this?"

The obvious answer is, "We tell stories." But what kind of stories do we tell? What stories are particularly appropriate for an expedition into the dreaded Faerie? Do we focus on the epic journey, the intense grandeur, the fiery romances and deeply personal friendships, or the beautiful madness? Can we focus on them all? Ultimately each Storyteller must make this decision for his or her group, based on whatever mad dash inertia has brought the motley to the climax of their own legend. But that doesn't mean we intend to leave you in a lurch.

What follows is not so much a guide to storytelling the endgame (for that, see Chapter One), but rather a guide to the stories to tell during the endgame. A story that dives into the darkness and madness of the deep Hedge and Arcadia takes on a different tone than the typical **World of Darkness** or **Changeling** story. While it should remain a narrative that focuses on the characters, the level of that narrative is heightened. Characters who brave the road to Faerie take their first steps towards becoming legends.

Consider the way the True Fae function: each interaction they have with one another is one part conversation, one part story, and one part war. Their domains, being aspects of themselves, reflect this interaction, emphasizing the role of fate. Fate is a palpable force in Faerie, and stories that take place in Arcadia will be underscored by this current. The deep Hedge, being psychoactive and manipulated with some ease by the Gentry, reflects this facet of Arcadia, as well.

In a way, this allows for a lot of freedom on the part of the Storyteller, both to provide help to the characters and place them in harm's way. Were the characters to meet precisely the individual they needed to find their way out of a sticky situation while waiting for the bus in the material world, not only would credulity be strained to the breaking point, but the themes of the larger World of Darkness would be undermined. Were the characters to find such an individual in the deep Hedge or in Arcadia, however, it would underscore the power of fate that has bound itself to the characters' story.

Fate flavors even the effects of dice rolls in Faerie. The result of a successful roll, even though the roll itself is mechanically identical to any roll in the material world, seems fortuitous. Failures are divinely ordained. Dramatic failures are tragic (in the theatrical sense of the word), while exceptional successes are nothing less than inevitable victories. The difference between a mundane dice roll and one flavored by fate largely falls to narration. While a successful attack in the material world might be narrated as "*He attempts to*

## *Legendary Games*

This is not the first time we have touched on characters as the heroes in their own legends. Storytellers who play or have access to the books **Exalted** or **Scion** could do worse than read the Storytelling chapters of those books in preparation for a chronicle that leads changelings into the depths of Arcadian wonder and nightmare. Both are chocked full of advice for Storytellers working to bring a taste of the legendary into their chronicles.

Other aspects of **Exalted** and **Scion** can be adapted or used as inspiration for tales set in Arcadia, as well. The Virtue Flaw mechanic for **Exalted**, for example, is an excellent way of representing the tragic flaws of otherwise glorious heroes, and both **Scion** and **The Sidereals** heavily discuss the role of fate in a game where the players are in control of their own destiny.

Classical tales of gods, monsters, and heroes are not, after all, deeply divorced from the folklore fantasies from which much of **Changeling** draws. The distance is as short as the path from Troy's Paris to Prince Charming by way of Lancelot.

*duck, expecting your blow to swipe in from above, and your attack glances from his shoulder, leaving little more than a scratch,"* the same attack in Faerie rings of fate: "*He attempts to duck your attack, even as his eyes register that the wound is inevitable. The blade strikes home, a glancing blow that draws first blood.*" Like any aspect of narration, care must be taken not to over-emphasize the role of fate in the actions of the characters. A phrase that rings of fate (or a carefully chosen word, like "inevitable" above) seasons the action, but too much can sour the story. It's easy for repetition to get tiresome; remind players of the inexorability of fate only sparingly.

Characters that delve into Faerie become players in a legend almost by definition. Likely they assume it is their own (and in a sense, it should be), but legends are the blades and siege engines used by the Gentry to strike at one another. Changeling characters who set out to enter Faerie can expect to be manipulated by the Gentry in their ongoing wars. This is not, however, automatically awful. The strongest ally a changeling could hope for against his former Keeper is an Other in opposition to the changeling's foe. From a storytelling perspective, remember the roles played by the gods in *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey*, or the machinations of Merlin in the Arthurian romances. The key to keeping the spotlight on the characters, even when they are being used as weapons by one nigh-incomprehensible being of infinite power against another, is that the characters are accomplishing *their own* goals, even if they accomplish the goals of others in the act.



Most importantly, the characters should feel that they are the central characters of this story. Every challenge sets the stage for a triumph. Every great action should feel like it is a deed that will be sung of forever. Even the Gentry are aware of the importance of the characters in the context of the Fae narrative being spun, and they may well treat them with appropriate respect (the respect one has for an enemy before she is vanquished), perhaps to the great surprise of their former slaves.

## ET IN ARCADIA ECO

Characters who have taken it upon themselves to travel to Arcadia should be prepared to die. In theory, any characters taking part in a story in the World of Darkness are risking life and limb, but this is especially true in an endgame. The Storyteller should, of course, feel justified in shifting the odds so that the player characters have a chance; they are, after all, what makes the story interesting. But if the journey to Faerie doesn't *feel* at least as dangerous, and preferably more dangerous, than anything yet encountered — if the characters manage to slip out of situations they created through an incredibly bad decision without a few scratches (or a light maiming) — the players will pick up on it, and the journey will be robbed of its importance.

This does not mean players should be *punished* for attempting the hardest pilgrimage. The Thorns should rip away bits of the soul, the briarwolves should bay at their heels, and the combat should be brutal and bloody, but these difficulties should be surmountable. Changelings, however, are ultimately creatures of finesse, and reminding the characters that however powerful they may be in the freehold, the safest route through Arcadia may very well be the one that keeps them off the main path, approaching with stealth and guile. There is nothing craven about entering an Arcadian Realm through clandestine means, especially when the alternative is death or recapture on the open trods of the Gentry. The guileful way presents its own dangers, however, or the heroes' journey would have little meaning.

The Storyteller should plan in advance how he will keep the action running if a character dies. If you have something working to your advantage, it is that the deep Hedge and Faerie are both potentially excellent locales to meet new allies (i.e., player characters) who have a vested interest in helping the characters, at least long enough to escape. Until the player has made a new character, keep her involved, allowing her to make dice rolls for Storyteller characters or narrate the motley's enemies. During a break in the game you might take the player aside and find out what kind of character she wants to bring into the group, and end the chapter with the motley stumbling upon another changeling, leaving whether or not she is an enemy for the next session.

You can, of course, pace out the lethal and non-lethal threats as dramatically appropriate. For many entities in the Hedge, capture of a changeling is far more worthwhile than destruction. Privateers will try to throw nets over char-

### *Cheating Fate: Fate Points*

One possible way to tweak the action is to implement optional rules such as Fate Points. A Storyteller can use Fate Points to put fate squarely in the hands of the players, allowing them a better chance of avoiding an ignominious end. Upon embarking on the journey (usually with a declaration of intent to the Wyrd), each character gains three Fate Points. Characters that possess an Entitlement gain another Fate Point, and characters who bear the Mantle crown of their Court likewise gain the benefit of an additional Fate Point. These characters are closer to the Gentry than not, and the heavy streams of fate in the deep Hedge and even Faerie recognize the characters and show them respect.

Once Fate points are spent, they are gone. There is no way to replenish them.

In combat, the expenditure of a Fate Point automatically mitigates a number of health levels in damage inflicted in a single attack of any type equal to one half of the character's Wyrd rounded up. Wounds don't instantly heal, but rather are turned away at the last instant by some trick of fate, leaving slight gashes or bruises where otherwise a mortal wound might have been sustained.

Outside of combat, a character may expend a Fate Point to add three automatic successes to a single roll. This bonus adds only to one roll, regardless of whether or not the task is extended. Fate Points may not be spent in this manner to add automatic successes to an attack.

Fate Points are a wholly out-of-character convention. Characters have no idea they have access to this reserve of advantageous fate. The effects always manifest in subtle ways, and can always be attributed to a beneficent turn of luck, the subtle maneuvering of destiny — or to one's Wyrd having a mind of its own.

acters, giant spiders will wrap them in webbing or inject them with a potent soporific, and even briarwolves will bite and claw at a cornered changeling, seeking yet another hit of fear in the deep Brambles. Capturing characters rather than killing them outright opens up the potential for stories of daring rescues, magical escapes, or guileful liberation.

Character death deserves particular attention. Whereas a sudden death that rips a character from the world in an instant can be horrifying and thematically appropriate in the context of many horror stories, this is the place of des-



perate last stands and cinematically charged endings. Faerie is the place to grant characters a moment for final words and tearful goodbyes. A character who has lost all of her health levels to aggravated damage may be dead from a system standpoint, but there is nothing stopping the Storyteller from saying that she is simply beyond help, conscious but fading fast. In a legendary story, a character's death must be as meaningful as her victories, even if (as may be especially appropriate for young or innocent characters) the meaning is specifically the meaningless of the death: if the character's death can be framed in such a way that it allows the motley as a whole to push further on, so much the better.

### *Youth in Revolt*

This chapter largely assumes that characters crashing the gates of Faerie are experienced changelings, glorious or grim heroes capable of wielding the powers of gods and clad in the ephemeral raiment of their Court. The characters may have performed violent and terrible acts to reach that level of power, but such is the way of the World of Darkness.

If the characters are fledglings, however, still weak of Wyrd and haunted by the fear of their recent escape through the Thorns, the journey through Arcadia takes on a decidedly different hue. Rather than bolstering their legend, Fate seems to turn against the changelings, making the quest in many ways (beyond the obvious) more difficult than it might be for a more experienced character. The characters' fear feeds the Hedge and the Thorns reflect it back to the characters. The quest becomes a quiet, furtive journey through a deeply shaded Hedge, twitching with fear each time a hobgoblin growls in the distance. The same scenes below can be used for fledgling changelings, but the hue will always be even more dark and terrible, the odds stacked even higher against the motley.

## WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

There is no good reason to return to Faerie.

There are numerous *compelling* reasons to travel to Faerie, but they're almost never pragmatic, and some would say they're *never* good. The motivations for braving the deep Hedge and entering the Realms of Faerie are myriad, but almost universally involve retrieving something, typically someone who has been taken by the Gentry, but sometimes an item, a potent Contract, or even revenge. In the same way that escape from Faerie required memories of home to guide the changeling back to the world of mortals, a strong goal is necessary to conduct a motley into the depths of Arcadia.

Avoid the temptation to set the entire freehold at stake (or worse, the entire world). While certainly some glorious epic tales have been spun about heroes questing to save their kingdom, the ones that work are those in which the hero and the kingdom are intimately entwined. If one of your players portrays a changeling lord who loves the freehold or his Court with an intensity that puts his relationships with friends and family to shame, by all means, threaten the freehold.

The greatest stories, however, are far more personal in scope. Orpheus journeys into the depths of the underworld neither to conquer it nor to save Greece, but to retrieve his beloved Eurydice. The quest for the Holy Grail is often touted as a great epic story (and it is), but the emotional center of Arthurian myth is the tragic love triangle between Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot. Some of the greatest stories focus on the personal, even when nations are at stake. While he certainly adores his homeland and considers it his lordly right to reclaim, Odysseus's return to Ithaca is driven by his love for his wife and son. Hamlet destroys Claudius (and the rest of the Danish court) not to gain a throne and crown that should have been his by law, but out of love for his father and anger at his mother. *The Illiad* may portray a clash between gods and nations, but each character has his moment and each death is rendered profoundly personal.

An endgame story often begins with the theft from the mortal world of someone that the characters as a motley care about deeply: an ensorcelled mortal; a friend or family member; a fellow freeholder; perhaps even one of the changeling nobility. There are numerous variations on the theme, though, and a quest might be made for an item of great power (the existence of which is gleaned from esoteric Autumn Court texts) or for the head of the Keeper that the motley has run afoul of in the past. In the case of an item, give the characters a personal reason for seeking it (perhaps it can heal a wasting illness that has afflicted the family of one or more of the motley members). Whatever your characters' reason for braving the realm of the Others, make it deeply personal; the payoff of the victories and defeats along the way will be more intense as a result.

## VIA ACERBA

What you are holding in your hand is a story guide. This is not a pre-packaged adventure, but rather the skeleton of one. None of the scenes below are necessary, nor are they specific. Each serves as an archetype of a scene, much as a kith represents an archetype from folklore. What this chapter does provide is a general guideline to Storytelling a quest into Faerie, replete with the pitfalls and dangers thereof. No aspects of the stages below are immutable; they're designed to be customized. With a bit of tweaking (though we hope we've done the bulk of the work), you can make this *your* story, the height of your chronicle. This chapter can easily be utilized multiple times for multiple stories, allowing for enough flexibility that they will not feel repetitive or derivative.



Some of the stages below provide specific creatures, from guardians to the gateways of Arcadian Realms to the monstrosities that prowl the shadowed twisted paths of the deep Hedge. Traits are provided for ease of use, but the Storyteller is welcome to change the creatures in any way he or she needs to in order to underscore the themes of her particular story. Whether the changes are purely thematic or if you toss the creatures out entirely in favor of Wisps with powers culled from the other **World of Darkness** games, the players will have something terrifying and alien before them, which is the point. It should be said that the creatures given below are quite powerful, and will serve as a challenge to endgame-level characters. We have split them across the stages presented below to illustrate the different challenges and the rationale behind them, but by no means should you be constrained by the way we organized it. There is absolutely nothing keeping you from using the Minotaur as the Arcadian sentry, The Chimera as the creature that haunts the depths of the Keeper's realm, or the Bladelings to keep the blindbirds company as they slip through the deadly Thorns like fish through water.

## THE JOURNEY BEGINS

*Even as we approached her Hollow we could tell something was wrong. The wards had been disrupted, the piece of stainless steel that had served as her door had been torn from the hinges and was now hanging precariously among the Brambles above us. Sextus kneeled, examining the marked soil, as I gazed into the air.*

*Its presence still hung there, like a foul odor.*

*"At least five people came here," he muttered. "Four goblins, and... something else." He looked up. "They took her." He pointed to a pair of trailing through the dirt. "They dragged her away."*

*"This wasn't just anyone," I replied quietly. "This was Him." Sextus' features darkened as I confirmed his fear. "He came for Amy, like He said He would. He'll come for us next."*

*Our Keeper had returned.*

It is not quite enough to say that every tale begins. Instead, every tale has an impetus. Every story is the result of some action. *The Odyssey* is not simply a story of a man returning home. The impetus comes when Odysseus, flush with pride at his guileful victory over the Trojans and his equally cunning defeat of Polyphemos, cries out to the blinded cyclops that his name is Odysseus, and that no man can defeat him. Polyphemos complains to his father, Poseidon, who harries Odysseus for a decade before the hero manages to return home and make amends with the god of the sea. Odysseus' encounters come as a direct result of his actions. Likewise, Theseus, who hears the tale of the Minotaur and the dread rites of sacrifice that the king makes to it, sets out to destroy the beast, kick-starting his own legend.

Often the origin of a particular story is seeded within the context of a larger set of events. As related in *The Iliad*, the Trojan War begins when Menelaus seeks to regain his wife who has made off with the prince of Troy, Paris. Paris took the girl as a bribe from Aphrodite, that he might name her the

most beautiful goddess at a wedding to win a golden apple. The apple came to the wedding by way of Eris, goddess of strife, who was angry for being left off of the guest list. This snub set in motion a story that would see the end of numerous heroes, a royal line, and one of the great cities of the age.

Just as a cannonball will sit motionlessly ensconced within the metal cannon until an explosion of gunpowder sends it rocketing through the air, a story that hinges on the journey through the Hedge and back into the depths of Arcadia requires a catalyst that will drive it through to its completion. When the characters are broken and bloodied, gazing at the massive gatekeeper of Faerie from an uncomfortable hiding spot in the deep Hedge, when they are contemplating calling it a day and returning to the safety of the freehold, they need to be able to look back at what started them on the journey and know that they *need* to continue, that they have a choice and are choosing to dive into a Realm of madness and danger ruled over by their own godlike former masters.

Legends usually begin with a call to arms of some manner. Agamemnon called together the Argives for an assault against the city of Troy just as Arthur called together the knights of the round table. In an Arcadia story, the call to arms is likely to be raised by members of the motley, putting the player characters in the driving seat and at the center of attention. In most Arcadian stories, someone has been kidnapped by the True Fae out from under the players' noses. This should be someone they care deeply about; friends, allies, and children are all possibilities. The kidnapped character might be a changeling, possibly a Court leader (but only if the loss of the Court leader doesn't help the characters) or someone the characters enacted a pledge with. An interesting possibility might be a current or former motley mate, which might be a way to involve a character whose player has left the game or otherwise can't be involved in the story. Taking a current player's character probably only ruins things for that player, but might be worked out with the right group.

Otherwise the call to arms may come in a more traditional manner, from a leader of the Court or freehold. A grave threat falls upon the freehold like a shadow, and only a quest through the Hedge and into Arcadia will carry the day. Such a story has the advantage of tapping into a huge mythic background of warriors and knights riding forth to do battle. The disadvantage, however, lays in the fact that such a story is usually rather impersonal compared to a quest to save a kidnapped compatriot. The two might be combined, however, so that the characters must answer the call of the leaders of their freehold *and* save a friend from the True Fae, but the Storyteller runs the risk of diluting the themes of either of the two forms of quest.

A tale in the traditional idiom of knights on a quest will involve even more challenges than provided in this outline. There will be challenges of bravery, morality (or Clarity), and mettle in combat. The rewards, however, stand to be greater. Treasures and tokens, as well as the liberated, stand to be gained from such an adventure. The phrase "adventure," how-



## Red Shirts

There is a strong chance that a story that delves into Arcadia and brings the characters face to face with the Gentry will involve characters of great power and influence, especially in the freehold. Character who hold the crown of their respective Courts or hold Entitlements that allow them to field martial forces may be inclined to bring as many Storyteller characters as possible with them to help protect their own hides. A call to arms from Storyteller character Court leaders might convince only the player characters to volunteer, but they in turn may try to rally a force against Arcadia themselves. Chances are some of them are quite inspiring and persuasive.

The Storyteller has to take extra care when the group entering the Hedge is more army than expeditionary force. In both fantasy and horror, both of which inform **Changeling**, everyone around the main characters is expendable — it puts more dramatic weight on the protagonists themselves. Here is no different.

If the characters do venture towards Arcadia with a large force in tow, half of it will likely never reach the sentries. The rest can serve as a distraction for the player characters while they bypass the sentries and gatekeepers and enter Faerie. At least a quarter will turn back in the deep Hedge, too scared to continue on to their certain doom and the waiting hands of their Keepers. Others still will fall in combat with the monsters in the Hedge long before reaching the gates to the abode of the Fae. A large retinue traveling through the Hedge is far more likely to see a great deal of combat before reaching Arcadia simply because it draws far more attention by virtue of its size. It may even draw the attention of a member of the Gentry (such as the Arcadian Huntsman provided in **Changeling: the Lost**), which will destroy some of the Storyteller characters and drag others back into Faerie as slaves.

Each Storyteller character who dies in the Hedge, or Arcadia, or finds herself kidnapped by the Others, should serve as a strike against the characters' Clarity. Treat each such combat or ambush as a single sin against Clarity at level 5. Characters who dip below that level become callous to the loss of their inferiors.

Even if the characters rally a goodly portion of the freehold to their aid, the band of motleys will likely be no larger than 15 to 20 changelings, including the characters. The Storyteller characters should not remain faceless minions for the characters to throw at their enemies. Take a few minutes to sketch out the band, giving each changeling a name, Seeming, Kith, Court, Virtue, and Vice at the very least. A short sentence on each of the characters' personalities ("Scratches self with left foot and speaks with a slight southern accent", for example) will go a long way towards bringing life to these characters. While the players probably shouldn't feel the nigh-inevitable loss of these characters to the same extent that their characters will, when the characters have solid personalities, the players will notice when they're gone, which will drive home the themes of war and make the story a more meaningful experience.

War films that focus closely on a single unit, such as *Full Metal Jacket*, *The Thin Red Line* and even *Saving Private Ryan*, serve as excellent inspiration for and a guide on how to tell stories of this nature. Epics like *The Odyssey* and the Grail romances provide numerous examples of how the heroes' support can be whittled away until only they are left to carry on.

ever, should serve as something of a warning. Care should be taken to make sure the quest aligns not only with the themes of **Changeling**, but also those of the World of Darkness as a whole. Even a glorious knightly sally into the Hedge should be grim and dark, more *Band of Brothers* than *King Arthur*.

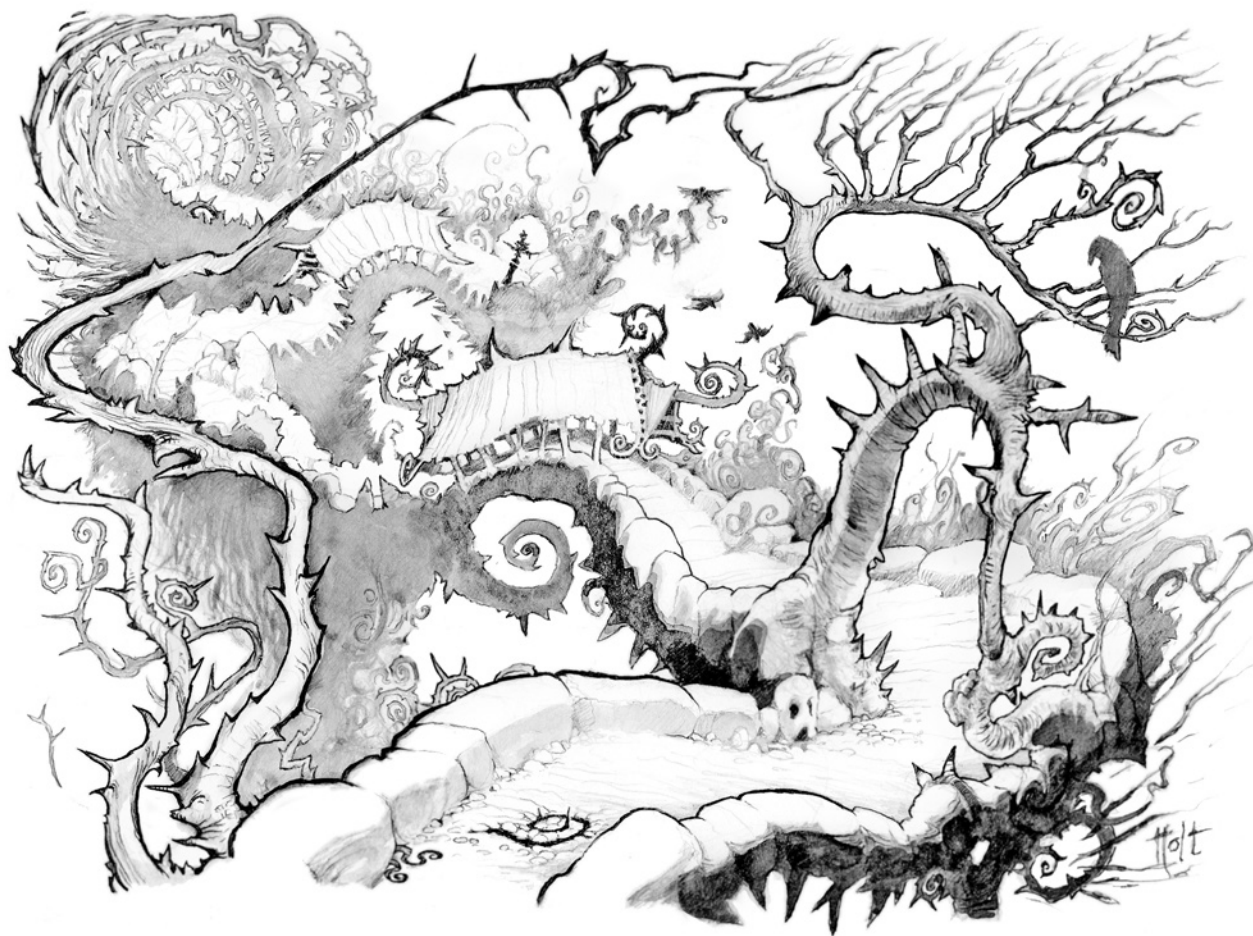
The characters may stubbornly refuse the call, whether a formal call by the freehold leaders or simply the vanishing of a loved one. This regularly occurs in the great mythic tales and movies alike ("You'll never get me to go back," says the grizzled veteran just before signing up). Like most procrastination, refusing the call typically only results in things getting worse. Whatever events precipitated the initial call recur; the Others return to make off with other companions or allies or to initiate further assaults against the freehold. The longer the characters ignore their destinies, the more apparent those destinies become, until they are left with two alternatives: to face their fears or to flee from fate.

## ENTERING THE THORNS

Once the characters have rallied their motley or allies, they must take the first step towards journeying to Arcadia: entering the Thorns. If the characters have reached their endgame, chances are they have entered the Hedge numerous times. It is important that nothing about the journey be rote or taken for granted, however. Describe entering the Hedge in detail, allowing it to sink in that they are beginning on a new path. Describe the journey as the characters slowly leave behind all traces of human civilization for the verdant madness of the Brambles.

The appearance of the Hedge in this early portion of the characters' journey can go a long way towards establishing the tenor for the rest of the story. The Hedge changes with the seasons: are the colors of the flora the crisp and muted browns of winter or the vibrant greens of spring; is there a cool, crisp wind and a sense of decay in autumn; or does the





sun beat oppressively down on the parched earth in summer? Perhaps the humidity is cloying, bringing sweat to the skin of the most stalwart Ogre. Perhaps storm clouds gather above, flashing as lightning jumps between the thunderheads, sending rolling thunder through the characters' bones. Or perhaps the future is shrouded in mist, the road ahead of them visible no further than a hundred feet in advance.

The Storyteller can use the atmosphere of the Hedge to craft the mood of the story. Unlike the real world, the Hedge conforms happily to the pathetic fallacy, and its psychoactive properties mean that it is likely to reflect the underlying emotions of the characters, especially if they are powerful, experienced changelings. If the changelings feel tense, ready for the first strike in a small war against the Gentry, the Hedge will reflect it, perhaps as a smell of ozone saturating the air and a storm that hangs low over the Thorns, just ready to break. As an alternative, the Storyteller might describe the Thorns as warm, bright, and calm (or dark and calm, depending on the time of day) in order to emphasize the chaos of Faerie when the characters come upon it.

## THE OLD THREATS

If the Storyteller intends the characters' jaunt into Faerie to serve as a climax and ending for the chronicle, it

may be wise to draw in a few of the characters' old foes as a callback to their younger days and a reminder of how far they have come. The characters enter the Hedge expecting trouble and thus draw trouble upon themselves. If there is a specific privateer or loyalist with whom the characters used to clash, perhaps they run afoul of him as they begin their journey. If the characters have a history of fighting briarwolves (see **Changeling: the Lost**, page 275), perhaps they spot a pack quietly approaching amongst the Thorns. Whatever the Storyteller utilizes, it should be used to underscore the differences between the characters as they were and the characters as they have become.

The Storyteller can confirm this by immediately establishing the superiority of the characters or the submissiveness of the former enemies. The briarwolves approach the characters, see how powerful they are (or, if the characters have run afoul of this specific pack before, how powerful they *have become*), and back away, disappearing into the Hedge rather than attacking a clearly superior foe. The antagonistic privateers may avoid the characters, or try to cut them a deal (or lead them astray), offering them supplies or munitions in exchange for some form of service (just don't allow the quest to become too sidetracked).

The Hedge, however, is not entirely without threat.



## FINDING THE PATH

*We left just before dawn, entering the Hedge through a beachside dressing stall when the glow from the eastern sky had drowned out the neon city lights but before the sun had risen from the ocean. We moved quickly, quietly, using the Smoke to hide our passage as best we could. The three of us traveled until it was dark again, we were tired and bloody, and the last vestige of the City of Eternal Summer had fallen away behind us. Linus asked for a break, and we stopped as he drew water from a plastic bottle. The boggy marsh was undrinkable, utterly fetid.*

*"Have we gone far enough?" Erica asked. I looked over my shoulder. Even the glow of Miami didn't penetrate the thick labyrinth of thorns. I nodded, slipping the brown package from a pouch at my side, breaking it open and withdrawing the candle. A scratch and click, and Linus held out a Zippo in offering. I smiled.*

*"Here goes nothing," I said, immersing wick in flame.*

Once the characters have determined to travel to Arcadia, they face what is perhaps the most daunting aspect of returning to the kingdoms of the Others: they likely have no idea how to get back to Faerie or how to locate the specific Realm they seek once they get there. Granted they can always try following one of the larger, wider trods to see if it runs straight back to Arcadia, but the chances of them coming across the Gentry on the way are extremely high. Likewise, they might utilize Call the Hunt, a Goblin Contract, to entice the True Fae to come to them. The characters may be powerful enough to defeat the two or three Gentry and their hounds that show up, but the Storyteller should pull no punches. Doing so would rob the True Fae of their weight as a threat to the characters. The most likely outcome of the characters going toe-to-toe with the Others is a swift defeat and a trip to the cells of the Others, quite likely not the Keeper whose Realm they were hoping to reach. This may result in the story becoming a very different tale than what is presented here.

If the characters are particularly powerful, however, the Others will notice this, and, depending on the needs of the story and the personalities of the Others, they may be more inclined to parley with the changelings than attack them. This will only happen if the Gentry feel the changelings are more akin to True Fae than they are to humans (a fact that should, if the characters figure it out, give them pause). This may lead to the True Fae being the guide that leads them to Arcadia and to the Realm of the specific Other that they seek. The same may be true of Gentry who capture the characters; the captors may be willing to release the characters when they learn what they want, but there will always be a catch, whether it is the destruction of the Keeper or something far more inscrutable, likely related to the Feud. If the characters get captured by the Gentry, it should probably be one who is in a Feud with the Other they seek, not only because it provides story hooks and motivation, but for the simple reason that True Fae can only interact with one another through the Feud. If a Fae with

no connections to the Other sought captured the changelings, they would have no way of reaching their destination short of leaving Arcadia and trying again.

Even if the characters manage to "enlist" a member of the Gentry as a guide (or more accurately, even if they are enlisted by a member of the Gentry as a weapon), the Storyteller needs to ensure that there are challenges aplenty for the characters. Luckily, the Gentry do battle with one another through legends; and a legend has no weight if it does not involve great difficulty and an equally great triumph. Thus, while the Gentry may lead a group of Changelings to Arcadia, they'll abandon them before actually entering the Realm; helping them to enter or sneaking them in would simply be too easy and would not possess the metaphysical weight necessary to act as a coup in the Feud.

Assuming that the characters are sensible and avoid the Gentry, they still need to figure out a way to Arcadia. A second and equally unsafe method is to attempt to navigate the Hedge in the same way that they might if they were attempting to travel from one locale to another in the material world via the Hedge (see **Changeling: the Lost**, page 219). Essentially they attempt to return to Arcadia by the same route they escaped: by holding a memory of it in their heart to guide them. Whether or not this is possible is up to the Storyteller, but the characters are far more likely to come across someone who can act as a guide than they are to find the way themselves. If none of the characters have been to the specific Realm that they are seeking, navigating the way to Arcadia in this manner is likely next to impossible.

The most probable method of getting to Arcadia without being shackled or indebted to one of the Gentry and involved in their power games is through the help of a guide.

## GUIDED BY THE INANIMATE

*I spoke the words written on the parchment, feeling slightly silly as I did so, the guttering candle throwing distorted shadows across the Brambles that surrounded us. Six rhyming lines, each of six syllables, spoken by the sixth son of a sixth son who and spent six years in Arcadia. I wondered vaguely what the sixth sympathy was as I spoke the final line.*

*I gasped as the candle flared, burning baleful green, and I felt something... my Glamour... torn from my body by the candle. My eyes rolled back into my head and visions flashed there, six shocking revelations of the road before us.*

*My eyes snapped open, and I exhaled heavily. Erica and Linus were both speaking my name, glowing in the green light of the candle, both touching me, shaking me, terror in their eyes. I straightened my shoulders and smiled at them, as encouraging a grin as I could manage.*

*"Take my hand," I said, extending the free arm towards the pair while raising the candle. "I know where we're going."*

Characters may be able to find an item that will serve as their guide to Arcadia. These are typically items that are representative of the navigation, the search for knowledge, or



uncovering the hidden. Examples include spyglasses, lanterns, compasses, or maps. They tend to have an unusual cast to them, and are often tinted with the colors of the local Hedge. Inanimate guides are almost always trifles and can be used only one time. Some rare tokens may exist that allow for multiple uses and can guide changelings throughout the Hedge. These items should count as tokens of no less than three dots. Travel tokens (see p. 96) are too valuable to be purchased in the normal way, and usually require a story in their own right to acquire. It's only fair; it's essentially trading one story (acquire the token) for another (navigate the way to Arcadia).

Inanimate guides may come from a number of sources. A character with the Merit Tokenmaster (p. 14) may make one of their own accord, possibly accidentally, which may be thematically appropriate if one of the major themes of your Arcadian story is the weight of fate upon the characters. Conversely, characters may seek out another from whom to purchase the token. The likely suspects for such an endeavor would be the members of the local Autumn Court or the local Goblin Market. Dealing with the Autumn Court (or other occult-minded Lost) is always a matter of Contract. There is always a trade involved, and it is rarely in the character's favor (as they are obviously the ones with the most pressing need). The Autumn Courtier *might* be willing to trade for such an object now for an unspecified favor later, but dealing with such occult-minded individuals is typically a matter of this for that. If time is of the essence, additional tension can be added if the characters have to undertake some arduous task just in order to get what they need to journey to Faerie at all. Similarly, they may be given instructions on how to make the Token themselves, taking a specific item to a specific locale in the Hedge to soak up the Wyrd energy, or they may have to brave the Hedge to track down an object that may be nothing more than an old wives' tale.

The Goblin Market, on the other hand, can be used to underscore all of the usual tensions of that locale. More on using Goblin Markets can be found on page 283 of **Changeling: the Lost**. In a story that is ramping up for a journey into Arcadia, the Goblin Market serves as a gateway into the exotic. Characters who ask too loudly or too obviously for items or guides that will get them to the Realm of the True Fae inspire whispers in the shadows and are rewarded with several small goblins scuttling away to inform their various masters. With a little luck (perhaps through the use of a little fae magic) the characters find themselves ushered through a low cloth doorway and into the back of a dark tent or stall to negotiate for a golden compass from a creature more bat than man, with a flat, triangular nose, large black eyes, and long, clawed fingers that tap nervously on his Hedge-wood table top.

Privateers and loyalists might serve as another source of items that can guide one through the deep Hedge. They *are* rumored to be in contact with the True Fae, after all, and supposedly travel to Arcadia and back with their illicit cargo. Perhaps they have objects that allow them to travel to Arcadia, objects that can be stolen from them (or

acquired after a sound thumping). Objects taken from such unsavory individuals likely have an equally unsavory cast... and perhaps an unsavory cost to utilize.

### *Bringing it Full Circle*

One of the major themes of the journey into Arcadia is the completion of the circle. Once again the characters are leaving the material world for that of the Fae, and once again they shall flee when their task is done. The major difference, of course, is that this time they do so of their own volition. Furthermore, a journey into Faerie will function as the capstone for many chronicles and serve as the last interaction the players will have with a specific group of characters.

As such, the Arcadian endgame story is a good time to bring back familiar faces and objects from the past for a last goodbye. Whether it is an old friend and beloved character that has been kidnapped into the Hedge, whether the characters seek out a familiar Autumn Court changeling to find a guide through the Hedge, or even if their guiding object turns out to be an item they picked up off a group of defeated privateers some time ago but never understood what it might be used for, pulling up the past strengthens the overall tapestry of the story, binding what occurred before to what is occurring now.

The players will appreciate the closure they get from interacting with the familiar characters and, if you can wing the old useless object trick, will likely think the Storyteller planted it from the beginning. While it serves the purpose of making the Storyteller seem totally cool, it performs the more important service of hammering home the strange ways in which the changelings interact with fate.

### GOBLIN GUIDES

Conversely, the characters *could* simply force the privateers, loyalists, or any of the numerous hobgoblins in the area to lead them to Faerie. Finding a guide to Faerie is as easy as finding a creature that the characters trust and that travels regularly enough between Arcadia and the material world to know the way. Taken together it is a rather tall order, but chances are that the characters have, over the course of their stories, heard of local changelings who spend a great deal of time in the Hedge or who are rumored to have dealings with the True Fae on a regular or semi-regular basis. Seeking out one of these individuals is perhaps their best chance of getting into Faerie unmolested.

Guides to the deep Hedge should be every bit as creepy, crazy, and cunning as Gollum and every bit as self-serving as



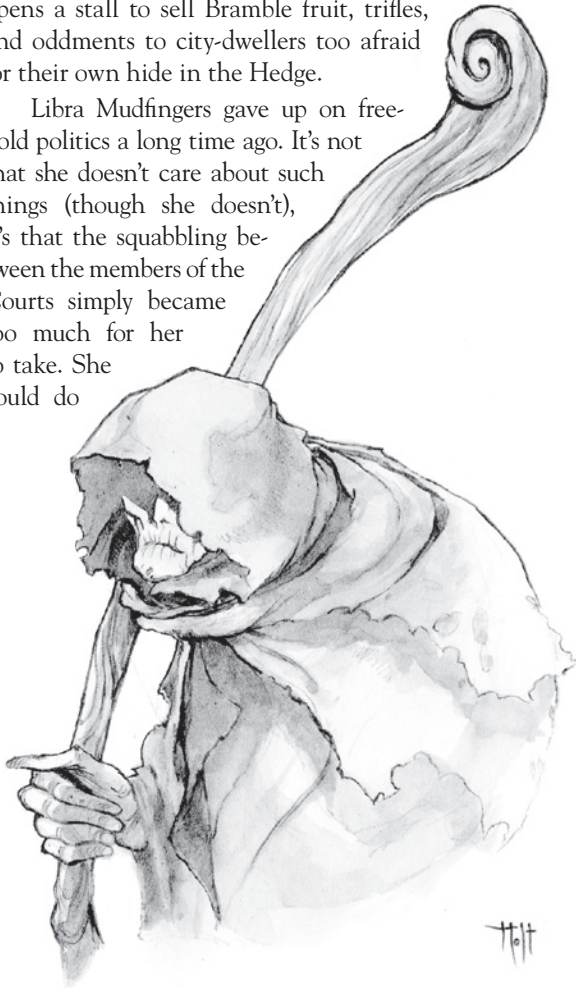
Raiders of the Lost Ark's Satipo (who sells Indiana Jones out for an idol). They may be fellow travelers, but they are not companions; escorts, but never friends. They have strange habits that disquiet and perhaps irritate the characters, and often possess motivations as inscrutable as those of the True Fae. They may know the secret, winding paths through the deepest, thickest parts of the Brambles, and they probably know how to get the characters to Faerie without being noticed by the bulk of the dark things in the deep Hedge, but one can never be quite certain whether or not these guides serve a darker purpose, or perhaps are simply willing to sell them out to a hungry nightmare creature of the Hedge.

## THE LOST GUIDE, LIBRA MUDFINGERS

**Quote:** "I've taken people there before, you know. That's the easy part, getting there."

**Background:** Some say she lives in the Hedge, leaving the confines of her Hollow only to seek out a harvest of goblin fruit. Others claim she keeps a small hut out in the forest preserves, one part modern day Baba Yaga, one part fairytale Unabomber. Whatever the true case, the only time the other members of the freehold see Old Lady Mudfingers is at the monthly Goblin Market, when she opens a stall to sell Bramble fruit, trifles, and oddments to city-dwellers too afraid for their own hide in the Hedge.

Libra Mudfingers gave up on freehold politics a long time ago. It's not that she doesn't care about such things (though she doesn't), it's that the squabbling between the members of the Courts simply became too much for her to take. She could do



perfectly well on her own, so she did. The years since have slowly eroded her Clarity, a fact that few Lost are privy to, and she has become more hobgoblin than changeling.

On the other hand, she is more familiar with the trods, both large and small, through the depths of the local Hedge than any other freeholder. For the right price, she might even be willing to lead a motley of Lost into the depths herself. After all, for a changeling who spends very little time in the world of humanity, some things are very hard to come by and some tasks impossible to perform...

**Description:** Little is visible of the withered old woman save her hands and the lower reaches of her face, all weathered and cracked with age and exposure to the elements. She steps gingerly through the Hedge, her frame draped in layers of thick cloth stained with blood and dirt, her fingers wrapped about a walking stick twice her height. She moves surprisingly quickly, especially given that the tracks she leaves in her wake are those of bare feet, though they sometimes shift between human footprints, hoove-prints, and canine pad-prints without warning.

**Storytelling Hints:** Old Lady Mudfingers serves as a warning to the changelings that would seek her guidance. She is the signpost that warns Lost at the outset of their quest that a life eked out away from the living world takes its toll on those touched by the Wyrd.

Mudfingers fidgets constantly, speaking in half-sentences, trailing off into silence or muttering to herself. She doesn't trust anyone, and requires a sworn oath before she is willing to take anyone anywhere. Attempts to touch her in any way earn a quick rap on the knuckles from her walking stick. Worst of all, due to her abysmal Clarity she occasionally wanders blindly off the path. If her folly is pointed out she will (usually) recognize it, but woe be to the characters that follow her blindly.

**Seeming:** Wizenod

**Kith:** Woodwalker

**Court:** Winter

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 2, Computer 1, Crafts 3, Investigation 2, Medicine (Goblin Fruit) 2, Occult (Pledge Loopholes) 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 1, Stealth 2, Survival (Navigation) 4, Weaponry (Staves) 2

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Danger Sense, Disarm, Fighting Finesse (Staff), Harvest (Hedge Bounty) 5, Holistic Awareness, Hollow (Size 1, Wards 5), Mantle (Winter) 3, Token (Hedgespun Raiment, Bug Cudgel, multiple oddments, trifles, and goblin fruit as necessary)

**Willpower:** 7

**Clarity:** 2 (Vocalization, Suspicion)

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Wrath



**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 10

**Health:** 8

**Wyrd:** 5

**Contracts:** Dream ●●●●, Hearth ●, Smoke ●●, Artifice ●●, Stone ●, Eternal Spring ●, Eternal Autumn ●, Eternal Winter ●●●, Goblin (Call the Hunt) ●●●●

**Pledges:** None

**Glamour/ per Turn:** 14 / 5

**Weapons/ Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Staff	2 (B)	8 (9 Again)
Large Knife	2 (L)	6

**Armor:** 1/2

### Variations on the Theme

The default assumption is that Libra Mudfingers is trustworthy enough, but that her odd behavior will keep the characters who, as changelings, are slow to trust others, constantly questioning her actions and motives. This doesn't have to be the case, however, and she can be as apt to betrayal as the Storyteller desires. Perhaps she is a secret privateer or loyalist. Perhaps she has worked out a deal with some monster in the deep Hedge to bring it food in exchange for some esoteric elixir. Or perhaps she is an assassin of her Court, stationed in the Hedge to murder those who would breach the walls of Arcadia and bring the attention of the Gentry back to the freehold.

Likewise, the guide need not be a changeling at all. Any manner of hobgoblin might serve as a guide, if offered the right motivation (though such agreements are always the proverbial "deal with the devil"). Perhaps briarwolves are not as mindlessly feral as they first appear, and with the right appeal they can be convinced to act as escort and bodyguard to a group of changelings along trods rarely traveled by those with mortal pasts.

### CHALLENGES ON THE ROAD

In many classics, such as the aforementioned *Odyssey* or *Journey to the West*, the journey is more important than the destination. In the case of an expedition to Arcadia, however, this does not typically hold true (the goal, after all, is *Arcadia*). While the challenges that befall the characters as they travel through the Hedge should never simply be glossed over, the Storyteller should give some thought to how much of his story he wants bound into the specifics of the journey. If you want the emphasis of the story to be on the actions that take place once the character reaches Faerie, you may keep the journey's trials to a minimum, perhaps providing a single encounter with a creature of the deep Hedge that far outstrips anything the characters have encountered in the Hedge before (save the Gentry, of course).

If, on the other hand, the Storyteller wants the focus once the characters reach Faerie to be on stealth and guile, he may seed the journey with numerous threats and monsters, leaving the characters exhausted, bloodied, and low on resources once they reach the abode of the Fae.

Conversely, the story may be the chronicle of the journey itself. Arcadia is a place of madness, fear, and absolute beauty, but ultimately there is very little that the characters can do to affect it. The Hedge, on the other hand, remains a veritable land of opportunity, full of forgotten treasures, occluded secrets, and terrible monsters. In this form of story, the characters may actually be thrilled to reach Arcadia because it no longer means they are in the wilderness, that they are no longer in a daily struggle to survive. Arcadia may offer some comfort, in the form of drinkable water and edible food, but it should not be mistaken for safety, nor should the Realm serve as an epilogue to the journey. In stories that focus on the journey, Arcadia is *not* the destination. Arcadia is the final step on the journey, the climactic stop along the route. The destination, after all, is *home*.

The deeper the characters travel into the Hedge, the more fantastical the landscape, due in part to being utterly divorced from the mortal world and in part to the influence of the True Fae. Nightmares take shape in the depths of the Hedge. Things that have been banished from Arcadia and entities that were too terrible for even the Gentry to let in stalk the darkening Thorns. As the characters approach Faerie, they find an ever-increasing number of signs of other changelings that attempted to escape from the bridles of the Gentry; bits of sackcloth hang from the Thorns, tufts of hair crusted with blood are visible just off the path. The sounds of the Hunt are more common, and the characters may be forced off the path to avoid the Others more than once. Or perhaps they managed to find one of the rarely-used trails that winds through the darkness. The claustrophobic closeness of the Hedge on either side and above them may make them feel safe from being suddenly set upon, but it offers little chance of escape. Characters along one of these hard, rock-strewn trods find themselves slowly lured on towards the inevitable.

Below we have included a pair of creatures with which a Storyteller might populate the Hedge. Feel free to customize them to fit the themes and mood of your own story.

### CREATURES OF ILL OMEN, BLINDBIRDS

**Quote:** "But what can you offer me?" (followed by a sound somewhere between the high laughter of a child and the wild crackle of birds).

**Background:** Carrion birds have long hounded the dreams of the dying. Blindbirds manifest in the Hedge, whether as a response by the Hedge itself to such dreams or by the twisted whim of the Others, particularly in places plagued by death, whether battlefields, ganglands, cities suffering epidemics, or even the occasional hospital.



Unlike briarwolves, blindbirds were never human, and Autumn sages argue over whether or not they were ever even birds. Changelings who brave the deep Hedge report that it is thick with the selfish, hungry, capricious creatures. They perch among the Thorns, almost invisible, until they fall upon their prey as a massive tide of living shadow.

Despite their name, which is a result of their appearance, blindbirds typically remain incredibly aware of their surroundings, and many are well-informed. Few changelings, especially those who have never braved the deep Hedge, are aware of this fact, as trafficking with the creatures is considered by most Lost to be the equivalent to inviting ill luck into one's life.

A group of blindbirds is called a murder.

**Description:** Blindbirds take on the characteristics of the local avian carrion-eaters. Condors and vultures appear on occasion, especially in the dry desert Hedge, but changelings by far most often report spotting corvid blindbirds. The large, sleek black creatures typically travel in murders, and are usually espied in the distance, perched carefully on the Brambles like some black blanket thrown over a hedge-row or floating in lazy circles in the sky above.

Blindbirds are named for their eyes, which universally appear to have been gouged out, often leaving burnt pits behind. Despite their apparent blindness, these creatures suffer no perception penalty.

**Storytelling Hints:** Like the rats that flee a sinking ship, blindbirds are harbingers of ill omen. Many changelings believe they can sense death and are attracted to it. Blindbirds

only approach if they feel they have something to gain, most often when an individual is so exhausted they can attack her without fear of reprisal. Changelings do, on occasion, make deals with blindbirds, usually for bits of goblin flesh (eyes are the favored delicacy). The birds speak with high, croaking voices in short, clipped phrases. For reasons unknown they speak of past events in the present tense and current events in the future tense. They never discuss the future.

Utilize the blindbirds when the characters have been touched by death, either by losing a member of their own motley or destroying an enemy. Alternatively, the blindbirds may begin stalking the characters when they are becoming exhausted and hungry from their time in the Hedge. They will not usually attack a foe that is not already incapacitated, but if forced into combat, they fight as a swarm, quickly lowering characters' Defense ratings. The blindbirds are the shadow of death, and they fall over much of the deep Hedge.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Investigation 4, Medicine (Diagnosis) 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl 3 (Beak), Survival (The Hedge) 3

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken (Birds) 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2

**Merits:** Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Eidetic Memory, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Fast Reflexes 2, Fresh Start, Iron Stomach

**Willpower:** 7

**Initiative:** 8

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 15 (flight only; species factor 10)

**Health:** 5

**Wyrd:** 3

**Contracts:** Dream ●, Hearth ●, Smoke ●●●●, Darkness ●●, Fang and Talon (Birds) ●●, Fleeting Spring ●, Fleeting Autumn ●●

**Glamour/ per Turn:** 12 / 3

**Weapons/ Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Special	Dice Pool
Beak	1 (L)	—	7
Eye-Gouge	1 (L)	Eye Damage*	2

\*A successful strike to an eye blinds a character permanently, inflicting upon him the One Eye Flaw (see the *World of Darkness Rulebook* page 219) and causing immediate wound penalties at the Storyteller's discretion. This can be healed with appropriate magic.

## BEAST THAT STALKS THE HEDGE: THE CHIMERA

**Quote:** "Keep speaking. I strip meat from the wordbones and suckle the marrow."







**Background:** The creature that stalks the meandering paths of the deep Hedge believes it is older than it remembers, if only because it does not remember being born. And the Chimera remembers quite a bit. The matter of its inception is a tangential concern at best (it does not think it began as a changeling, and the fear that the Gentry strike into it when they ride forth from their demesnes leads it to believe it was never among their number either), but one that it is not uncomfortable ruminating on. Sometimes it wonders if it began as a nightmare given form and thought, and other nights it suspects it is the result of the sundering of some ancient pledge between the Fae and the Wyrd. With the secret unlikely to be revealed any time soon, The Chimera is content to preside instead over a Court of lesser goblins, a hunting party that secures for it the flesh of goblin, Hedge fruit, and changelings alike.

**Description:** The creature's torso and head resemble a lion, replete with mangy mane, but its eight arachnid eyes are perched in two rows on its head and its ant-like mandibles protrude from a gaping maw. The beast's tail is that of a scorpion, slowly curling above its head and slick with some goblin poison, while its scaly arms and legs owe their appearance to the great lizards of past and present. The beast seems unaffected by the Hedge, silently prowling through the Brambles and Thorns like an enormous house cat. When it speaks, its voice is a low roll of thunder and its breath fetid bog gas.

**Storytelling Hints:** The Chimera is the creature that stalks the dark, winding, solitary paths of the deepest Hedge. It is the monster that must be vanquished or assuaged with riddles before it can be passed. It is the dragon, the manticores, the Blatant Beast or the sphinx. However you choose to portray the Chimera, its aspects always represent something decidedly local. In a city with a strong four-Court system based on the vernal calendar, the Chimera may be made of aspects of four creatures, each a metaphor for one of the local Courts. Conversely, the creature may represent something inspired by the larger population of the area rather than simply the changelings. The sphinx that stalks the Hedge near a major university may be a brilliant pedagogue willing to wax poetic on the nature of the Wyrd... if it can be impressed with an appropriate enigma. The spider-like monster that makes its nest near a town of cultural oppression may lure prey into its waiting web before injecting it with a poison that dulls the mind. The Chimera is usually intelligent but feral, and represents the duality of man and beast, of civilization and wilderness, of changelings and the fae.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

**Mental Skills:** Academics 2, Investigation (Puzzles) 3, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Politics 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl (Claws, Mandibles, Tail) 5, Stealth (Hedge) 4, Survival (Tracking) 5

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 3, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1

**Merits:** Direction Sense, Fleet of Foot 3, Hollow (Doors 2, Size 3, Wards 4), Iron Stamina 2, Retainer (Goblin Retinue) 5

**Willpower:** 8

**Virtue:** Prudence

**Vice:** Wrath

**Initiative:** 8

**Defense:** 4

**Speed:** 20 (species modifier 8)

**Health:** 12

**Wyrd:** 7

**Contracts:** Dream ●, Mirror ●●●●, Smoke ●●, Elements ●●●●, Fang and Talon (As per Aspects of the Form) ●●●, Stone ●●●●,

**Glamour/ per Turn:** 20 / 7

**Chimerical Flesh:** The Chimera may not be harmed by entirely mundane attacks from objects of the physical world, save cold iron, which inflicts aggravated damage. All other mundane attacks pass through the Chimera harmlessly. Brawling attacks performed by changelings do not count as entirely mundane for the purposes of this aspect, but brawling attacks from mortals, even the ensorcelled, do. Any attack performed by an otherwise mundane object that is under the effects of any Contract that directly improves the object (such as Contracts of Artifice or Elements) do inflict damage upon



the Chimera as normal. If the creature is ever robbed of or somehow forced to spend its last point of Glamour, it vanishes from the Hedge, possibly never to be seen again. It is aware that this will happen, and will avoid that fate at almost any cost.

**Ruled by Passion:** As per the True Fae aspect of the same name (see *Changeling: the Lost* page 279)

**Goblin's Tongue:** By spending a Glamour point, The Chimera gains +3 to all rolls involving a Social Skill or Attribute against a hobgoblin for the remainder of the scene.

**Scorpion's Tail:** The Chimera possesses a tail between eight and ten feet in length and as thick as the thigh of a muscular man. Used as a bludgeoning weapon, the tail adds 2 dice to bashing attacks. If the Chimera attacks with the tail's barb, it inflicts +2 lethal damage. Once the barb has entered an enemy, the creature may reflexively spend three Glamour points to inject a Toxicity 7 poison directly into the target.

**Weapons/ Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Special	Dice Pool
Bash	0 (B)	—	10
Bite	2 (L)	—	13
Claw	1 (L)	—	12
Tail Bash	2 (B)	—	13
Sting	2 (L)	May Poison	13

### Variations on the Theme

Blindbirds serve as an ever-present threat of the deep Hedge. They are forever watching and stalking, and while each individual is not much of a challenge, as a murder they can be as dangerous as the term implies. The blindbirds can easily be changed to fit any kind of chronicle by changing them from crows to whatever creature is representative of ill fate or doom in the area in which the game takes place (such as black cats for much of the West, the British black dog, or, for a historical twist, the Roman *striges*). The **World of Darkness Rulebook** provides statistics for several animals, and combining the traits provided here with those given in that book for a specific animal should be a snap. With a few minor alterations, the traits given here for the blindbirds can serve to represent small gnomish hobgoblins like those portrayed in the art on page 221 of *Changeling: the Lost*.

The Chimera, on the other hand, can be adapted to cover a much larger thematic landscape. It might serve as a guardian to a deep Hedge Hollow, or tomb, or stand within the stone arch that leads into Arcadia, or it may simply be a creature of hunger, anger, and nightmare. It may be willing to let the changelings go if they successfully solve an enigma (or form a pledge), or it may hunger for their flesh rather than their ideas. In the end, the Chimera represents the obstacle that cannot be easily overcome with blade and shield. Speaking to it may not be wise, but attacking it is far more foolish.

## ENTERING ARCADIA

Reaching Arcadia is one thing; actually getting in is another thing entirely. Once the characters have reached the

### *Deadlier than the Fae*

Canny readers will notice that the strength of the Chimera is comparable to the Arcadian Huntsman, a member of the Gentry detailed on page 277 of *Changeling: the Lost*; and like the Arcadian Hunter, he is usually accompanied by several hobgoblin retainers. His poison attack alone is capable of killing most starting characters as a reflexive action, and that's *after* the Chimera has inflicted the lethal damage necessary to ram his stinger through the character's flesh. In short, the Chimera is more than capable of destroying a motley of fledgling Lost and is designed to leave a veteran group bloodied and bruised.

Unlike the Arcadian Huntsman, the Chimera may be willing to simply speak to the characters, even allowing them to continue on their way unmolested if they are polite and impress him with their wit or knowledge. Its rage, however, is the wrath barely restrained within the veneer of civility, and the wrong word can cause it to snap in a violent display of savage destruction.

The Chimera is not, however, designed to be a "boss fight," and speaking with it or agreeing to help it uncover its origin can serve to create future stories. Assuming the characters make it back from Faerie alive, of course.

border between the deep Hedge and Arcadia, they must discover a way across, through, over, or under whatever barrier is presented to them, hopefully without alerting the sentries. The form of the border between Arcadia and the deep Hedge varies from locale to locale. The Storyteller should determine what form the barrier takes depending on the mood of the story, the attitude of the characters, the nature of the Realm that the characters seek, and simple whim. The characters take many of their own expectations with them into the Hedge, and some subtle prodding during a moment of downtime can find out what the players expect the Hedge might deliver. They might see something familiar like a country fence, a section of chain-link and razor wire, a tall wall of worn stone, or a glistening labyrinth of glass and crystal.

Or perhaps there are no walls at all. It is possible the characters will simply walk out of the Hedge (usually quite suddenly, without any thinning, such that when they look behind them, the Thorns seem almost a solid vertical wall reaching into the sky) to find themselves on the outer edges of Faerie. The Hedge, they realize, is the border that exists between the Fae Realm and the mortal world. The rare changelings that have experienced this (or remember it from their initial mad flight from their Keeper) claim that any wall or border other changelings have experienced are merely local manifestations



of the innermost areas of the Hedge. Others retort that perhaps some Gentry build walls around their Realms while others don't bother. A third camp, often the one populated with those changelings that have spent the most time in the deep Hedge, point out that the deepest areas of the Hedge, those closest to the fae heart of Arcadia, tend to look extremely similar wherever in the world the changelings may be. The fact that there are inconsistencies, and the possible implications there of, may be far more worrisome than matters of semantics and what does or does not constitute a wall. However, the idea of *multiple Arcadias* is a little more discomfoting than most changelings care to admit.

Whether or not the characters encounter a wall keeping them out of Arcadia, they will certainly have to face sentries. In the rare instances that changelings have reported finding the entrance to Arcadia entirely unguarded, they claim the border was marked by a single massive, almost impossibly tall, heavily trapped wall. The reigning theory among the changeling savants posits that in these situations, the sentries take the form of a wall. It is not unusual for the sentries that guard the entrances to Arcadia to be entities that are not easily classified as changeling, hobgoblin, or Fae. Many take the form of magical objects, constructs, or other automatons capable of independent movement and some manner of thought. Others appear as living avatars of an element or concept, such as a golem of living stone, a phantasmal swordsman or a ghostly knight. Some are beasts sitting Cerberus-like at the threshold, more loyal incarnations of the Chimera. The entities are never actually ghosts or spirits, but rather some manner of other creature animated by the True Fae from the very stuff of the Wyrd to serve as guards.

### *So What Are They?*

If the sentries that stand guard along the borders of Faerie are not hobgoblins, changelings, or True Fae, what are they?

While they may be the results of ancient Contracts or pledges with the Hedge itself, the most likely answer is that most of the sentries are actually Wisps that were long ago released from the greater part of various True Fae (see page 95). While this means that they technically *are* (or at least were) an aspect of the greater part of the Gentry, very few changelings are so knowledgeable of the true nature of the Others that they would recognize this to be the case.

If it hovers like a floating flaming sword and it burns like a floating flaming sword, they reason, it is probably just a floating flaming sword.

Conversely, while the Gentry themselves almost never patrol the borders of Arcadia, they do, on occasion, spare

changeling slaves or hobgoblin mercenaries to do the job for them. Some changelings claim that the briarwolves were once creatures engineered for just that purpose, and a few changelings have run afoul of sentries that were mistaken for briarwolves, but far more potent, likely due to benefiting from powerful pledges with their masters. The rare changeling that serves as a sentry to Arcadia is almost always a loyalist who finds himself punished for some failing or slight against his Keeper. Placing such unworthies on the outskirts of Arcadia puts them in the unenviable position of having to keep unwanted entities from the deep Hedge and beyond out of Arcadia while keeping them from experiencing either the pleasures of their Keepers' Realms or the safe sanity of the mortal world. The characters might even come across a loyalist whose plot they foiled long ago, now forced to stand sentry at the cusp of Faerie. Such an enemy would have become hardened and bitter by his time served at the edge of the wilderness and likely has a score to settle with those who ruined his relationship with his Keeper.

Changelings who serve as sentries typically gain through their experiences, or are sculpted by their Keepers to possess, features that reflect their precise duties. Changeling sentries specifically ordered to keep watch and put the hurt on any approaching outsiders are likely to be huge and muscular; more brawn than brains. Equally dangerous, however, are the small, stealthy creatures that spy enemies from a distance before blowing darts at the interlopers tipped with deadly poisons derived from the most vile goblin fruit. Changeling sentries, however, remain exceedingly rare. Given that it is unlikely to see a changeling standing guard at the edge of Arcadia yet exceedingly likely to see one keeping the gate to a specific Realm, most changeling scholars presume this disparity is related to the core selfishness of the Gentry. Why waste their most precious slaves protecting *all* of the Fae when they can use them to protect only themselves?

### GETTING IN

In most cases, stealth and guile are the linchpins to a successful plan to get into Arcadia. In a testament to the overwhelming hubris of the Gentry, the creatures that reside in Arcadia often expect direct assaults against their holdings. The idea that an invader would try to *sneak* or *trick* his way in, even those invaders who were trained by the Fae taskmasters themselves remain rather laughable to the Others; or so common wisdom states. A few sage changelings point out that the Gentry are far from stupid, and if anyone has an intimate knowledge of the way changelings behave, it is the True Fae. The security measures of Arcadia seem almost designed to draw changelings in, they claim, while keeping undesirables out. Other changelings decry this theory; if the Gentry knew the changelings so well, how do so many manage to escape?

Either way, the border of Arcadia is vast, and only so many sentries can patrol such a wide area. Most remain within sensory distance of two others, one to either side, allowing



several to come to the aid of one without sacrificing much in the way of efficiency. This makes them particularly susceptible to distractions that draw them away from those planning to sneak in. The more sentient entities may be tricked in other ways, but rarely if ever can they be bargained with. Rarely do changelings possess anything that will convince a sentry to risk the wrath of its Fae overlord.

In situations where the changelings come across an obstacle that resembles a natural or man-made fortification, such as a wall, moat, or crevasse, the changelings must either find or craft a way across or over. Often a thorough search will uncover a secret gate or invisible bridge. These passages are always extensively booby-trapped.

## ARCADIAN SENTRIES, BLADELINGS

**Quote:** *(the quiet crackle of fire)*

**Background:** The Bladelings are the creation of some Fair Folk weapon smith, enchanter, or both. They patrol the borders of the twilight kingdoms tirelessly, never stopping to rest, eat, or drink.

Bladelings have no meaningful background; as far as they recognize, they have always been and always will be.

**Description:** The trod passes from the maddeningly thick Brambles before you, winding through a gap in an ancient stone wall and beyond into what can only be the Realms of Faerie. For the first, brief moment you foolishly think the entrance is unguarded, that you will be free to come and go as you please. But then you see it, dull metal almost blending into gray stone. It looks like an old, downturned sword, gliding slowly a few feet above the ground, crusted with dry blood. It pauses in its circuit, and you are still wondering if it can see you when it erupts into flames.

**Storytelling Hints:** Bladelings are the foolishness of entering Arcadia through the front door. They are unbribable, unflappable automatons, and they only fulfill their reason for existing when they are spilling the blood of interlopers. Characters may come across the Bladelings floating as described above, or the sword sentries may be resting “abandoned” in the grass before the gate (as if dropped by fleeing guards) or propped on a weapon rack; woe betide the changeling who hefts such a goblin blade when it bursts to flaming life.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 5

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

**Social Attributes:** Presence 1, Manipulation 0, Composure 5

**Mental Skills:** Investigation (Sentry) 4

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 5, Weaponry (Sword) 5

**Social Skills:** Intimidate (Jabs and Swipes) 3, Subterfuge (Feints) 3

**Merits:** Danger Sense, Disarm, Fast Reflexes 2, Weapon Finesse

**Willpower:** 10

**Initiative:** 12

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 18 (species factor 10)

**Health:** 10

**Wyrd:** 5

**Contracts:** Elements (Fire) ●●, Stone ●

**Glamour/ per Turn:** 14 / 5

**Automaton:** Bladelings cannot be intimidated or otherwise coerced. They never suffer wound penalties, and will not stop fighting until their health levels are filled with aggravated damage (and thus have been entirely destroyed). Bladelings take aggravated damage from cold iron.

**Working in Concert:** A pair of Bladelings can act as one, becoming a single whirling, flashing, flaming dealer of death. When two Bladelings are near one another they can function as a single ambidextrous entity with Fighting Style [Two Weapons] 4.

**Flamberg:** Bladelings are often wreathed in flame (or whatever element suits the Storyteller). Every successful attack made by a Bladeling inflicts an additional 2 health levels of lethal damage.

**Elemental Weakness:** Submerging a fire-wreathed Bladeling in sufficiently cold water will not only produce a great deal of steam, but will cause the blade to shatter, destroying the Bladeling.

Bladelings sheathed in other elements may suffer other elemental weaknesses.

**Weapons/ Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Special	Dice Pool
Vicious Slice	4 (L)	May choose to disarm	15
Stab	3 (L)	—	14

## Variations on the Theme

The Bladelings are silent, inhuman killers. They slaughter indiscriminately. Objects given life, they possess no empathy for human beings and cannot be reasoned with. Similarly, they generally cannot be tricked, though changelings of sufficiently great power (Wyrd 8+) might be able to convince them they are True Fae. Any weapon or object of the Storyteller's choice can be substituted for the sword aspect of the Bladelings. If the characters seek a Keeper that styles itself a Queen of Death, they may come across sickle, scythe, or dagger-like Bladelings. A Keeper that resembles a massive Scandinavian troll may create Bladelings that are axe or hammer-like. A strange puppet master may leave murderous marionettes at the borders of





Arcadia, while an anarchic force of modern horror may people its borders with sentient guns of fire, lead, and glass.

## TEMPTATION AND BETRAYAL

The first Arcadian Realm the changelings encounter upon entering Faerie usually tends to either be a common Realm for members of a Feud or an abandoned Realm. While these Realms tend towards thematic extremes, they also tend to be the least alien of the landscapes encountered by the changelings.

In the case of abandoned Realms, without a specific Fae Keeper twisting it to his every whim, the Realm takes on aspects of the expectations and desires of all that pass through it, whether True Fae riding out for the Hunt, changeling slaves scurrying about performing their masters' bidding, or liberated changelings either fleeing for home or returning for reasons unknown. These many influences tend to wear down the rough edges of the Realm, resulting in a locale that maintains some of the spirit that its True Fae lord once invested in it, but greatly evened out.

These Realms are especially influenced by the idea of travel from the material world to the Fae, and tend to be Edenic counterpoints to whatever geographic area in the real world to which the Realm most closely corresponds. (It is not unusual, after all, for a given Gentry to find a preferred city and do most of its hunting there, which results in changelings desperate to escape to the same locale.) An abandoned Realm that serves as a crossroads between Arcadia and a country where it snows for most of the year may be a pleasant land of Winter wonder, while a Realm close to a city may manifest as a pleasantly green, surprisingly quaint metropolis. Of course, they are also remarkably empty, save for travelers and the strange creatures that become part of the Arcadian ecosystem. The experience of traveling through an "abandoned" city overgrown with vines and haunted only by goblin birds that flit back and forth above may be akin to exploring the ruins of a fallen civilization in a foreign world.

In the case of Realms forged to serve as a battleground between Others, the theme of the Feud is typically strongly apparent, but the differences between the members of the Feud tend to push the Realm as a whole towards an average common vision. A Feud in which each of the Fae members strongly identify with a specific element may lord over individual Realms of hellish fire or frozen ice, but they share a Feudal Realm in which the elements play out their eternal struggle in a manner that seems almost natural. Additionally, these Realms are identified by their function as places of gathering and constrained peace, two aspects that tend to blend together to make a heaven of the world. Allow the characters to explore Arcadia (or make it large enough to require such exploration) for as long as you feel comfortable. Darker fantasy films like *Willow*, *Stardust*, *The Dark Crystal*, *Mirrormask*, *Pan's Labyrinth*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Dark*

*City* or *The City of Lost Children* provide loads of inspiration for what architectures and vistas might greet characters traveling through the various "open" Realms of Arcadia. Faerie is and should be surreal — it is above reality, unconstrained by physics and geology. One glimpse of it would set even the most jaded Hollywood producer scrabbling to put together a film one-tenth as beautiful, or one-tenth as frightening. Be lavish in your description. Enjoy yourself.

Inevitably, some changelings decide that they are content with the world offered to them in Arcadia. They may not be able to change the Realm themselves, but it provides for them, like a caring parent, and that makes it a paradise of sorts. Such changelings, Storyteller and player characters alike, may leave the group to put a stake in the unclaimed (or sometimes, foolishly, the claimed), reasoning that it is better to serve in Heaven than be free to rule in Hell. These characters are well on their way to embodying the mentality of the True Fae, and, likely sooner than later, they may even abandon their physical form for the sublime being of the Others.

Storyteller characters that abandon or betray the group can serve as excellent antagonists. The harshness of the sudden betrayal for so obviously empty and meaningless a prize can pave the way to a high-stakes confrontation with a changeling on the verge of becoming what most Lost most loathe. If a player character takes this path, however, the Storyteller must give careful consideration to how to handle it. The character will quickly lose Clarity, and, as a result, will no longer be playable. (Luckily, Arcadia is absolutely brimming with enslaved changelings or even adventuring changeling heroes who could join the group, giving the player an easy in back to the group.) It is not advised, however, that the Storyteller use the former player character as an antagonist for the other player characters to beat up on; this usually only promotes ill feeling among the players. If you feel like you want to use a former character-turned-Fae as an antagonist, speak to the former player of the character first and make sure it's acceptable.

### *Other Abandoned Realms*

A sense of abandonment pervades every derelict Realm. Those that stand between the Realms of the Gentry and the mortal world tend to also be permeated with a sense of exploitation or exhaustion: They are thoroughly used and slowly become threadbare. Some abandoned Realms, however, are deep within the metaphysical landscape of Arcadia. These dread demesnes usually offer a much clearer picture of their former ruler, but they are also far more inundated with its destruction. A sense of death and decay pervades these Realms, even as ecosystems continue to flourish. The Gentry, for their part, avoid such locales.



## THE GATEKEEPER

The entrance to every Arcadian Realm is marked with some manner of threshold, whether literal and physical, or metaphorical. This can be as ornate as a forty-foot wall replete with arrow slits and ramparts accessible through a gateway sealed by a portcullis of steel and a drawbridge or as simple as a road sign. Other, more bizarre examples exist as well, including but hardly limited to rivers of insects, walls of flesh or flame, and stairways of light that ascend into a dome of polished silver. The nature of the gate almost always directly correlates with that of the Realm and its Keeper. Similarly, each Realm's gatekeeper tends to take a form inspired in part by her duties and in part by the Realm and Keeper whose gate she guards.

The vast majority of the Realms of the True Fae have gatekeepers. It is an immutable law of Realms that each must be accessible to others, and as a result, each Realm is at least somewhat open. The Gentry, however, have little or no interest in the servants and warriors of their fellow True Fae or the other strange entities of Arcadia entering their personal Realms (understandable, given that each Realm is truly an aspect of the Fae that rules it), and place gatekeepers at the threshold to their Realms to deter undesirable elements.

A surprising number of these gatekeepers are changelings, usually loyal slaves who were either content to remain in Faerie and serve an inhuman overlord, have been in Arcadia for so long that they have utterly forgotten who they once were, or, more often, some combination of both. The Others make sure their door wardens remain in the best shape to do their duty, forcing them into that shape as necessary. Ogres are by far the most common creatures given to this role, their features determined by the nature of their Keeper. An Ogre in service to a Keeper that more closely resembles the Elemental seeming may develop the Stonebones or Water-Dweller kiths, while an Ogre defending a Realm of primal beasts may develop the Gristlegrinder or Farwalker kiths. Ogres are not unique in their role as gatekeeper, however, and Hunterheart Beasts, Draconic Fairests, Wizened Soldiers, and all manner of Elementals have been given the duty of holding the Realm. Older changeling gatekeepers have even been known to evolve bizarre kiths others have never seen before, always to the benefit of their duties.

Gatekeepers, being creatures of largely physical prowess, do not tend to be the most intellectual or creative of changelings, however. Once again, characters should probably play to their strengths as creatures of finesse, manipulating the gatekeeper to avoid incurring its wrath. Like the troll that hungers for the billy goat's Gruff, gatekeepers will often ignore smaller prey for the promise of larger fare. They may be tricked into allowing a motley into the Realm if they are under the guise of something else, much as Odysseus tricks the cyclops by tying himself to the bottom of its sheep. Indeed, many of Odysseus' deeds serve as strong examples of how a changeling might overcome a being of superior strength or numbers (the Trojan horse was his idea).

Gatekeepers tend to be simple of mind and, as creatures slowly metamorphosing into True Fae, they tend to wear their Vice on their sleeve. The characters should be able to figure out the gatekeeper's Vice without a great deal of difficulty. Any form of clever plan that plays on that Vice is almost assured victory.

Conversely, like the ogre of folklore who kept his heart in an egg, gatekeepers tend to have some major weakness or bane. Banes of this nature are rarely as simple as a weak spot in their armored hide or an object that can be destroyed to destroy them, but discovering and understanding what they are can be the key to bypassing the gatekeeper. Ognenov, below, has developed a frailty requiring him to engage in single combat if challenged honorably. While fighting Ognenov one-on-one may be a frightening proposition, his reliance on honorable combat may be used by clever players to trick him or otherwise tie him into an oath not to harm the characters.

### REALM GATEKEEPER, OGNENOV, REEVE OF THE REALM

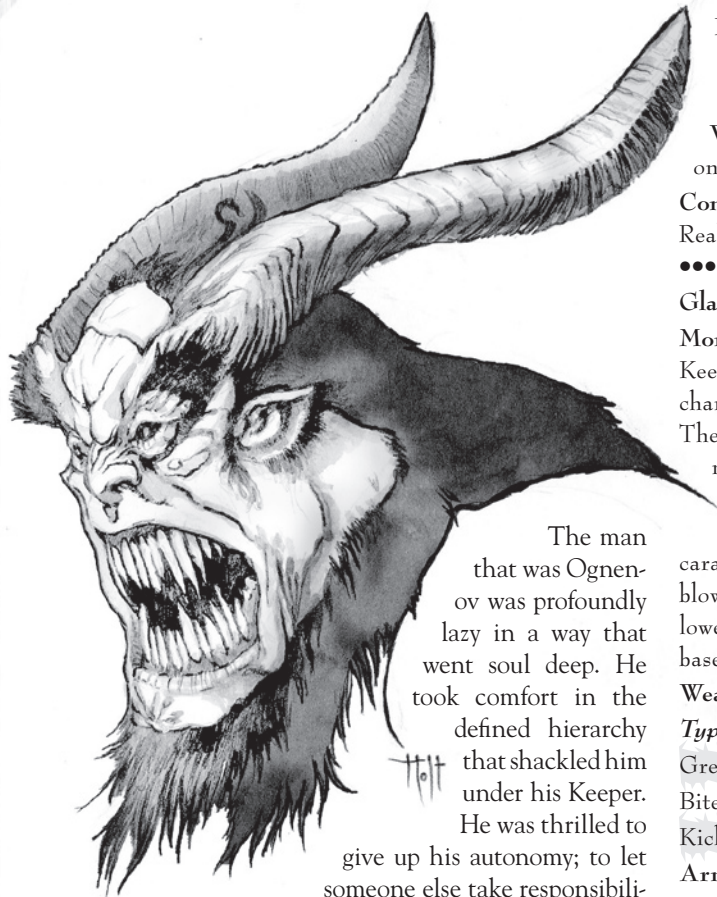
**Quote:** "There's no goin' through here, frien's. Best turn back fer yer own Realms."

**Background:** Ognenov remembers little of his time before Faerie, and he has no interest in going back to the mortal Realm. He has vague memories about his time on Earth. He was an enforcer, that much is clear, but he can't remember which side of the law he enforced. He's lucky, though. His Keeper saw him for who he was, and now, so long as he proves himself worthy of the authority his Keeper has granted him, his life is comfortable. The future may be as foggy as the present, but for now, he's content.

**Description:** Ognenov's large (and often larger) frame seems, at first, to be wearing a thick, polished armor and massive helm replete with meter-long decorative horns. A closer examination, however, reveals no helm, his horns have grown forth from high atop his forehead, and what initially seemed armor is actually a thick chitinous hide that covers most of his body. Thick hair hangs in lengthy patches about the guard's form, and his flat face sports a gaping mouth full of dagger-like teeth. A thick bluish-green hide sheathes the bulging muscles of his tree trunk-thick arms and legs, and his bare feet end in four toes, three of which sport viciously-hooked claws.

**Storytelling Hints:** Ognenov is the large, dumb brute that keeps things out. The kind of things don't really matter; he knows what's allowed to come in, and everything else stays out. He's not prone to thinking. Thinking only gets you in trouble with the Keeper. Blind obedience is key. Ognenov is the laziness and Vice of those changelings who prefer a life in Faerie to one in the material world. He is the kind of changeling that *wants* to become one of the True Fae. He may be huge and powerful, but ultimately he's a pathetic little man ruled by his Vices and he is comfortable in slavery. Make sure the players understand this.





The man that was Ognenov was profoundly lazy in a way that went soul deep. He took comfort in the defined hierarchy that shackled him under his Keeper. He was thrilled to give up his autonomy; to let someone else take responsibility for his life, for his actions. After decades, perhaps longer, serving his Keeper, his laziness has been exchanged for a slothful hunger. It is not the hunger of ambition, the hunger that drives one to perform his best in all aspects of his life. It is the hunger of a dog that lays under the table in wait for whatever scraps are thrown his way.

The characters are just such scraps.

**Seeming:** Ogre

**Kith:** Special (See Below)

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 5, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Battle Tactics) 2, Crafts (Weapons) 3, Investigation 1, Medicine (First Aid) 2, Occult 3, Politics (Gentry) 1

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl (Kicks) 4, Survival 3, Weaponry (Axes) 5

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 3, Socialize (Carousing) 3, Subterfuge (Detect Lies, Boasts) 3

**Merits:** Disarm, Giant, Inspiring, Iron Stamina 2, Quick Draw (Weaponry), Strong Back

**Willpower:** 8

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Gluttony

**Initiative:** 9

**Defense:** 5 (3 with armor)

**Speed:** 15 (21 when gargantuan)

**Health:** 11 (17 when gargantuan)

**Wyrd:** 6 (frailty: must accept challenges for honorable one-on-one combat)

**Contracts:** Artifice ●●●, Elements (as appropriate for Keeper's Realm) ●●●●, Fang and Talon (as appropriate) ●●●●●, Stone ●●●●●, Vainglory ●, Goblin (Delayed Harm) ●●●

**Glamour/ per Turn:** 15 / 6

**Monstrous Kith:** The gatekeeper has faithfully served its Keeper in Faerie for so long that it has evolved features that changelings would recognize as aspects of multiple kiths.

The gatekeeper's bite inflicts 2 dice of lethal damage. He may spend 1 Glamour point to add his Wyrd to his size.

Much of the gatekeeper's body is covered in chitinous carapace. He may spend 1 Glamour to harden this carapace into armor capable of deflecting the mightiest blows. This provides him with an Armor rating of 6, but lowers his Defense by 2 and inflicts a -1 to all Dexterity-based dice pools.

**Weapons/ Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Special	Dice Pool
Great Axe	5 (L)	9-Again, Two Hands	14
Bite	2 (L)	Must Grapple First	10
Kick	0 (L)	—	9

**Armor:** 6

## THE KEEPER'S LAIR

*We observed the manse from the distance, a safe distance we hoped. Everything was fog there, a fog that stood against time itself. We crouched in that fog, used it as a screen. Erica even managed to forge some kind of Contract with it, to cloak us, to wrap us in it like a shroud. I didn't know she could do that.*

*Sextus was salving some of her deeper cuts with the mashed up remnants of a goblin fruit and muttering some of the Spring rites to heal her. She smiled back at him and I turned aside, shifting my gaze back to the Patriarch's manse. We had all escaped this hell together, but there was something between the two of them, something clearly manifest in the clean scent of Sextus' mantle. Hell, he'd been sitting there for five minutes, and fucking roses had grown in around him. It sucked to be left out.*

*I slipped a handful of bones from a pouch at my side, shook them in my hand, blew on them, and then let them fall at my knees. I studied them for several seconds, a sickness growing in my stomach like a cold, wet stone.*

*"It's time to go," I said to the other two, my voice in this place little more than a whisper of things to come. "He knows we're here."*

Much of this book is devoted to the Realms of the Gentry, the various forms they take, and the entities that rule over them. This section focuses instead on Storytelling (or, for the characters, navigating and dealing with), the various threats that manifest within a Realm.



The appearance of each Realm and the form that various threats take derive largely from the Keeper. Thus changelings who enter the Realm with a strong knowledge of the Keeper (such as those that escaped from its grasp) have a far better chance of exploring and overcoming the obstacles in their path. This section allows the character who escaped from the Realm to take center stage, to lead the way and warn the other characters of obstacles. It would not be out of the question to grant a character a dice bonus of +1 to +3 when navigating a Realm in which she served her duration.

The actual method of navigation is largely up to the Storyteller and will vary between different Realms. Whatever method used, navigation through a Realm tends to be somewhat more metaphorical than that in the material Realm. Directions are ideas and sympathies rather than straight lines between locales. A Keeper whose Realm produces Flowering Fairest may have a Realm that owes a great deal to the English landscape gardens, where statues and small, decorative buildings are chosen as much for what they represent as how beautiful they are. In these cases, characters might find that their best chance of navigating their way to their goal lies in following clues provided at each edifice, connecting the dots between them as they slip unseen through the gardens. A watery Fae's Realm may follow the natural law of gravity, with water flowing downhill from a source to a destination. Clever characters can follow the water to the Keeper if they know the nature of the entity; a Gentry who is a source of water or makes its home in a bubbling spring may be found at the source of the river, while a murky creature of the deeps may keep its lair where the water comes to rest. Dice pools to navigate a Keeper's Realm almost always involve Wits, with the Skill chosen based on the nature and rules of the Realm.

Take care that the other characters don't feel left out. By tailoring the challenges to the abilities of other characters in the group, the Storyteller can make sure the character "native" to the Realm can lead the way while the other characters can clear the path.

Storytelling the Keeper's lair is an exercise in walking thin lines. The Storyteller must balance the attention paid to those who came from the Realm with those that didn't. She must paint the Realm as a land of both nightmare and beauty, alluring but ultimately fatal. Even a grim nightmare Realm of hungry corpses and incorporeal shades possesses an austere, classical beauty, while an Edenic garden drips blood from the myriad thorns of its many roses.

As mentioned earlier in this book, a Realm must abide by certain rules. While a Realm is dangerous, simply existing within it cannot be harmful. Lethal danger cannot haunt every step. The Realm is, by definition, accessible. Yet this accessibility, while perhaps more inviting than the characters initially expect, may not be entirely pleasant. A Realm in which they must breathe blood and the air is poisonous may take some getting used to.

Most changelings, upon entering an Other's Realm, get the feeling that they are being watched, that their Keeper has

seen them or knows they are coming. As the Realm is essentially an aspect of the Fae in question, this sense of paranoia is often well-founded. While the Keeper may maneuver threats into the characters' path, it will not move to stop them. The Keepers need conflict as much as changelings need Glamour, and they will allow even a dangerous foe to approach, if not unmolested, at least more or less unharmed. That same need for conflict, however, encourages the Keepers to threaten the characters and give them obstacles to overcome. While the changelings may never understand it, the difficulties they surmount feed the Feud, which empowers the Gentry involved. In other words, each obstacle overcome by the characters will make the Keeper's triumph over them more meaningful (or its defeat at their hands more tragic).

Two features that exist in most Arcadian Realms bear mentioning. The first, the manse, is discussed at length elsewhere in this book. It is, essentially, the core of power within an Arcadian Realm, where whatever actors the Fae chooses to exist as make their "home." Despite the name, manses do not always manifest as houses, mansions, or castles, at least not as humans think of them. The only trait that keeps a manse from appearing as a cave formed between the roots of an impossibly large tree, an impenetrably thick grove of bamboo, or a shadowy island in the center of a lake of tar-thick inky liquid is the whim of the Keeper.

### *The Gardens at Stowe*

Carefully sculpted and landscaped gardens were once common among the British and French elite. Many of these gardens came into being when the Neoclassical aesthetics of symmetry and geometry were in vogue. Sights such as perfectly octagonal lakes dotted the countryside. As the Classical fell out of style and Romantic aesthetics of decay and entropy, the natural and the gothic, became popular, the same wealthy families that had paid so much to ensure their grass was a perfect length and their lakes were the right shape paid equally exorbitant prices to have the landscape carefully crafted to seem grotesque and overgrown. The sharp edges were filed and chipped away in favor of perfectly planned deterioration.

The parallel with the Gentry should be obvious.

An excellent example of one of these gardens is the landscape garden at Stowe in England. While a visit, if possible, is strongly recommended, luckily quite a bit of information on it has been placed on the Internet. The gardens themselves might serve as wonderful inspiration for a Fairest's garden estate, while the ideas and history behind it can help inform any Realm in Arcadia.



The second feature is the changeling slaves. Most changeling slaves seem nearly mindless, without the desire (and certainly without the will) to escape themselves. The characters may feel inclined to help these hapless brutes, but will find most of them discouragingly apathetic to their situation. (In addition, one of the quickest ways to draw down the wrath of a Keeper is to attempt to liberate its slaves. Furthermore, many Keepers seed their changeling slaves with Wisps specifically designed to alert the Other to any impending jail break.) On the other end of the spectrum, the changelings most cognizant of their situation are the pathetic souls that have sworn themselves with utter loyalty to their taskmaster. The gatekeeper above is an example of this, as is the Minotaur below. The rare few changelings that *want* to escape and have the presence of mind to do so are rare, but their liberation adds a heroic aspect to the story.

## THE MAN LEFT BEHIND, THE MINOTAUR

**Quote:** *(a sound of heavy breathing and the drag of claws across stone)*

**Background:** It was human once, with a name, a family, a gender, with hobbies and vices, loves and hates. It may remember one or two of those things, far in the darkest recesses of its mind, in the same way a person remembers only a single detail from a forgotten dream that was

so *vivid* at the time. Of course, it doesn't dream anymore. It hasn't slept in what might be perceived as eight decades, were time not a quicksilver whim of the Master.

Even the Master has turned his back on it. Now that it is more fae than human, more insubstantial shade than soft, pliable flesh, the Master has little time for it. The Master focuses its attention on new mewling playthings and ancient feuds with the other Gentry. The Master leaves it in the dark and twisting recesses of the basement, only acknowledging it when he has decided to discard a changeling slave that isn't living up to potential.

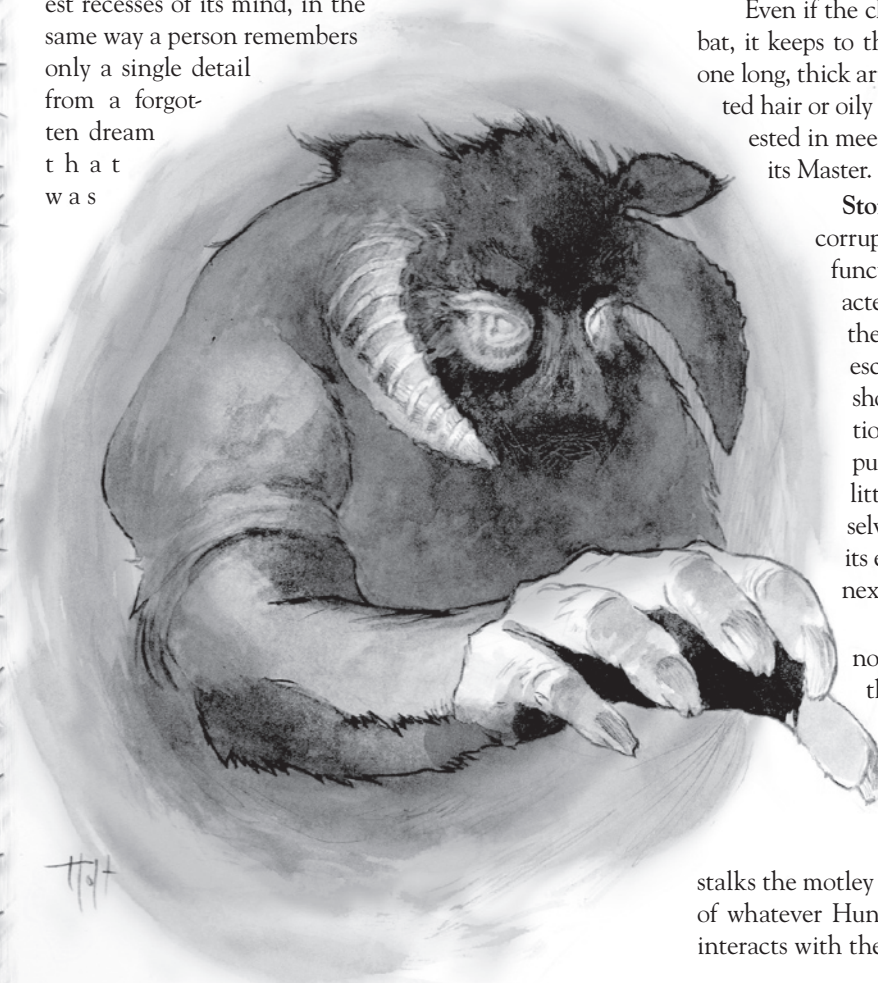
It stalks them because it makes him happy. It batters them about, pursuing on their heels around corners and down impossibly long, dark corridors because it amuses him. And it eats them because it loves him, even when he isn't watching.

**Description:** The creature that haunts the shadows of the Keeper's manse is little more than the sense of movement in the darkness, the sensation of a shark brushing against the thin bottom of a rowboat. It is the creeping feeling that the room is smaller than it should be and the growing dread that you are not alone. The Minotaur is seen more in its actions than its physical form: dried blood spattered lightly across a wall, eight-inch long, six inch deep gouges in the stone floor, the sudden realization that one of the motley is missing.

Even if the characters meet the Minotaur in close combat, it keeps to the edge of the light, striking forward with one long, thick arm and revealing only an impression of matted hair or oily feathers. When wounded it flees, not interested in meeting its end unless it comes at the hands of its Master.

**Storytelling Hints:** The Minotaur is the corruption Faerie inflicts on its inhabitants. It functions as a reminder of just what the characters might have become had they not had the wherewithal, the courage, and the wits to escape. For some characters it may serve as a shocking wake-up call, a mirror-like exhibition of just how much they have lost in the pursuit of power or influence, and just how little distance they have put between themselves and their Keeper. And then they meet its eyes, realize its the changeling from the cell next door, and wonder if they ever left at all.

The Minotaur also demonstrates that not all of the danger in Arcadia comes in the form of the Gentry. The Minotaur does not stalk the motley because it has been set to the dread task by its Keeper or even because its Keeper set it to standing sentry, but because its Keeper *grew bored of it and left it alone*. The Minotaur stalks the motley because stalking interlopers, a vague echo of whatever Hunts its Keeper once drove it on, is how it interacts with the world in the absence of an authority.





The Minotaur has devolved from man into dream entity, and now it exists in the present, with little to no thought given to what came before and naught in the way of future plans save hunting the motley around the next corner. It cannot be reasoned with, because it discarded rational thought long ago. It can be scared, shocked, and even confused, but that is not likely the first tactic a motley is going to take when it realizes it is being hunted.

Feel free to play cat and mouse with the characters. Show them the horror that also lives in legend.

**Seeming:** Darkling

**Kith:** Special (See Below)

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 5, Resolve 2

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

**Social Attributes:** Presence 1, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Its Master's Library) 2, Crafts 3, Investigation (Its Master's Manse) 5, Occult 4

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Larceny 3, Stealth (Moving in Darkness) 5, Survival 2

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Intimidate 4, Persuasion 1, Subterfuge 4

**Merits:** Ambidextrous, Fame (Infamous Among the House Slaves) 3, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 2, Iron Stamina 3, Iron Stomach, Quick Healer

**Willpower:** 5

**Virtue:** Prudence

**Vice:** Envy

**Initiative:** 10

**Defense:** 5

**Speed:** 14

**Health:** 10

**Wyrd:** 5

**Contracts:** Dream ●●●●, Smoke ●●●●●, Darkness ●●●●●

**Glamour/ per Turn:** 14/5

**Mantle of Darkness:** While the Minotaur is not pledged to a changeling Court, it has become so closely bound to the concepts of darkness and smoke that it has developed a mantle of its own. The Minotaur always seems to be cast in shadow, even if there is no apparent source of light or object to cast it. 1 die is subtracted from all Wits + Composure or Wits + Ability rolls by others to detect the Minotaur unless the others are specifically looking for it.

**Monstrous Kith:** The Minotaur has existed unchecked in Faerie for so long that it has evolved features that changelings would recognize as aspects of multiple kiths. By spending 1 Glamour the Minotaur becomes one with the darkness, gaining a +1 Defense that applies against close combat and firearms attacks. The blessing ends instantly if the Minotaur is exposed to a strong source of light, which shreds away the darkness. Additionally, by spending 1 Glamour, the Minotaur can manifest vicious knife-like claws that inflict +1 lethal damage for the scene.

**Knowing the Dead:** The Minotaur exists somewhere between the Realms of the living and those of the dead, and has a special kinship with the latter. It can perceive and speak with ghosts. By spending 1 Glamour and rolling Manipulation + Wyrd, the Minotaur can call forth a shade of the dead for a scene, allowing it to fully manifest and interact with the living in every way. (If you have access to **Winter Masques**, the Minotaur has access to the Contracts of Shade and Spirit ●●●.) If the characters somehow befriend the Minotaur, it might offer them a chance to say goodbye to lost loved ones (perhaps granting a player the opportunity to roleplay for the final time a deceased character).

**Weapons/ Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Claw Swipe	1 (L)	9

## Variations on the Theme

The Minotaur is less representative of any single idea than it is representative of those left behind in Arcadia. The Minotaur literally haunts his Keeper's manse like a ghost. The characters are likely to find other slaves, perhaps even ones they knew, if they've returned to their own Keeper's Realm. Let this be less about what the creature is, ultimately, than it is about what the characters could have become.

## SEIZING THE GOAL

*When I heard the footsteps approaching, I assumed they belonged to my Keeper, and huddled deeper into the corner of the cell I had been appointed. When I realized the steps were too many, and too light, I believed they were the Patriarch's minions, come to visit some new indignity on me. And if it was only them, I knew, my chance to escape may have come at last.*

*The sensation that tore through my gut when I turned to face them erupted like some kind of hundred kilowatt jolt. My motley, bruised and battered, Sextus' fair face swollen and purple, a terrible gash across Linus' wrinkled brow, Erica's arm bound in a poorly rigged sling. And behind them all, the Patriarch looming in the shadows.*

While exploring the Keeper's inner sanctum is rife with possibility and offers Storytellers a chance to utilize whatever puzzles, enigmas, traps, and creatures they would like, the characters' goal should ultimately be the focus. Most players will hope to get in and get out, avoiding conflict and bloodshed for as long as possible. Even characters hoping to assassinate a member of the Gentry are better served by reserving their strength for use against their former captor than they are wasting it with a full frontal assault against whoever and whatever they find.

The goal should be as difficult to find as the Storyteller sees fit and the characters find compelling but ultimately accessible. The Gentry, after all, are more interested in seeing the story play out than stopping it, and some may even be curious as to what the changelings hope to accomplish. Inspirations for this part of the endgame are myriad, from



the myth of Theseus and the minotaur to dungeon-delving videogames. Once the characters seem on the cusp of achieving whatever they came for, whether it be a treasure, a captured companion, or an apparent surprise attack against their former Keeper, things immediately go to Hell.

Legends are the weapons that the Gentry wield against one another, and when a story seems about to be resolved, to come to fruition, what was once a curiosity, pleasure, and feast to the Gentry suddenly becomes a life or death struggle. The whole of the Realm comes to life in an attempt to stop the characters.

### *"But We Were Totally Stealth!"*

The characters may feel short-changed if they've successfully made every effort at stealth in their journey towards their goal. The Storyteller is well within his rights to decide that the characters slipped in and out under the Gentry's nose much as they did when they escaped in the first place. If the characters know to "pay" for whatever they take in order to keep from alerting the True Fae, there's no reason they can't avoid that particular entanglement. They've paid for it, after all.

This does not mean there will be no complications during the escape for the characters to overcome (they have to sneak back out, after all), but it does mean the Keeper won't harry their every step with potent improvised Contracts.

This form of escape is best suited to a motley of young changelings with lower Wyrd, or a motley in which every member claims alliance to the Winter Court.

## FLIGHT

Goal in hand, the logical next step for the characters is to get the Hell out. Drive home the level of danger as the Keeper sounds a clarion call that draws in every Actor, Wisp, and hobgoblin or changeling slave to stop the characters. Numerous automated traps (such as the Bladelings above or the Inanimae on page 113) spring to life, pursuing the characters.

Inspiration is everywhere. Many classic fairytales feature a scene in which the heroes must flee a witch or ogre, from Baba Yaga to the giant atop the beanstalk, using their wits, resources and the help of those they'd aided to survive. Inspiration for these scenes appear in sources as diverse as tomb-raiding movies such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark* to folk tales like *The Master Maid* and *Jean, The Soldier, and Eulalie, the Devil's Daughter*. The biblical escape of Lot and his family as well as the escape of Orpheus from the underworld serve as inspiration and a warning: those who hesitate are lost. The animated *Aladdin*,

specifically the title character's escape from the cave in which he found the genie's lamp, serves as a surprisingly strong example of a literal flight from just such a situation.

The characters have a major advantage in their flight: the Keeper's Realm, by its nature as a Realm, cannot simply close and keep them in. It can impede, threaten, mislead them — but it is not an impermeable wall. There's always a loophole. It's just up to the motley to find it — which is not guaranteed.

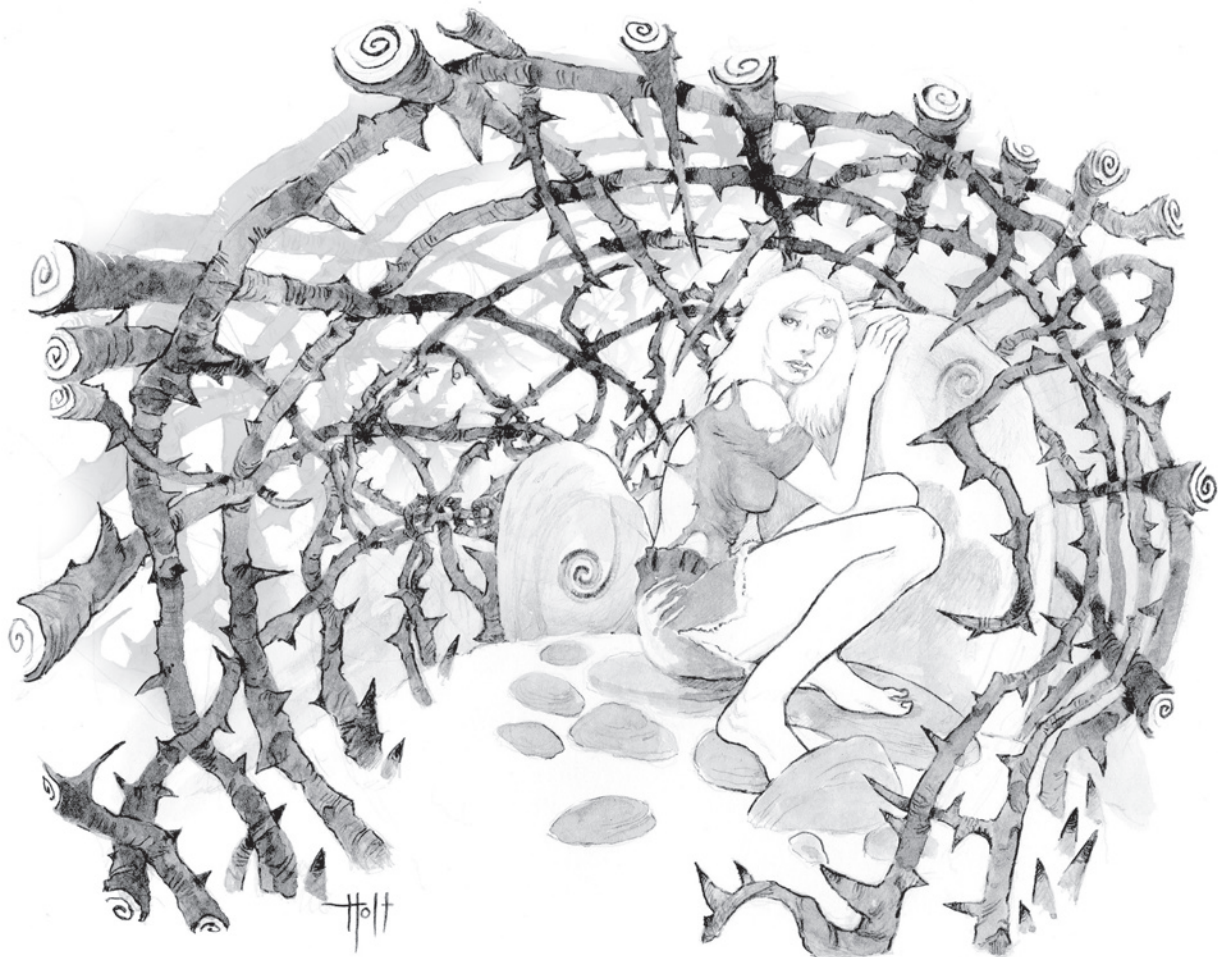
While escape is likely the characters' best bet, some players will inevitably call for initiative and start swinging. Handle these characters ruthlessly. They picked a fight with a god, and the results should bare that out. Allow the dice to lay where they fall, but feel free to grant the character an out. If the character suffers a major wound, perhaps the Keeper gloats or turns to give chase to the other character, giving the character the opportunity he needs to escape. Conversely, if the character scores even a glancing wound against the Keeper that inflicts only a few health levels of damage, the Keeper may overreact and thrash about in distraction. The Gentry are not, after all, entities used to the painful bite of a sword. Make it clear that the character's attack was nominal, but that he has a window of opportunity to get out. If the character fails to take advantage of the opportunity, perhaps he will triumph over his enemy, but don't give the character a victory unless he earns it by the rules. After all, there's a lot to be said for a heroic death against a superior foe.

While the Gentry in their Actor form serve as potent adversaries, the possibility remains that the characters, especially experienced ones, will rival their enemy in sheer power. If the characters have amassed so much strength that the Keeper falls under the weight of their combined assault, let it happen. A certain poetic irony results from the brutal slaying of a former taskmaster. The fact that the roles have been reversed does not imply a triumph of good over evil, and the Storyteller might emphasize that by having the Keeper beg for its life (see *Death or Immortal Mercy*, page 91) or through any similar method that underscores its powerlessness. The death of the Keeper, a mere fragment of a Title of a greater being, does not invalidate the rest of this scene, and even after killing the Keeper the characters must escape a Realm that rapidly turns against them.

## THE AUTUMNAL ROAD

Perhaps to their surprise, the characters can escape directly from their Keeper's Realm into the deep Hedge without having to travel through the rest of Arcadia proper (they did so the first time they escaped, after all). The deep Hedge offers no more safety than it did when they left Arcadia the first time or even when they returned. Aside from the usual dangers of the viciously sharp Thorns and monstrous hobgoblins titanic and miniscule, the characters are being pursued by the Gentry. The Keeper whose Realm they flee, ironically, ceases to be a problem once they have escaped. The characters either put it to the blade themselves or their





very escape served as the completion of a fatal legend, and the Fae lost its Title to another member of the Feud (or, in some strange and disquieting games, perhaps to one of the members of the motley). A glance back shows them the Realm collapsing and shifting as it takes on the characteristics of its new owner, a facet of Fae existence they are unlikely to understand. One effective way of underscoring the manner in which they were used involves Storytelling the arrival of a Fae who may have aided the characters along the way to claim its new prize, perhaps with some new aspect that reminds them of their former Keeper.

Whatever happens, the escape of changelings from Arcadia serves as a source of the very conflict on which the Gentry thrive, potent enough to call them up *en masse*. In short, the characters find themselves pursued by perhaps the largest single Arcadian Hunt they have ever borne witness to.

In both the case of the flight from Arcadia above and the escape through the Hedge, the characters discover themselves experiencing the very dread flight that has haunted them since their return from Faerie as fledglings. They are more experienced now, however, and if they have learned anything through their various triumphs and failures, their exploration and exploitation of pledges and Contracts, and their experiences during this story, it is that cunning is key.

Characters who conceive of viable tricks to elude their Gentry hunters should be rewarded with victory over their infinitely flexible but ultimately unimaginative pursuers.

## THE BARONESS OF TORTURED HARMONIES

**Quote:** *"This is mine now. You are mine now."*

**Background:** The entity that pursues the characters is an Actor aspect of a member of the Gentry among whose many titles is that of Baroness of Tortured Harmonies. The Other uses the Baroness title as a social avatar, utilizing her to interact with the other Gentry that she bound herself to in the Feud. Eight decades have passed in the mortal Realm (and many more in Faerie) since the Gentry won the title of Baroness from another foe, and during that time she has hosted numerous galas in the guise of the Baroness for her fellow Fair Folk.

Why she has appeared in this time at this place is likely a mystery to the characters, but probably involves either having won the Realm through their actions (which had been bound into one of the Legends told between the Gentry), because she is an aspect of another title of the Other that the characters have wronged, or simply because she knew they would be fleeing the gates of their Keeper's Realm and was hungry for conflict.



**Description:** She moves with careful calm and grace, like a dancer, and you can't help but keep looking back, because her beauty is sublime. The blood-jeweled diadem that rests on her brow projects a coronal crown of shivering light which plays down across her inhumanly perfect features. Her easy smile shames the coquettish come-hither grins that crowd city newsstands. Her lithe frame, draped in gore-spattered silk and diaphanous light, a cold glow that shines through her or from her, shifts and sways with a potent promise. Her blade, which arcs lazily through the air, glints with the dripping ichor of Bramble fruit and hobgoblin alike. The swath she cuts through the Thorns guides her ethereal song, punctuated with every even footstep.

**Storytelling Hints:** The Baroness is the personification of beautiful madness. Her actions follow a strict logic known only to her, and her very presence in the characters' lives seems arbitrary. She is profoundly violent, and descriptions of her blade strikes should contrast the beauty of her features and the grace of her movements with the gore that results. She can be mothering, in a twisted, inhuman manner, possibly cradling the corpse of a fallen enemy while singing quiet, discordant lullabies; she is the most kindly of the Kindly Ones, and the bite of her blade is the softest caress.

The Baroness is on the warpath. She is not terribly interested in speaking to or making a deal with the characters, and if they attempt to do so she will find the fact that they are no longer fleeing profoundly boring (likely resulting in one of them losing a limb as a reminder that they should be running for their lives). However, if the characters offer her a more tempting target, she may be convinced to let them escape with their lives. The Baroness is unlikely to accept any offer that isn't utterly perverse and depraved, and any character who makes such a deal with her is committing a sin against Clarity 1.

**Seeming:** Fairest

**Kith:** Bright One

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

**Social Attributes:** Presence 6, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

**Mental Skills:** Academics 3, Investigation 2, Occult (Fae) 4, Politics (Feud) 5

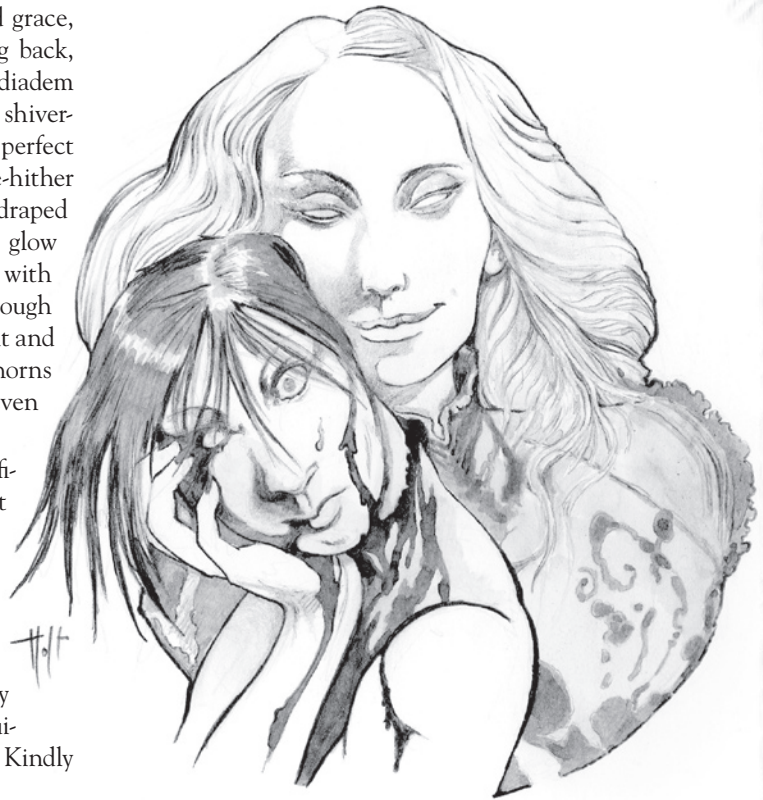
**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Weaponry (Swords) 8

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Empathy (Sense Motives) 3, Expression 6, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Cutting Deals) 4, Socialize 4, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Ambidextrous, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Disarm, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Finesse, Inspiring, Iron Stamina 3, Quick Draw (Weaponry), Quick Healer, Striking Looks 6, Token (Hedgespun Armor) 3, Toxin Resistance

**Willpower:** 9

**Virtue:** Fortitude



**Vice:** Wrath

**Initiative:** 12

**Defense:** 5

**Speed:** 13

**Health:** 11

**Wyrd:** 10

**Contracts:** Elements (Fire and Electricity) 1, Fang and Talon (Birds) 5, Stone 4, Vainglory 5, Eternal Summer 5

**Glamour/ per Turn:** 100 / 15

**Avatar of Light:** The Baroness is a sublimely beautiful being of light. She may spend Glamour points to add two dice per point spent to Presence, Manipulation, and Persuasion dice pools. All Social rolls by the Baroness benefit from the 8-again rule. Her light shines forth, illuminating a space of 180 cubic feet. She may spend a Glamour to make this light painfully intense, which levies a -3 penalty on rolls to attack the Baroness. She may not, however, hide in most environments. Even in a brightly lit space, the Baroness suffers a -3 dice penalty on all Stealth rolls.

**Being of Madness:** The Baroness does not possess Clarity, but she is an utter sociopath. She possesses as many Derangements as the Storyteller feels appropriate up to six, but which include at least Megalomania, Paranoia, and Vocalization, the last of which manifests as near constant singing.

Additionally, encountering the Baroness tends to deeply affect those that survive. Sudden bright lights, such as a car cranking up or even turning on the lights, cause the survivor to fidget or twitch. There is no mechanical rule for this; it is



primarily a roleplaying consideration.

**Unearthly:** The Baroness is not truly part of any world save her Arcadian Realm. When outside her Realm, she leaves no trail, can walk across any solid surface (even if it would not normally be able to support her weight), can escape any bonds with the expenditure of a Glamour, can spend a Glamour to pass through a solid barrier, and can spend a point of Glamour to add her Wyrd to her Defense for a turn. With the expenditure of 2 Glamour points and 1 Willpower point, the Baroness can become completely intangible. While intangible she cannot harm others, though she can walk through walls and across water as if it were solid ground. Returning to her solid form is a Reflexive action. (If you have access to **Winter Masques**, the Baroness has access to the Contracts of Separation ●●●●.)

**Immortal Flesh and Ruled by Passions:** As per **Changeling: the Lost**, page 279.

**Weapons/ Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Special	Dice Pool
Rapier	2 (L)	Armor Piercing 1	16

**Armor:** 2/3 (-1 Defense, Bulletproof)

### Variations on the Theme

The Baroness is a fairly “typical” member of the Gentry, in that she fulfills many of the expectations players have of what a member of the True Fae looks like and how it behaves (even if she doesn’t necessarily have pointed ears). However, the possible variations on the True Fae are nigh-endless, and the Storyteller should pick whatever manner of creature best conforms to and underscores the themes he has established in his story. Use the traits listed as a jumping off point, or see the information elsewhere in this book, in **Changeling: the Lost**, and in **Autumn Nightmares** for further inspiration.

## BITTERSWEET TRIUMPH

*I've never really known how to handle those kinds of situations. Erica started crying before we even got to the Everglades. Amy didn't weep until we pushed the bier into the swampy water. It floated away from us as the flame caught, dancing in that way they do here, the way they never did back in His Realm. I was almost surprised when flowers didn't bubble to the surface in his wake.*

*I bit my lip. I had nothing left to say.*

Nothing is gained without loss, no victory won without sacrifice. Odysseus returns home to regain his wife and child, but loses his entire crew, ten years of his life, and ultimately swallows his pride and makes amends with the god of the sea.

Arthur’s defeat of Mordred preserves England, yet Merlin finds himself imprisoned, the affair of Guinevere and Lancelot shudders and dies, and the great king himself leaves the Realm of the living. Even traditional fairytales rarely conclude without at least some misunderstanding, torture, and bloodshed. In the World of Darkness, things are no different.

The characters achieved a great victory, an accomplishment for which they should be forever proud, but remind them also of what they have lost. Friends have likely died, perhaps even motley-mates. The Keeper that for so many years drove their actions has been vanquished. The characters bear the scars of the whips and Thorns of the Hedge and Faerie, and may have given a tithe of their soul both directions. The characters entered Arcadia, and thus risked and may have lost Clarity. Tokens of great power may have been destroyed.

But if they’re home, they succeeded, despite the cost. They came out of Faerie with their lives and their freedom, which is far more than most can say. They didn’t come out quite whole — but that’s something to be proud of in itself.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Every story ends. While it is always possible to begin the quest again, to fall into the cycle of seasons and start in the quiet shadow of Autumn nightmares, there are few experiences in the hobby of roleplaying as ending a game’s narrative on precisely the right note. Players are often loathe to admit this, at first, wishing to spend more time with the characters in whom they have invested so much, even when they recognize that anything they added would be nothing but coda or epilogue. The characters who have survived may be inhumanly powerful, easily able to trump any who stand in their path. They have certainly faced the greatest challenge they are likely to confront. Some players may be tempted to rest on their laurels, to enjoy the spoils of war. To take it easy.

And there’s nothing wrong with that, to a point. But a story without a credible challenge is a story without conflict, and a game can no more survive without conflict than an Other. There is a pleasure in parting, a sweet sorrow, and better it come when the passion is highest than after the life has drained from a chronicle. Bring your game to its explosive climax, allow for the briefest of denouements, and then try to hit that perfect final note that will hang in the air, that will stand out in your players’ memories as the night the experience came to a close.



# APPENDIX

## *The Game of Immortals*

Every myth is a battle, a hunt hidden behind mystic symbols, hate in love, power in conflict — the meat and drink of the True Fae, who survive by creating a theater of legends, supplying the players and props, but battling for command of the script. This myth-play is the Game of Immortals.

For our purposes, the Game of Immortals is a real game: a storytelling game where you play the Fae and create their Legends. It's an unconventional roleplaying game and doesn't use the World of Darkness Storytelling System, though you can use it as a "metagame" layer on top of your standard **Changeling** game.

To play, you need 10-sided dice, paper, pencils and at least three players.

### SETUP

Everyone in the Game of Immortals portrays a True Fae. There's no Storyteller role — or rather, everyone's a Storyteller.

To create one of the Gentry, choose a Name and one or more Titles. The number of Titles is a measure of the Fae's power. It also determines the length of a Game of Immortals story cycle, so you'll need to decide how many Titles each Fae begins with. Consider these methods:

**Fair Play:** Each faerie starts with the same number of Titles. We recommend a minimum of two and a maximum of five. At one Title, the Other is very fragile. At six, he's extraordinarily powerful; perhaps even an aspect of the Wyrd instead of a free-willed being. In the default rules, six titles is a victory condition called Wyrd Transcendence; the faerie departs play.

**Pitiless Play:** Not every player gets the same number of Titles. Roll a dice and divide the result in half, rounding up. Treat a 1 as 2 and a 5 as 4. The result determines how many Titles each player starts with, biased toward two and four. This might seem unfair, but Others with fewer Titles have a stronger chance of winning new ones thanks to the rules for Spiteful Legends.

### WIDDERSHINS TITLES AND FEUD-PROMISES

A faerie's soul is a Name in Arcadia: an oath to exert his will on the Wyrd and separate himself from pure

chaos. Each player chooses his True Fae's Name, but the player to his left chooses his Titles for him. Move widdershins (counter-clockwise), each player adding a Title, skipping the player of the Fae being born, until all the Titles have been selected.

This is a game convenience, but some say the Gentry are born in clusters. Bound by strange fate, they name themselves and then define the crèche cosmos of their early days. They see their brethren and give them form and Title with willful words.

Widdershins Titles provide an initial challenge, since each player must make do with the Titles they're given, but they also supply the initial web of obligations. The Title-giver holds a Feud-Promise over the beneficiary's Titles, even if another Fae takes them away. The Other created the Title so she has the right to take it away, if she's willing to fight for it with a Legend. A Feud-Promise is the right

### *Cathbound Rules*

The Gentry live and "die" by their vows. The Game of Immortals is a form of cultured story-warfare that can include many, many rules — the ones listed in this section are only a start.

Any player may propose additional rules. To adopt them, the Fae (that is, the players) swear an oath to make them official. For instance, if you want to vote on a story's success or failure, you'd make a pact to follow this rule. Once it's been defined (loopholes and all) and sealed with an oath, the rule becomes as official as any other. Not every player needs to ratify a rule, but players who don't agree to them aren't bound by them either.

Chapter Two's discussion of the True Fae lists two types of oaths you can use to give disobedience mechanical consequences. You can add rules as Titlebound or Namebound promises, with the usual consequences. Lost Titles and Names go to the cheated party, the person mandated by the oath itself or if all else fails, are distributed to the remaining Fae at random.



to Legend-duel for a Title. It's transferable. If a faerie takes it from the original owner, the Title's Feud-Promise owner can still hunt it down. A Fae can spend an Indulgence (see below) so seize a Title's Feud-Promise. The original Promise-holder loses his claim.

## CALLING DOWN THE IMMORTAL BREATH

The object of the Game of Immortals is to devour — steal — your rival's Title (and eventually, his Name) by telling a story: a Legend. Each side manifests their Titles as Actors, Props, Realms or a pack of Wisps. Together, these manifestations are the heart of the Legend. A tale of two Actors could be a duel or romance, while an Actor and Realm Legend might be about traveling through hard country.

You may challenge a Fae for any Title you hold a Feud-Promise over, or for the Name of a Fae with no Titles left.

### CHALLENGE AND ANSWER

The challenger begins by stating the Title she wishes to use, by saying, "This is the Legend of..." and incorporating her Title and the Title she hopes to devour. This is a very simple statement and does not describe the action to come outside of naming the Titles themselves.

**Example:** *This is the Legend of the Burning Rune and the High Gates of Steel.*

The challenged party responds with an outline of the Legend to come. He selects the manifestations used by both parties. The challenged Fae can't state the outcome of the Legend, but only the central conflict.

**Example:** *This is a Legend of the Actor, the Sage of the Burning Rune, and how he used his lore to try and break the Realm of the High Gates of Steel.*

Begin with any player you like. Once the Legend is done, move to that player's right, proceeding clockwise through the game.

### THE WYRD ORACLE: STYLE AND STAKES

The challenged Fae casts the Wyrd Oracle to learn the Legend's style. The Wyrd is half chaos, half as rigid as a prophesied doom. The challenged Fae might cook dinosaur bones and read the cracks, build a world and see patterns in the destinies of species, or simply stare into the uttermost madness of Arcadia.

Whatever the method, the player simulates it by rolling dice. This procedure is not the usual method used in the Storytelling System. First, roll one dice: this is the challenged Fae's Name Dice. Note the result. Next, roll a number of dice equal to the challenged Fae's Titles. Appropri-

ately enough, these are called Title Dice. Note the numbers on these dice as well. You are *not* looking for successes, but the actual numbers rolled on each 10-sided dice.

The results determine the Legend's style, as follows:

- If the Name Dice has the highest number among all dice rolled, the Legend has a **Spiteful** style. If the challenged Fae only has his Name Dice left, the result is always Spiteful.

- If the Name Dice is lower than one of the Title dice, a **Glorious** Legend plays out.

- If the Name Dice roll is the highest of all rolled save for other dice results that *match it* (example rolling 8 on the Name Dice, then 8, 4 and 2 on Title Dice) an **Unbound** Legend unfolds.

The style determines the stakes: how a victory or loss will affect each party. It also provides a suggested mood, but this isn't a hard and fast rule. The conditions for each style are:

**Glorious:** Glorious Legends are straightforward affairs. The warring Fae (and the players) narrate affairs, using their manifestations to bring the Legend to life. If the challenger wins, she devours the opponent's Title, adding it to her own, or earns an Indulgence — her choice. If she loses, the challenged Fae wins the challenger's Title.

**Spiteful:** Spiteful Legends are tragedies and cynical comedies where characters are rewarded for their sins and punished for their virtues. If the challenger wins she gains nothing, but if she loses, the challenged Fae wins the challenger's Title or earns an Indulgence — his choice.

**Unbound:** Unbound Legends don't come to definitive conclusions. They leave room for sequels and twisted retellings. If the challenger wins, she doesn't take her rival's Title, but wins an Indulgence. If she loses, the challenged Fae wins the challenger's Title.

### INDULGENCES

The Wyrd favors artful Legends — it grants Indulgences as a reward. These give Gentry the power to claim new Titles or transform a Legend's style. Write down a running tally of Indulgences or use tokens. You can spend one of these on the following:

- Transform a Spiteful Legend to a Glorious one after the challenged Fae casts a Wyrd Oracle.

- Seize a Feud-Promise over a Title of your choosing.

### THE RULES OF MANIFESTATION

Each Title's manifestation (as chosen by the challenged Fae) guides the Legend's telling. It lays specific storytelling rules for the players. You must abide by the rules of your Title's manifestation. These are:

**Actor:** Tell the story in the first person, taking the role of the Actor-protagonist.



**Prop:** Tell the story from the perspective of the Prop. You may only describe the events that take place immediately around it and you can't tell a story where the Prop acts without being given some external command, though you may invent a character to give them.

**Realm:** Tell the story in the present tense. Part of it must take place within the Realm itself. Realms are as aloof as they are timeless, so you may not describe the inner motives or thoughts of anyone in the Legend, either.

**Wisp:** You must include a conflict within the ranks of her Wisp pack and resolve this in addition to the Legend's larger conflict.

## THE CAULDRON OF LEGENDS

After determining the Legend's Titles, manifestations, style and stakes, it's time to tell its story. This is a three-step process.

### CHALLENGE

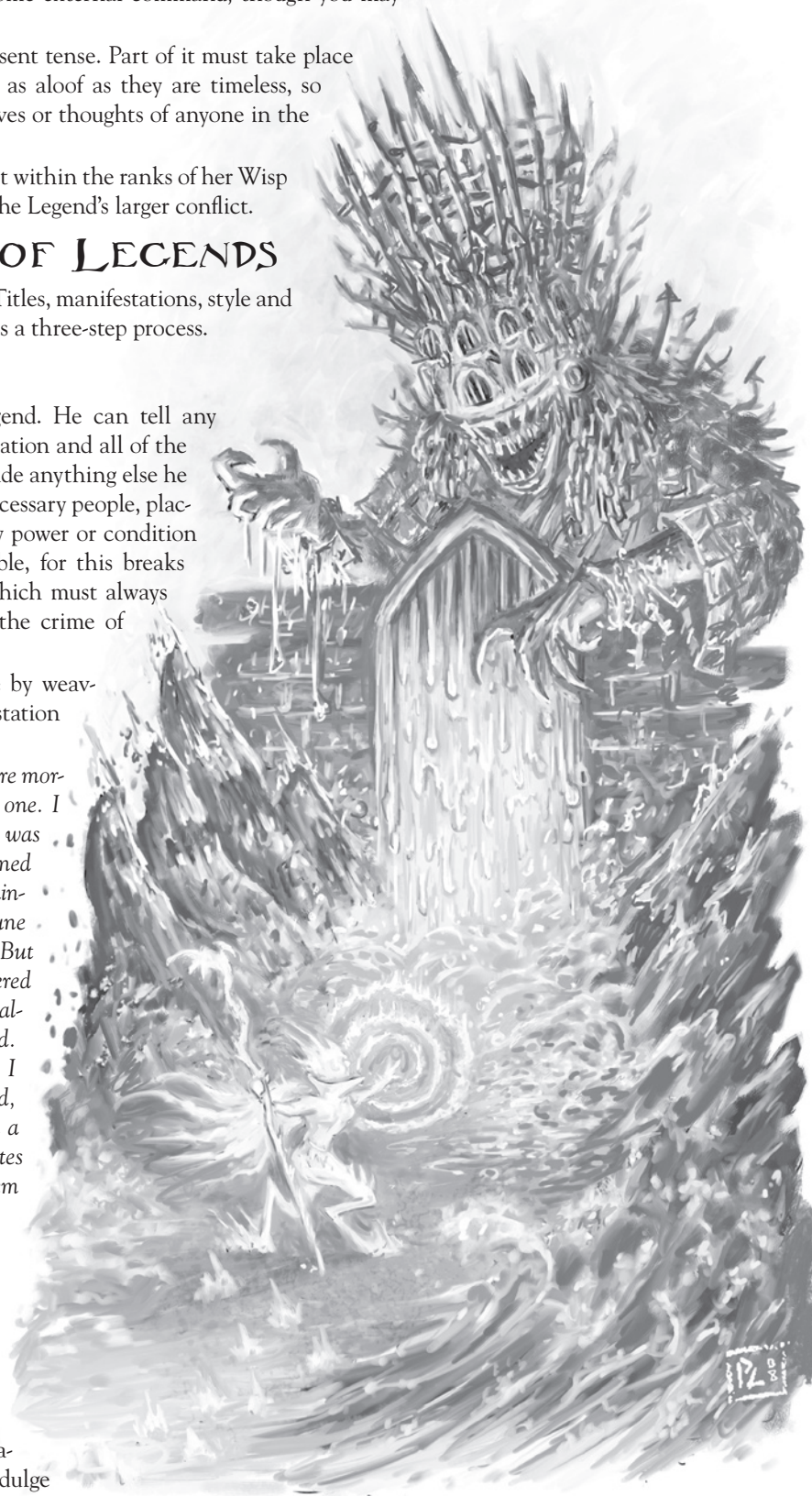
The challenger begins the Legend. He can tell any story that includes his Title manifestation and all of the strictures that includes. He may include anything else he wishes — the Wyrd creates all the necessary people, places and objects. He can't describe any power or condition that would be completely unstoppable, for this breaks the oaths of Title manifestations, which must always be finite. Violating this promise is the crime of Form-Twisting.

The challenger ends this phase by weaving the challenged Fae's Title manifestation into his narrative.

**Example:** *I remember the age before mortal histories, when all dominions were one. I was a young man then but my soul was old, culled from another Cycle. I learned quickly, progressing to the final attainment of the old Art: the Burning Rune that destroys obstacles with holy fire. But a thing untested is unknown. I wandered that world to try the Rune against all challenges. Stone melted. Heartwood burned. Golems of Adamant cracked when I drew the Rune on them. Liars confessed, too afraid of its brightness to maintain a psychic wall of falsity. But the High Gates remained. I traversed the sea to find them and force my way through.*

### OBSTACLE

The challenged player narrates an obstacle: something that would keep the challenger from reaching his desired story goal. The challenged player incorporates her Title. She obeys the rules of its manifestation. Like the challenger, she can't indulge in Form-Twisting, nor contradict any state-





ment the challenger makes. If she violates the latter rule, she commits the crime of World-Breaking.

If both sides feature characters who can speak with each other (such as two Actors, or Wisps and Realm denizens who might converse) you may use this phase for dialogue. Each challenger portrays a character, but the challenged player has the last word and may invoke it at will.

**Example:** *The Sage crosses the dream-sea. He breaks the waves by writing his Rune on them and walks across the ocean floor. He breaks the cliffs on shore and passes between them. But the High Gates of Steel watch the brother-world Earth and learn the lore of heat and how mortals make fire a home for their demons. The High Gates melt at the story. The Sage arrives to red liquid metal. His Rune heats it but merely turns it white. It flows like a river turned on its side, molten metal giving way like a wave, to be replaced by the steel beside it, always providing a barrier, filling the gap like water falling into a bowl.*

## RESOLUTION

Now, the challenger completes the Legend. His story must overcome the challenger's obstacle and invoke his own Title. As before, Form-Twisting and World-Breaking are forbidden.

**Example:** *The Gates were a metal river. Even turning one part into primordial steam meant nothing, because more of it would only flow into place. But if it flowed like a river, it would move like one, slithering along the ground. I burned a furrow before it, so that it might flow in. When that succeeded, I wrote the Rune again and again until it reached the sea, and the Gates followed until they struck water. The sky went pale with steam. The molten wall turned to hard, mottled metal as it cooled. I used fire to bring it to water, and at the line between land and sea, I found the door: a brittle flaw built by fast cooling. I knocked three times and it shattered open for me. I stepped through. I had used fire to conquer fire and at last, mastered the Burning Rune.*

## CONSEQUENCES

If a duelist disobeys his manifestation's storytelling guidelines, he violates the oaths he used to build the Legend. The first faerie to misstep loses. Surrender, excessive pausing and other situations also affect the outcome.

## FORMS OF OATHBREAKING

These penalties arise whenever a player breaks the rules of narration. These are Fae rules of engagement, sanctified by oath and can't be ignored without consequences.

**Form-Twisting:** The duelist invokes an inherent unconquerable situation. This is either too broad ("God opposes you") or has some infinite characteristic ("The wall is as tall as the universe"). Players who aren't enacting a Legend can recognize a Form-Twisting incident and call for a vote. The majority decides whether Form-Twisting has occurred. If it has, the offender loses the Legend.

## Storytelling or Storytelling

You can always use the Game of Immortals to inspire standard Changeling games. Instead of creating the Legend with pure description, combine the setup with the rules in Chapter Two to plan your game session. If you do this, you don't have to worry about Title narration rules or the laws against Form-Twisting and World-Breaking. The normal True Fae rules are sufficient. This can add a meta-narrative layer to the game that influences your chronicle. If you set the action on Earth, the Fae can't create surroundings to support the story (or can they?), but you can easily involve changelings in their plots.

If you choose this option, Legend-duelists might compete using normal game systems. A third player takes the Storyteller's role, moderating the contest. Is the Storyteller a figure of convenience for the sake of the game or a True Fae in Arcadia, taking the role to judge her peers? The answer is yours to decide, but assume that Fae Storytellers swear a Namebound oath to treat both parties fairly.

**Profaning the Title:** The duelist loses when he breaks the narration rules for his current manifestation.

**World-Breaking:** The duelist loses when she contradicts anything her opponent established in the story.

## FORMS OF SURRENDER

These are the forms and consequences of withdrawing from Legend contests.

**Accession:** A True Fae may surrender at any time. Regardless of the Legend's style, he loses his Title to the opponent.

**Flight:** The True Fae flees Arcadia for Earth, the Hedge or another alien place. She loses nothing, but may not continue play.

**Dwindling:** The faerie gives up her turn, so she dwindles instead of playing at a Legend. She loses a Title of her choice automatically (or her Name, if she's out of Titles — this destroys her) but no other Fae wins it from her. A faerie might also dwindle because she doesn't hold a Feud-Promise over any Titles and thus, can't initiate a Legend.

## INVADING THE DREAD GAP

True Fae fear the Dread Gap: the moment where a Legend hangs silently above the maw of the Wyrld, without progressing. This is the equivalent of a mortal suffering a loss for words, but in the Gentry's case, entire worlds grind to a halt and weaken. Invaders seize these opportunities because at these moments, an Other's Title loses its customary protections. An invader



can wrest control long enough to steal her victim's victory, or sacrifice his Title in lieu of risking her own.

If the player stammers or doesn't speak when it's his turn to contribute to the Legend, a player who isn't part of the duel can invade through this hole in the story. The player rolls a dice and announces the result. She does this over and over again, adding each result to the last, until the final number is 20 or higher. This is a countdown for the frozen duelist. (It's bad form to count up the numbers overly fast or loudly.)

If the incoherent player doesn't recover by the time the would-be invader reaches 20 points or more, she worms through the Dread Gap in his Legend.

Thereafter, the invader continues in the victim's role, playing out the rest of the Legend. He uses his victim's manifestation to play it out. If the invader wins, he gets the usual boons, but if he loses, he may substitute the victim's Title for his own. If the Prince of Hollow Reeds invades a Legend through a Dread Gap caused by the Five Cats Witch in her battle with the Panderer with Blue Nails, he either wins the prize determined by the Legend's style, or the Witch loses her Title. The Prince risks nothing.

## DEVOURING THE NAME

A Fae who has nothing left but her Name must manifest as an Actor. If challenged, she always invokes a Spiteful Legend, but the challenger may spend a Wyrd Indulgence

to counter this. She may use any single Title to narrate her part of the Legend, but in truth, she bids her name. If she would lose a Title to her enemy, she loses her Name instead. Her opponent devours the last of her. He may use that energy to create a new Title, but another player defines it for him and thus, gains the right to challenge him for it.

## THE END

The game ends whenever you want it to, or when all of the Gentry attain one of the following states:

**Devoured or Dwindled:** Enemies eat the Fae's name, or she dwindles into incoherent chaos because she can't or won't forge Legends.

**Exile:** The Fae leaves Arcadia to save herself from destruction.

**Wyrd Transcendence:** The Fae accumulates enough Titles to evolve into something more than even an Old God. The Fae aren't sure of their ultimate fate but their instincts drive them to this "higher" state. By default, this happens at six Titles. You can set higher numbers to prolong game play.

## VICTORY

The Fae who attains Wyrd Transcendence first, or survives the longest is the winner. Thus do the immortals play at myth, to see what lies beneath the outer veils of Faerie.





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