SWORDS AT DAWN™

CHANGELING
THE LOST

Exploits of Darkness

I am a blind child.
I am the end of blindness.

My life is measured in minutes.
I am old as the world.

I am the death of dreams.
I am the birth of hope.

Name me.

— The Glass Hangman's Riddle

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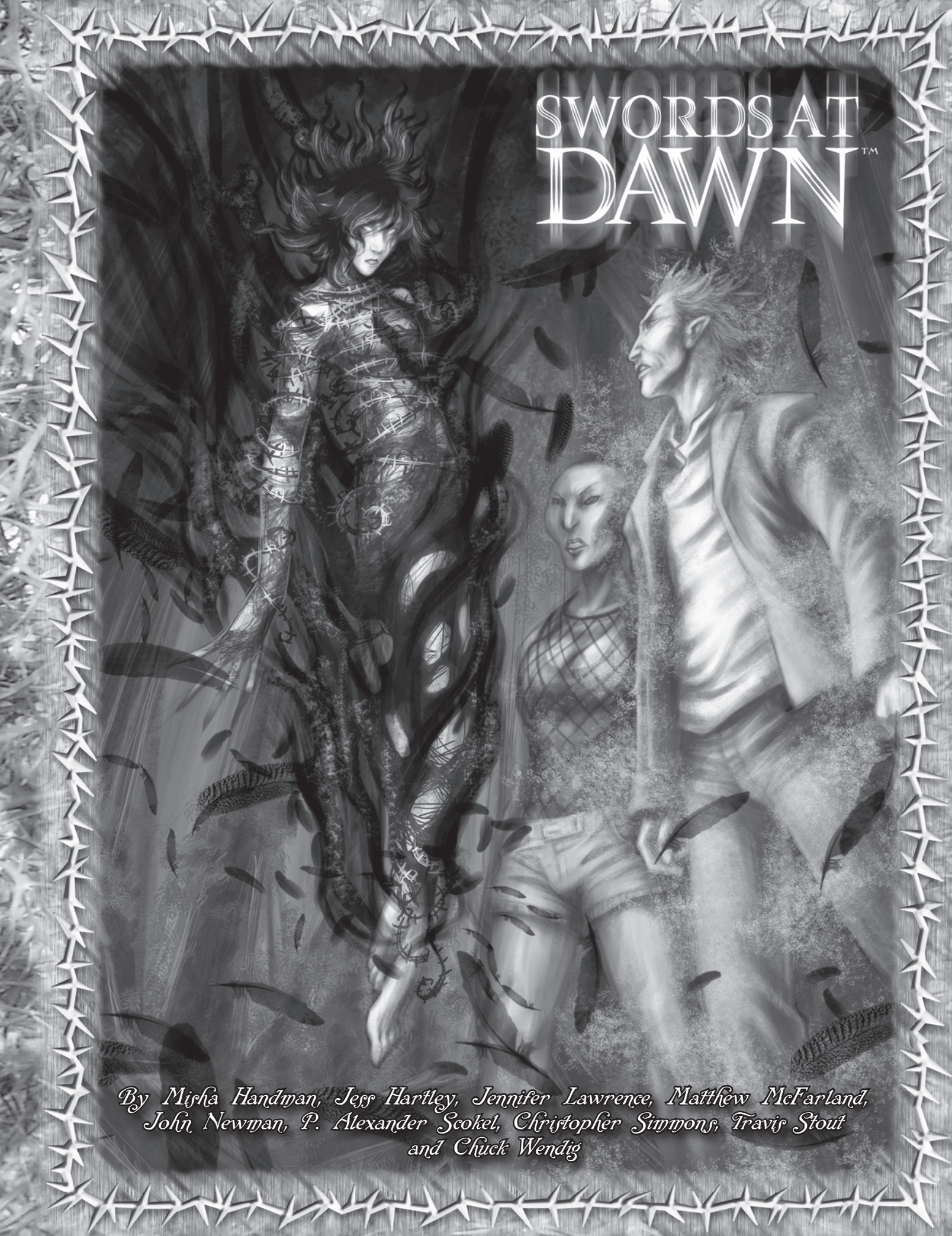
CHANGELING™ THE LOST



By Misha Handman, Jess Hartley, Jennifer Lawrence, Matthew McFarland, John Newman, P. Alexander Scokel, Christopher Simmons, Travis Stout and Chuck Wendig

Red Sky at Morning

"That's how you feel about it?" she asks. I nod, sending dust motes spinning about me in the twilight of the warm October evening. All along the beachfront the neon is beginning to burn with anticipation of the night. I can almost taste the Glamour beginning to permeate the air. It tastes stale, like a sneeze, and I add that to the long list of bad omens I've racked up over the last few weeks.

I've been seeing them everywhere. It started shortly after the equinox, with a dream, a nightmare of sorts, if only in the sense that I didn't have control over it. I felt it from the moment I fell asleep, and before I knew it I was being whisked away through wet darkness, as if submerged in an underground river or caught in a late-night undertow off Miami Beach. I summoned the wherewithal to build a raft for myself, out of foam, darkness and dreamstuff, and hauled myself onto it, coughing saltwater from my lungs. I may have lived in Miami for the last 20 years, but I've never been much of a swimmer. I glanced up at the stars, and it only took an instant to read the lines between them, the correspondences and the conjunctions.

Everything screamed death and change. Since then I've seen it everywhere, nestled in the rainbow twists of oil in parking lot puddles, between the strains of the Spanish songs lilting from cars in Little Havana, written in the graffiti code that keeps popping up under the overpasses. When you can walk unseen, you get to see a lot of the city, and the whole damn thing is crying one word: cataclysm.

I bought a new tarot deck from a shop in Little Haiti, partly as an experiment, partly out of curiosity. I set it in the Hedge for a few days, just slid it under the Thorns without opening it. It was still there when I came back for it. So I popped it open. Thing was, every card inside was the Tower, the Hanged Man, the World or Death. The same four cards, over and over.

And then there were the stories. Nobody but my motley knew the details, but word had gotten around that Sextus, a knight of Spring, died fighting the Gentry. Everyone had an opinion on it. Some claimed that it spoke volumes: that Thorne's people were willing to take up arms against the Fae while Grandfather Thunder sat comfortably ensconced on his throne, ineffectual at everything except gathering and maintaining power. Others were spooked, sure Thorne was planning some move against Eternal Summer. Word was a few of the Vichy Lost in Miami Beach had skipped town; some said they were flocking to Thorne's banner out in the Everglades, others that they knew something no one else did and were getting out before the shit hit the fan. A few claimed that they hadn't left at all, that they'd been *taken*, snatched up from bedrooms and boardwalks and hauled back into the depths of Arcadia.

Then there was Sleet. The Winter King was on the warpath, his whole Court gone to ground after Ivan, Grandfather Thunder's favored enforcer, apparently murdered one of Sleet's lieutenants. Three Summer Courtiers, each a more staunch ally of Thunder than the last, had been assassinated in as many weeks. Nobody had claimed credit, but everyone suspected Sleet's bony hands held the knives.

So when Amy came looking for me this morning, I knew it was just the most recent in the long string of bad omens.

"Hey," she said, sauntering towards me like she does, that predator's walk, confident yet guarded. I was sitting outside the Calder Library, near the hospital. I'd borrowed a copy of the DSM-IV and a book on synesthesia, more out of curiosity than anything else, and was thumbing through the latter. I was

wearing a tweed jacket, hardly appropriate for the weather, and when she approached, wreathed in the heat of the Summer, I could feel the beads of sweat break out across my brow. I considered shrugging off the jacket, but she'd see that as weakness. She nodded at the books.

"I didn't realize you could check out books at the medical library." She was wearing a one-piece bathing suit, something sleek and hard that reduced her curves to an aquadynamic simplicity, with a fishnet tank-top and a pair of shorts. The suit was by far the most expensive thing on her, more so even than her running shoes. Everything but the swimsuit looked disposable, like she was willing to shed it in a heartbeat to get into the water.

"I didn't exactly check them out," I answered, my voice raw and strained. I winced slightly. I can't stand the way I sound anymore. It feels like someone dragging sandpaper across my eardrums. She nodded again and sat down beside me, sending dust swirling away in every direction. She smelled slightly of the saltiness of the ocean and the bitterness of human sweat.

"We must look like quite the odd couple," she said with a grin. "The barely-dressed bald-headed teen and the professor at least 20 years her senior."

"A Woody Allen film for the new millennium," I answered. She chuckled then abruptly switched gears.

"You doing anything?" I glanced down at the open book, then back to her eyes. "I mean, are you busy?" I shook my head. "You should come with me then." I raised an eyebrow. She leaned in close, glancing once to either side. Then she whispered: "Naamah wants to talk to you." This got both of my eyebrows.

"She's sending me messages through *you*?" I asked. Amy shrugged in response.

"She seems to think you're less accessible these days, since you joined up with, well, you know." I nodded. She meant the Office of the Vizieral Council, a group of occultists dedicated to two things: the study of fae magic and the neutral assistance of governance. While my Queen would hardly take offense at the former, the latter meant that I spent more time in Thunder's Court than she found entirely comfortable for someone as bound to Autumn as myself.

The arrangement was hardly ideal, and had I had the choice, I probably would never have accepted the Office's offer of membership. But the Office also offers clarity, and since Sextus died, I've felt a little… off-kilter. I needed something, anything, to ground myself. It worked. Or it has so far, anyway.

"So she picked a member of *his* Court?" I asked. She flicked both dark eyebrows up for an instant and shrugged.

"I owe her," she answered. I closed the book, and a cloud of dust erupted from the cover.

"Then let's go."

Cerastes sauntered up to Amy and I when we reached the old Coral Gables home Naamah's people are using as a staging area for whatever they have planned. He grinned at me, greeted me with a pass phrase meant to remind me that I'm being watched, and escorted Amy off, leaving me to find my own way to Naamah. I glanced about the inside of the home, all wood paneling, peeling white paint and layers of dust and cobwebs. The very essence of the Court was meant to be off-putting. It was an easy trick to see through, and I easily followed the faint scent of the Wyrd to the room where the Autumn Queen awaited me.

She, on the other hand, was a bit of a surprise. I hadn't realized how long it had been since I'd seen her. She seemed older, more mature. Her Mantle had come in, and, unless I was mistaken, I could even make out the beginnings of a phantom crown of harvest wheat just above her brow. Her body, on the other hand, looked much the same as it did the day she took the throne: tall, willowy, skin so white as to outshine the moon and hair so dark as to swallow stars.

"Vizier Linus," she greeted me calmly, with only a hint of warmth. "Welcome home." I bowed slightly.

"My Queen."

"Am I?" she asked, that barb coming sooner than I expected. I rubbed my chin, ignoring the dust that took flight from my stubble. There were only two others in the room, an old man with pale white eyes, restricted to a wheelchair, and his minder, a middle-aged man. The pair shared similar Mediterranean features with high, broad foreheads and deep-set eyes. The older man's milky irises seemed focused on a chess set that rested in his lap. It didn't *seem* like much of a set-up.

"Of course, Queen. My office requires that I attend to the freehold ruler, but never at the cost of my loyalty to you."

"The same loyalty you showed Tom Hood?" she asked, a black eyebrow delicately raised, examining me with those featureless white eyes.

"That was different," I practically growled, sitting forward slightly. The middle-aged Italian man glanced down at his elderly charge. I frowned at the pair, and then I shifted my attention back to Naamah. "I mean, I was never anything but loyal to King Hood."

"You were nowhere to be found when they came for him. A funny kind of loyalty, that."

"I saw which way the wind was blowing, and I went to ground," I answered, trying to recall the quickest way to the exit, in case I had to bolt. "Can you blame me? It's in my nature." She held me with her gaze, her lips parting slightly, as if a rejoinder rested just behind them, eager to escape. But then her lips tightened.

"And which way do you see the wind blowing now, Vizier?"

"Excuse me?" I croaked, blinking.

"My people say you've been canvassing the city. Every day, back and forth. Popping up in the strangest places." I shook my head. "So you claim you haven't noticed?"

"Noticed?"

"The way the Glamour tastes."

"Same as usual. Maybe a little bland." That wasn't the answer she expected.

"Bland? Did you choose the wrong Court, Vizier?"

"How should it taste, my Queen?" I asked, trying to sound respectful, beginning to wonder if the change I'd sensed in Naamah was less maturity than madness.

"Like fear, Linus, like fear. The whole of Miami quakes in terror."

"Does it?" I asked, earning a glare from the Queen. "I've sensed a lot of fear, but it's been freehold fear. The pure mortals aren't spooked. At least no more than usual." She shook her head, exasperated.

"I don't have time to mince words," she said. "I asked you here because I assumed that there was still some small part of you that held a connection to the Ashen Mirror." I held up my hand, where the dust of my Mantle had settled like a thin blanket. I blew it off, and the cloud wrapped about me, motes spinning in the still air. "Something human. Beyond the magic." I nodded.

"I'm listening."

"My companions here," she gestured to the two Italian men, "have been advising me. We've been preparing for war since before your motley went jaunting off to Faerie."

"War?" I glanced at the old man, and the Wyrd twisted within me. I looked back to Naamah. "You trust these men?"

"These men are responsible for every success we've claimed so far." My eyes widened.

"He riled up Sleet's people," I muttered. "Spooked the Vichy." I didn't need either of them to confirm it. The Wyrd had snaked its way into my mind, and Glamour, burning behind my pupils, parted the veils of mystery and lay bare all before me. I stood up.

"Aren't you taking a bit of a risk, telling me this?" Naamah shrugged slightly, looking up at me.

"If you're with us, you're with us. If not… well, we haven't left you enough time to betray us."

"I see," I muttered, nodding. "I'll… be in touch." As I turned to go, I marveled at the shortness of the interview and the clockwork efficiency of impending doom.

"That's how you feel about it?" Amy asks me that evening, after I've told her I think the war's going to be a disaster, that many, many Lost are going to die. I explained to her what I saw in the old man, that he was an Oracle, like myself, but that he had bent his gift toward vengeance. That he and his *fetch* lackey were playing Naamah as part of some old vendetta. I nod.

"That, and I can't betray Thunder. It's part of my oath of office." She shakes her head.

"You can't betray the *ruler*. It's almost Halloween, Linus. Naamah's the rightful ruler."

"I'm not sure it works that way."

"Are you sure it doesn't?" I narrow my eyes, then shake my head. "Well, then you need to man the fuck up and help us out."

"Why are you—" I am about to ask her why she's involved in a revolution against her own Court's ruler, when, with a rush of stolen emotions, the pieces fall into place. "You blame him."

"Of course I blame him," she spits. "The whole season thing, the way it works, it's like that for a reason."

"You think that if he hadn't held the throne, that… *it*… wouldn't have come back for you?"

"It might've come back for me, but would it have *found* me?" she asks. "Or would we all be eating happy pie with Sextus right now, right this fucking moment?" I shake my head.

"I *can't* do this. Every reason is the wrong reason."

"Sometimes the right thing happens for the wrong reason."

"Not usually." I brush some dust from my sleeve. "Look, I can't go against the Office. I made a promise."

"Well, then, I guess you're fucked."

"How so?"

"I seem to remember you making a *promise* to support your motley in all things." I almost gasp at her words, invoking the motley pledge, catching me between two equally powerful oaths, twisting them and me in them. I swallow.

"You can't make a decision for *us*," I say, already knowing how this will play out.

"I can put it to a vote."

"You could, but you'd vote for, and I against. So it would be a tie."

"So we'll need a tiebreaker."

"You want to go find *her*?" I ask, the roughness of my voice doing nothing to mask my disbelief.

"Looks like we don't have a choice," she says, standing. "Let's go. Before it gets too dark."

"There's always a choice," I mutter hollowly as I fall in behind her.

Amy hasn't been back to the old Hollow since *it* took her from there, and I never really made a habit of spending time there, but neither of us has any trouble remembering the way. The island, bordered by a tall wall of twisted mangroves, juts from the water like some drowning animal forever frozen in time. The simile seems particularly apt tonight; the marshy Hedge water has frozen solid in a ring about our old meeting ground. Amy prods heavily at the ice with her pole. It reverberates with a series of resounding thuds.

"Thick enough to walk on," she says evenly as she sets the pole down on the raft made of Hedgewood and Glamour. She rubs her bare arms, and I notice the goosebumps rising across her flesh. "Come on. Let's get this over with."

"Walk on that?" I ask. I hadn't even stood on the raft. She rolls her eyes.

"I'll save you if you fall in," she grunts. "I promise."

"If the blackgators don't get me first," I mutter.

"It's too damn cold for blackgators," she says. "Too damn cold for Miami." I tentatively ease my less-than-substantial weight onto the thick sheet of ice. My breath hangs in the air. Thick frost draws my eyes from where it encases a tangled series of thorny vines hanging from a tree like an arctic weeping willow.

"Eternal Summer, indeed," I say. Amy rolls her eyes.

"I can't take you anywhere."

"Eh. Travel," I answer dismissively, as if tossing out the very word as so much garbage. My hand snakes out, bony fingers tightening about Amy's hard forearm. "Wait."

"What?" I nod at the Hollow. Between the frozen thorns we see nothing but darkness.

"It's going to be dark in there," I mutter.

"Yeah? It's *night*."

"*Real* dark." I draw a cigarette case from an inner coat pocket, shake it for a moment, and unclasp it. Within are the folded bodies of several dead spiders. Her face contorts, her nostrils flare slightly.

"Gross. How old are those?"

"Not too," I mutter. My mind is on other things, on the season as it exists and as it should exist but doesn't. I pop the spider into my mouth and swallow. A warm calm burns down my throat, into my stomach, like the feeling one gets when he suddenly notices the trees have begun to change, their inchoate greenness broken into reds, yellows, pinks and browns. I try to spread the warmth, to pass it to Amy. She takes a step from me, and I realize that my dusty aura is spreading to encompass her. *The spider's enough for you*, the season seems to say, *but for her I need more*.

"It's okay," I say quietly, half to myself, half to Amy. Her fear of me twists outwards from her, catches in my nostrils, and for a moment I want to lose myself in it, to revel in it, but then I press it aside and pull out an older fear, the fear of a young couple I approached on the Metro. I offer it up to the Wyrd and feel it spread about me. The dust enshrouds Amy, her eyes wide, and then it falls lightly upon her shoulders.

"What the hell did you just do?" she growls, flashing her triangular teeth at me. It's a threat, one that would usually give me pause. But for now I'm beyond fear.

"You scared?" I ask her.

"Of you?" she asks, her voice contemptuous in reflex. Then her eyes widen. She's realizing that she's not. That she always has been, at least a little bit, but that the fear has passed. "No."

"Good," I reply before gingerly creeping across the ice.

Amy rubs her hands together, blowing on them lightly, as we slip between the contorted mangroves. The darkness within seems solid, wet, colder than any earthly darkness. It's the darkness of the dungeons of Faerie, where Sextus laid down his life to help bring Amy home. I can almost hear the muffled footsteps of the Patriarch of Unhallowed Silences padding towards us across the frozen ground. A gnawing fear tries to bubble up within my stomach. I glance at Amy, her features only barely visible in the guttering lamplight. My wards hold, however, protecting us.

"Are you going to try to out-fear *me*, Erica?" I ask aloud.

"Go away," Erica answers, her voice at our shoulders. Amy twists about, searching the darkness for our companion. I don't budge.

"I'm no pliant hob," I say. "We have motley business. Come hear us out and we'll leave."

For a moment nothing happens. Then the darkness begins to shift, to break like a fog. The neon glow that so characterizes the Miami Hedge reappears, outlining the closely entwined trees around us.

"Christ," Amy mutters when Erica appears. The rail-thin changeling, shod in a sleeve of tightly wound cobwebs, descends from the darkness above, her arms and torso wrapped in thick, thorn-covered vines. I wince slightly at the sight of her lacerated limbs as her bare feet come to a rest on the ground before us. Her icy Mantle whips up a biting wind that draws black feathers from the ground, hurling them about haphazardly. Like me, she has grown closer to her Court since we traveled to Arcadia. Since Sextus died. Just as I've nursed my fear, she has nursed her sorrow.

"What do you want?" she asks, her voice hard. I look to Amy.

"Motley vote," she says. "Whether or not to go to war against Grandfather Thunder and restore the seasonal procession. You're our tiebreaker." Erica looks at me, her deep black eyes slipping easily over my withered features.

"You voted no, I take it?"

"I feel," I say, "that things have been set into motion for the wrong reasons. I feel that our Queen has, uhm, *involved* herself with a fae who can't be trusted. A fae whose tactics are despicable. I feel that, given that of the three of us, only Amy wants to take part in this bloodshed, that the decision to do so should be left to the individual." I cough. "That the motley shouldn't mandate a stance to its members, one way or the other." Erica shifts her attention to Amy.

"And you?"

"Thunder's ruled for too damn long. It's time to turn back the clock. To put things to right. We *have* power. But we've just been sitting on it. Worried about ourselves. Absorbed. So what has to happen to make us see that what Thunder's doing is wrong? Who else has to be kidnapped by the Others? Who else has to die?" Amy's intensity pales in comparison to Erica's coldness, but between the two of them, a warm understanding seems to grow before my eyes. Erica looks back to me, and, despite my wards, I feel a cold knot growing in my gut. A tension seems to leave her body, and, as she relaxes, the vines that held her aloft loosen and slip away into the branches above. She rubs her arms absently, smearing dark blood across her pale skin.

"I'm sorry, Linus," she says, her voice little more than a whisper on a winter wind. "We've let this madness be for too long." I let out a sigh, deflated.

"Everything will change," I say. Erica nods.

"Did you really want it to stay this way forever?"

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DANCERS IN THE DUSK

SWORDS AT DAWN

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SWORDS AT DAWN™

Table of Contents

Prologue:
Red Sky at Morning
2

Introduction
10

Chapter One:
Duels at Dawn
12

Chapter Two:
The Loom of Fate
58

Chapter Three:
Things of Legend
94

Chapter Four:
The Coming Dawn
120

Introduction

Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.
—William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

Dawn. It's two things at once. It's the beginning of the day — and the end of the night. When the sun rises, the world transitions from darkness and rest, or at least rest for those who aren't nocturnal, to light and movement.

Some point to dawn as a poetic symbol of hope and renewal. As the new day begins, a symbolic wealth of possibilities opens up. Everything can be done afresh. It's a time for new beginnings. But again, everything has two edges to it.

Swords at Dawn is a book about both sides of these beginnings. When night changes to day, many possibilities stretch out ahead — some optimistic, some dangerous. Dawn may stand for renewal, but it's also when armies may make their first attack. When two people who cannot abide one another for one more day agree to a duel, dawn is the traditional hour. The brand new day a sunrise heralds may hold the possibility of being the last day of a person's life.

Similarly, renewal and change can be frightening. Consider the changes that sweep across a nation in rebellion, when one faction in power is on the brink of being cast down. This is doubly so for the Lost, whose tentative grasp on reality can be imperiled by sweeping changes. Too much alteration, too soon, and a breaking point is reached. The mad, ever-mercurial shifting of Faerie comes pouring through locked doors in the memory.

Yet sometimes, things just cannot remain the same. Each night must end, no matter what the next day might bring. The sun must rise, even if the darkness was comforting and cool.

Like Shifting Quicksilver

Change is an interesting subject when dealing with the fae. It both describes them perfectly and not at all. In most fairy tales, the Good Folk are creatures that are far more whimsical and treacherous than even humans. They levy terrible curses at the least slight, play heartless games for the fun of it all, and change their moods as rapidly as they change their faces. They're creatures of illusion, not bound to any one face or identity the way poor mortals are.

But at the same time, there's a certain predictability to fairies. Part of this is likely due to the format of the fairy tale itself: certain conventions simply explain themselves well to the audience. Three is a potent narrative number because the first object (say, the eldest sister) establishes a premise, the second object (the middle sister) reinforces the first premise and makes it a pattern, and the third is then able to break the pattern. But much of it is also due to the fact that fairy tales attempt to explain a world where not all rules are made by humans. Fairies are bound by rules that no human would labor under, and it's the wise mortal able to perceive and exploit those rules who triumphs.

In the context of **Changeling**, of course change is a worthy subject of exploration. Never mind the obvious nod in the very word "changeling" — every last one of the Lost has had their old lives torn away, remade, and potentially discarded forever. And that's just the prelude. How much further can a character go? What if her identity changes again, or her world is split apart in a new fashion? Will she change again with it, flowing mercurially into a new mold, or will she successfully stand against the shifting tides and retain the core of who she is?

It's certainly an interesting question. Here we're interested in exploring it.

How To Use This Book

Swords of Dawn is a companion volume to **Dancers in the Dusk** in some ways. Though the two books aren't a direct parallel, both address similar topics of

dreams and fate. But where **Dancers in the Dusk** addressed these from the perspective of a Storyteller and forces beyond a changeling's control, **Swords at Dawn** is about a more hands-on approach.

As previously stated, dawn can herald conflict. **Chapter One: Duels at Dawn** addresses this conflict, and how it might affect the lives of those Lost caught up in the bloody birth of a new day. Here you'll find information on large-scale conflict and Hedgefire wars, on the many traditions of dueling that exist among changeling society, and even of the magic that's used to survive such things.

Chapter Two: The Loom of Fate addresses the patterns of destiny, narrative or otherwise. **Changeling** is a game about modern fairy tales in some fashion, and here we present ways for the Lost to perceive the threads of fate that run through their stories, perhaps even altering them to change the outcome of their tales.

Chapter Three: Things of Legend brings relics of high Faerie and of dream into the chronicle. Here you'll find tokens so powerful they can alter the tales of those around them, and tools and magic for the aspiring oneiromancer.

And finally, **Chapter Four: The Coming Dawn** addresses dawn and change as themes in the most direct fashion. Advice and scenarios are provided for Storytellers who are interested in wreaking dangerous vicissitudes on a chronicle, from simple freehold conflicts to fundamental shifts in the world of the Lost. Of course, even changelings can prepare for these events to some extent. The Dawn Court stands at the forefront of these changes, even instigating them. Four Entitlements are also found here, each one preparing in some way for the inevitable truth that things simply won't be the same forever.

Happily Ever After?

It's a common refrain: "there are no happy endings, because nothing ever ends." And to some extent it's true, if a bit simplistically stated. Within the span of a changeling's life, few things will really and truly end. Even death may not be the end of a character's story. If he influenced other people, set things in motion, then perhaps his story goes on — or another story that would have died stillborn if not for his actions.

So it is for the changelings. They're inhabitants of fairy tales, but they aren't bound to have their stories end when Hans Christian Andersen would have chosen a stopping point. Their mortal nature gives them the freedom to keep going, for better or for worse. Maybe things will end — maybe they'll just change.

And isn't that what Storytelling is all about?

It felt like High Summer — the unseasonal heat hanging in the night air, the exhaust pouring up still hot from the dark asphalt and, of course, the anger. The city was full of it, and the city's Lost had been eating that wrath, digesting it.

Cassia felt it still churning in her belly as they sped through the streets. It was making her giddy. *Goddamn, I'm fucking sick of running*, she thought. *I'm sick of being afraid. I'm sick of being the rabbit to the Wild Hunt.* It was a litany she'd repeated to herself several times over the last few days. She saw it in the rest of the Winter Court, too, and she hadn't even thought anything unusual about it. Everyone was angry. Everyone wanted to fight.

She thumbed back the hammer on her sprightlock pistol, whispered a word to it, and fired another rounded ball of elfshot at the hungry car lapping at their fumes.

Eat this, you fucks, she hissed inside her head. *I'll make you work to chase me, and then I'll shoot out your damn eyes. That's the kind of fucking rabbit you're after.*

Some part of her, maybe, recognized that she'd changed. That everything had changed. That the Indian summer was more than just a fluctuation of weather.

But what use was it thinking about it? If there had been a change, it had already happened. The anger was now. The hunt was now. The war was now. And nothing felt more real.

Chapter 1
Duels at Dawn

"Can a magician kill a man by magic?" Lord Wellington asked Strange.
Strange frowned. He seemed to dislike the question.
"I suppose a magician might," he admitted, "but a gentleman never could."

—Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*

Hedgefire Wars

Since the first man realized he could take what the second man owned by force, war has been a part of existence. Inter-tribal conflicts over resources became struggles between city-states for control of the land became ideological crusades of nation against nation, and the only thing that evolved faster than the technology of war was the justification for one. And through it all, the Others watched, and absorbed, and learned.

Conflict is an inescapable part of a changeling's existence, both on the personal scale and on the larger scale of the freehold. From dealing with her fetch to finding her place in a Court to navigating the perils of the Hedge, no changeling lives an idle life after her escape from Faerie. Sometimes, those conflicts grow beyond one changeling or her motley's ability to resolve them, or beyond a courtier's words and the subtle politics of the Court. When that happens, when resentment boils over into hatred and some damn fool touches a spark to the powder keg, a Hedgefire war might sweep through the freehold.

"Hedgefire war" is a term common to freeholds throughout the Western world. It refers to a martial conflict among the fae of a particular freehold, usually (but not always) against each other, and on a larger scale than a duel or a squabble between two motleys. Hedgefire wars sometimes involve one or more Courts mobilizing soldiers directly, but more often are fought through cat's-paws and double-agents.

What does it mean when changelings go to war? Not the military conflict most people picture when they think of a war. Changelings don't have access to tanks, bombers, and military-grade infantry weapons (and even if they did, using them would draw *far* too much attention from far too many eyes). Even the most populous of freeholds is unlikely to have a *total* population equal to the size of a company, and once the battle lines are drawn each side likely has fewer men than a full-strength platoon (roughly 30 to 50 soldiers; for reference, the City of Endless Summer has approximately 175 subjects, with perhaps 25 more in Rose Thorne's exiled Spring Court).

Hedgefire wars resemble less the grand military engagements of mortal armies, like World War II or even the Gulf War and Iraq War, and more the gangland violence between rival criminal empires or the bloody coups that plague unstable third-world nations. They are small affairs notable for their speed and brutality: a typical Hedgefire war might last anywhere from a single day to a few weeks, usually ending with the death or dissolution of the losing faction. Formal battles with lines of engagement are rare —most "tactics" involve targets of opportunity, and the overall strategy is usually little better than "hit the other guy until he stops moving."

Casus Belli

The Courts go to war for a variety of reasons. With each other, they fight for personal gain, political change, or simple grudge. Against outsiders, they fight to defend the freehold, protect what they own, and hold the Others at bay. Individual motleys might escalate a conflict over perceived territory or a personal slight, or to advance their own station in the freehold. Casus belli, "cause for war," takes many forms.

Territory

Unlike some other denizens of the World of Darkness, changelings are not, as a rule, particularly territorial. They don't maintain feeding grounds like vampires or police a section of a neighborhood like werewolves, but they *do* need places to live and ways to provide for themselves. In some freeholds, a semi-feudal Court structure is broken down by geography into various manors pledged from the seasonal

monarch to lesser lords, who in turn receive Glamour, goods, and services from the weaker changelings who live there. In others, a powerful motley might lay claim to the Hedge-gates on the east side, charging a toll for their use. Sometimes this control is permanent, other times seasonal, but there are always those willing to use violence to take what others have.

Wars over territory are seldom about the physical territory itself, but about the resources it holds or can bring in. The Trident freehold, in Miami, suffered such a war in the mid-1960s, when La Llorona and her newly-formed Winter Court rose up against the Iron Spear and took the Liberty City neighborhood for its own. Not only did this give the Silent Arrow a stronghold to call home (a powerful psychological advantage), it gave the Court's members easy access to the emotions that provide Winter with its sweetest Glamour: despair, sorrow, hopelessness and loss. It also put La Llorona in a prime position to exert influence over the burgeoning drug trade perpetrated by mortal gangs.

Territorial wars are about *control*. No one fights a war over a Hollow where potent goblin fruits grow unless either someone controls the fruit and limits access to them, or else someone sees an untapped resource and decides that *he* wants to limit access to them. Control of a valuable resource, whether mundane or supernatural, is more than just survival: it's *power*, and power is the root of most territorial wars. Certainly, sometimes a war will break out because one group needs another's resources to survive, but the majority of them are about increasing one faction's (or even one individual's) political power.

Story Hooks: Territorial Wars

• **The Prince of Art and Beauty:** In Charlotte, the King of Spring grants the title Prince of Art and Beauty to one member of the freehold on the first day of the season. The Prince, in return for serving as a patron of artists, both mortal and fae, receives exclusive rights to draw Glamour from inhabitants of and visitors to the North Davidson arts district and the right to maintain and harvest the Hollows adjacent to that area. Usually, the other seasonal monarchs honor this appointment, but on the first day of the Autumn King's reign, having lost power and influence over the past year, the monarch has declared that he will be claiming the arts district under his sovereign authority. When the currently-titled Prince of Art and Beauty refuses to break his pledge and abdicate, the Autumn Court prepares to oust him by force.

• **Home Sweet Home:** A traveling motley of rough, tough sons of bitches has rolled into town, declaring allegiance to no Court or king. They kicked the shit out of a Summer motley up in the Heights, killed one and sent the rest running, and declared that anyone coming out of the Hedge in their territory would have to pay a toll. Since the Heights is where at least one trod that stretches all the way back to Arcadia lets out, the Summer King won't stand for this offense. When word comes down that the newcomers are catching newly-escaped changelings and returning them to their Keepers if they can't pay the toll, the Iron Spear goes forth in its full might.

• **A War of Ideas:** The usual rule in changeling society is "one city, one freehold." But when two cities grow so large that their urban sprawls merge into one huge metropolitan area, conflict sometimes arises between two freeholds. When the oppressive feudal society of one town's freehold runs headlong into the more egalitarian society of its neighbor, a conflict of ideals is inevitable — but when schemers on the side of the freemen begin agitating malcontents among their neighbor's citizenry to revolution, is it a war of ideals or an attempt to seize new territory in a destabilized regime?

Revolution

Rebellion. Regime change. Independence. When a freehold's members are no longer satisfied with the governance of the Courts, a revolution might break out. It might be driven by idealism and an effort to overthrow an oppressive monarchy, or it might be a coup d'état for reasons of personal ambition. Revolutions are perhaps the most intensely personal of Hedgefire wars, since when the battle lines are drawn they often divide friends, lovers, and motleys depending on allegiance. The tale of star-crossed lovers on opposite sides of a civil war is a classic tragedy trope among poets, mortal and changeling alike.

Although despots and the ruthlessly ambitious are every bit as common in changeling society as they are in any autocratic regime, actual revolution is comparatively rare. In a society where one's oath is often quite literally his bond, and among beings for whom sudden, jarring change is a dangerous, sanity-risking ordeal, the idea of overthrowing the Court often seems unthinkable. Even when changelings do choose to war against their lords, the sanctions levied by broken pledges of loyalty are enough to cripple any armed resistance. Nevertheless, when the situation becomes truly desperate and the alternative to rebellion is flat-out worse, a king can find himself cast down from the throne by the very people who swore to obey him.

Revolutions aren't restricted to the freehold, either. Miami simmers on a potential revolt against the City of Endless Summer to be sure, but should Rose Thorne's Spring faction

A Dictionary of Revolution

This section uses "revolution" to refer to any war fought for political reasons. In the interest of accuracy, a revolution is defined as a sudden change in the form of government or in the persons in power within a government. A rebellion is any act of disobedience against established authority (without necessarily desiring an overthrow of that authority), while a war for independence is, as the name suggests, a war to throw off the government and create an independent state (which may or may not involve the destruction of the original state). A coup d'état is the overthrow of a government by a branch of or a group within that government. Finally, a civil war is a war between citizens of the same nation, regardless of motivation.

Thus, Grandfather Thunder's coup in Miami began as a coup d'état that became a civil war (as Thunder threw out the seasonal Court of the Trident and established the City of Endless Summer), then quickly became both a rebellion and a counter-revolution (as the other Courts fought against Summer's authority and sought to restore the rotating monarchy. War is a complicated business.

ever be permitted to return to the city, it could well be war that decides who leads the Spring Court. Intra-Court civil wars are usually smaller and shorter than freehold conflicts, but also tend to be more vicious, as feelings of betrayal by a brother are far more personal than betrayal by a vassal.

Invasion

This is the one that every freehold fears. Internecine struggles and wars for independence are one thing, but when the hosts of Faerie come marching out of the Hedge, changelings must abandon their rivalries and stand together, lest they be dragged in chains back to Arcadia separately.

Sightings of the Others (or beings mistaken for the Others) within a freehold's borders are enough to spread panic through the Courts like wildfire and send the Knights of Summer running for their iron blades. The mere rumor of a Keeper's presence galvanizes the changeling inhabitants of a city with pure terror — and that's seldom more than a single member of the Gentry, perhaps with a hunting retinue. When the Hosts of Faerie marshal themselves and march forth from Arcadia, the legends say, entire cities go missing. Changeling lore is full of stories about the aftermath of Fae invasions: Pompeii; Machu Picchu; Roanoke Colony; and Iram of the Pillars. Skeptics say that talespinners will claim *any* lost city as the work of the Others, while the talespinners counter that that's exactly what the inhabitants of those missing cities said.

Story Hooks: Revolutions

- **Visions of Rebellion:** The Summer King is a wise, just ruler, whose punishments are harsh but fair. When a Winter Court oracle begins to see (or claim to see) visions telling her that the freehold will be overrun by the Gentry if the Summer King is not cast down before All Hallow's Eve, most of the freehold dismisses her as a madwoman or an agitator. But as Samhain night nears and changelings begin to go missing, the seer's words start to draw more attention. Is she telling the truth, or is she a cat's-paw for her ambitious Winter Queen — or worse yet, for the Gentry?

- **Winter is Coming:** When Stark Eddie came back from Faerie, he told the Winter Court that he'd met Winter in the Hedge. Winter had shown him the way home, and told him that when he got there, Stark Eddie was to rule in Winter's name. The Frost-King laughed at him and told him to be on his way, but Stark Eddie showed the king his power by blanketing the harbor with snow and breaking so many hearts that the suicide rate spiked to a 10-year high. Now Stark Eddie has an audience, and he's promising power to the angry young men of the Silent Arrow. Winter is coming, and there'll be blood on the snow.

- **The Mad King:** The King of the Leaden Mirror has lost his mind. Fear has turned to full-blown paranoia, and the oaths he demands of his vassals are ever more onerous and full of strong sanctions. Any who question his "wisdom" are branded heretics and loyalists, and are executed by impalement upon the Thorns. The leaders of the Courts counsel patience: even the cruelest season must pass, and Autumn will be over soon. Others, especially in the Summer Court, say that the king must be overthrown, and damn the consequences. Can lives be saved by stepping in now, or will the terrible curses the magic of Autumn will call down upon the traitor drown the freehold in ash and bone?

However few or many cities the Others might have made disappear, the truth is that the Others don't actually invade the mortal world *en masse* all that often. Scholars and generals of the Autumn and Summer Courts debate the reasons for this, from the theory that the seasonal Court structure of most freeholds masks the presence of the Lost from their Keepers, to the idea that prolonged existence within the mortal realm is painful, difficult, or costly to the Gentry. Some simply suggest that the Others are so

mercurial and treacherous that the idea of an army of them working in cohesion is absurd. Still, there are those who remember their time in Faerie as an endless parade of drills and tourneys, of briar-armies amassing with the slow, inexorable force of a glacier. One day, they say, the Host of the Thousand Princes will be assembled, and the Marshal of the Invisible will lead them through the Hedge to claim the mortal world as their birthright.

Invasion from the Hedge doesn't always mean the Others riding out of the Hedge-gates on horses of silken shadow, at the head of vast armies of the Gentry and their hobgoblin retainers. Sometimes a hobgoblin achieves a peculiar level of intelligence and power, gathers an "army" to its banner, and raids a freehold for its own inscrutable reasons. It might seek to capture changelings to sell back to their Keepers, or it might try to seize Hollows and goblin orchards within the Hedge. Other times, one of the Banished might rally a small force and seek to overthrow the freehold, either enslaving its occupants or using them as a bargaining chip to regain entrance to Faerie.

In any war against the Hedge, a freehold can expect to face a myriad and unpredictable foe. True Fae generals might be the most immediately terrifying, but hobgoblin skirmishers and changeling loyalists are no less of a threat. Agents provocateurs within the freehold itself are a constant peril, and even the threat of the True Fae isn't always enough to make power-hungry cabals set aside their ambitions for a while. Wise rulers ensure that the trods are watched closely year round — even if the invasion can't be stopped, some level of advance warning can at least provide the hope of mounting a defense.

Story Hooks: Invasion

• **The Lion and the Rose:** The Lion Whose Roar Is the Dawn was once the lord of a mighty Arcadian forest, where he hunted and warred and rutted in wild abandon. But when the hunts began to fail, the war turned against him and his concubines fled back to the lives they once knew, the Lion found himself diminished and cast into the Hedge to wander. The Rosejack was once the grandest champion of his freehold, until his Monarch discovered he had been selling his rivals to goblin slavers. Stripped of his title and cast out, the Rosejack met the Lion on a twisted road, and he swore himself to the great beast's service. With Rosejack at the head of a hobgoblin army, the Lion marches on the mortal world. He will have his sport again, to hunt and war and rut in the shattered ruin of what the Lost had built.

• **A Court Divided:** Motleys on the outskirts of the freehold have begun to report seeing odd movements of hobs in the Hedge, as though they were scouting the boundaries of the freehold. When a goblin messenger arrives in the Court of the Autumn King bearing a message from the King's Keeper, the Leaden Mirror is divided amongst itself: the missive declares that the Keeper has amassed a force of hobgoblin warriors and loyalist changelings who stand ready to attack the city — unless his "property" is returned to him. Now the Autumn Court crumbles into factions: some who refuse to bow to the Gentry, others who see turning the king over as the only way to ensure the survival of the freehold. Some suggest the other Courts should be brought in to help; others insist this will show the Autumn Court to be too weak to lead. Can the characters' motley navigate the minefield of politics? Will they choose defiance, even at the risk of destruction, or will they kowtow to Arcadia and prove themselves slaves? And can the King's Keeper even be trusted to keep his word?

• **Endgame:** This is it. The freehold's feeble protections are swept away, the hidden Lost laid bare, and an army of the Gentry — not merely a gaggle of hobs led by a lord of Faerie, but a true host of Arcadia — is on the march. Changelings cry that this is the end of the world, that the Others have come to claim the entire world. Maybe they're right, and maybe they're wrong, but certainly the fate of the freehold hangs in the balance. As the host approaches, strange storms wrack the mortal world, and ominous portents are seen by those with the sight. Can the freehold put aside petty rivalries and differences of politics to present a united defense, or will the madness of fear undo the Lost before the first of the Fae Knights ride out through the doorways?

Ideology

Crusade. Jihad. Pogrom. As long as there have been multiple belief systems, there have been wars fought over them. Changelings are no exception. Nominally, the seasonal Courts coexist peacefully, with each fulfilling their own role within a freehold. In practice, however, that doesn't always work out quite so well, particularly when a local Court holds to beliefs or practices wildly different from the "norm." Grandfather Thunder would certainly like to exterminate Rose Thorne's Spring Court, for example, and the City of Endless Summer has certainly engendered enough vitriol that some Miami changelings would not mind seeing Summer abolished even as a concept.

Inter-Court conflict is, of course, not the only potential ideological dispute in changeling society. Endowments have very strong codes of belief and behavior, and if multiple Endowments with conflicting beliefs (or even just conflicting personalities among their leaders) have a sizable presence in the freehold, a war among the nobility might easily break out. Even common lore or practice within a particular region or neighborhood might be sufficiently abhorrent to neighbors that a war of ideology might break out. In some freeholds, wars might even be fought over seeming or kith. Even mortal concerns like religion, race, or politics can spill over into Hedgefire wars. Oftentimes, the warring ideologies aren't even directly incompatible, the monarchs and leaders might simply need a scapegoat to further their own agenda.

Ideological wars are often the most brutal of wars, and among changelings as much as humans, atrocities are often committed on the field. It's all too easy to make your opponent in such a war out to be a bad guy, an inhuman savage who plainly cannot see the right of your cause, or as a subhuman brute little better than a hob or one of the Gentry. When destruction of an ideology is the goal, breaking the spirits of its followers is key, and brutality has long proven an effective means of breaking the enemy.

Technically, wars against loyalists, privateers, and bridge-burners might qualify as ideological wars, but the difference between the two causes is seldom so black and white. When coming up with concepts for wars of ideology, consider carefully whether you want the lines to be that clear-cut. Sometimes having an obvious black-hearted villain at the core of your chronicle is a good thing, but sometimes you might not want to lose the ambiguity of a morally gray war.

Vanity

It would be nice to say that wars are always fought for a noble cause, or at least something in which the combatants themselves believe, but the truth is that petty vindictiveness, ego, and pride cause at least as many wars as religion or resources. Changelings are no different than mortal men in that respect, and indeed the Lost are sometimes even vainer than ordinary humans. Rivalry, whether personal or political, slights real or perceived, and simple vanity ("who's the fairest of them all?") can prompt Hedgefire wars of surprising vitriol.

Most animosities and matters of pride, of course, are resolved on a personal level: political undermining, gossipmongering and, when all else fails, the duel, are the usual courses of action. When the rivalry comes between especially powerful and influential changelings, though, and when it is left to fester for too long, it can trickle down into their followers and ultimately erupt into an all-out war. Like the Montagues and the Capulets, one cannot continue while the other exists. Vanity wars are usually brutal but quick, and typically end when one of the offended parties is slain or some reconciliation is reached.

Sometimes in the case of a particularly beloved leader, her death will only galvanize those who follow her, in which case only vengeance will usually end the war. Other times, particularly if there is a strong central authority keeping the warring parties in check, a war of vanity might simmer in a long-lasting feud rather than exploding in a quick, violent confrontation. Jeremiah Sleet and his Winter Court's intermittent struggles against the Summer Court fall into this category, as Winter has never really forgiven Grandfather Thunder for the death of La Llorona.

Sometimes, the grudge carries on so long that those fighting no longer remember what led to the feud in the first place. If it's allowed to go on long enough, the feud might even become an institution of freehold culture. No one really knows *why* the Darklings of the Winter Court and the Elementals of the Spring Court hate each other; that's just the way it's always been. Ending such a feud might be as simple as uncovering the original reason for the enmity, but the truth is that's rarely sufficient. By the time someone redresses the original grievance (or at least reveals how absurdly minor it was), there has usually been enough violence on both sides that the feud *itself* is the root cause of the feud.

Story Hooks: Wars of Ideology

• **East and West:** The King of Winter has sent emissaries to the Courts of the freehold in the city across the bay, hoping for an alliance of Winter to increase the power of both Courts. What the emissaries find, though, is a strange place in which the rulership of the freehold does not pass with the seasons, but where the city is broken up into smaller fiefs each ruled year-round by a petty despot with no higher authority. Appalled by this bizarre and dangerous structure, the seasonal Courts band together to topple their neighbor's regimes and install a proper system of governance. To the Monarchs' dismay, rather than being welcomed as liberators, their soldiers are attacked in the streets by the oppressed commonfolk of the freehold, and are called invaders and conquerors.

• **The War of Straw Men:** The Scarecrow Ministry has a secret practice, out by the old junkyard on the east end of town. There's a gateway to the Hedge there, a gateway they say leads to a trod that goes right back to Faerie, arrow-straight and broad as the Mississippi. The only way to keep the Fae from strolling down that trod and taking everyone back in chains is to put up the ghost skulls. It's a simple enough procedure: when a man dies in abject terror, you cut off his head, mount it on a stake, and leave it in the Hedge in a line with more like it, right across that road. The panicked ghosts keep the Fae out, or so they say — but when it comes to light that the Ministers are killing mortals to make more ghost skulls, the Spring Court demands that the Endowment be exterminated. As the Courts go on the hunt (and more than a few innocent Autumn Courtiers are killed because they are mistaken for Ministers), no one's asking the obvious question: do the skulls *work*?

• **Lightbringer:** The Summer Queen has always loved the light and shunned the darkness. Under her rule, only the most beautiful and glorious changelings are permitted to join the Summer Court. Fairest, Elementals, noble Beasts and clever Wizened populate her Courts, while Darklings, Ogres, and all whose nature tends toward the shadow and the night are quietly pushed out of the Court. Finally, when the queen's reign comes round again and the Lord of Spring steps aside, the Queen of Summer declares her Lightbringer's Crusade: all changelings who embrace the darkness have embraced Faerie, she says, and they hold wickedness and treachery in their hearts. Summer's Knights begin by attacking the Courtless, those who have none to stand for them, but tensions rise every day, and it's only a matter of time before some unlucky Autumn or Winter Courtier is the target of the pogrom, and then there will be civil war.

Story Hooks: Wars of Vanity

• **Families of Blood:** They call themselves families, but of course they aren't. The odds of a dozen or more folk related by blood all being taken, let alone escaping Faerie, are astronomical, but they call themselves families all the same, the Gnarled Clan and the Slipshods. The feud between them stretches back a dozen years at least, and the root cause is lost to history. Maybe it was when a Gnarled girl spurned a Slipshod boy, maybe it was a Slipshod who broke oath with a Gnarled motley. Whatever it was, the feud has stayed mostly civil up to now, with the odd bar fight as the only real violence. But when a Slipshod Mirrorskin turns up dead in an alley with a knife in her back, a knife that belonged to one of the Gnarled Clan, the feud explodes into outright war between the two groups — war that cuts across all lines of Court and kith and even motley. But is this just a long-simmering feud brought to boil at last, or is there some larger agenda at work?

• **Love's Labors Scorned:** They call her the White Widow. She is a Duchess of the Icebound Heart, and her weeping lovers number in the dozens. She has played her game and played it well, until a young prince of the Summer Court melted her heart and made her love again. But when the prince became the king, he spurned her, choosing as his bride a fair and lovely young daughter of Spring. The Widow, who was powerful in her own right, swore that she would destroy the House of Summer and all who swore loyalty to it, until no memory of warmth or sun remained. The Duchy of the Icebound Heart has mustered its nobles, and though the Winter King has no desire to make war on Summer, the Duchy is powerful within his Court and the Widow commands much respect. Left unchecked, the feud could engulf the entire freehold.

• **Crossed Stars:** The Lost who dwell east of the old railyards have always resented those who claimed the west side as their home. It was the classic divide of the haves and the have-nots, the posh nobility and the rugged, sturdy, salt-of-the-earth peasants. What started as general resentment and dislike shortly after the freehold's founding has become organized over the decades: organized and mean. Violence has been intermittent but severe, and at several points in history, when Court allegiances and geography lined up just right, the feud has rendered the freehold all but ungovernable. Finally, a compromise has been reached: Hightower John and Janey Wrong-Side are going to be married in the hopes of bridging the gap. There's just one problem: the newlyweds-to-be hate each other. With the ceremony just a few days away, the troupe's characters are appointed to manage the couple and try desperately to stop a move for peace from pushing the feud into all-out war.

Battle Lines and Battlefields

When changelings go to war, they are inevitably colored in their approach by their nature and their beliefs. The seasonal Courts, the seemings, even members of the various and sundry kiths come to war with their own tactics and philosophies. Whether the battlefields lie in realms of dream, the overgrown nightmare of the Hedge, or even the streets and alleys of the mortal world, a Hedgefire war is fought by creatures strange and secretive, with tactics mortal warriors would scarcely believe.

The Full Flower of Chivalry: The Spring Court

The Antler Crown does not enjoy war. Spring is the season of desire, of passion and joy, and want and life. War is an ugly, brute business, the work of thugs and killers. When the Spring Court finds itself in a position where its enemies must be destroyed, or when a grudge has gone too far, changelings of the Spring Court prefer to resolve the issue in a more direct manner. Often, this is a duel between the offended parties, or between the leaders of two opposing factions. Appointing a champion to fight in the leader's stead is perfectly acceptable, though a king who fights his own battle earns great acclaim. Hearkening back to traditions as old as the Trojan War, the battle is decided not by clash of dozens of men, but by an honorable fight between champions. According to Spring tradition, the defeated leader must surrender the field, and the matter is considered resolved — no matter if the defeated champion could muster more warriors than the victor or could overwhelm the enemy with force of arms.

Nearly all intra-Court conflicts are resolved in this manner, and if Spring holds great sway within the freehold, even external conflicts might be resolved in this manner. When a champion's challenge cannot be arranged and the Spring Court must go to war, they do so in a glorious panoply that echoes the glory of the Antler Crown. Not for the courtiers of Spring are back-alley beatdowns and thuggish assaults: warriors of the Spring Court engage their enemies one-on-one with a challenge and a smile. Spring Courtiers at war might be archaic in appearance, all Hedgespun armor and swords like solid moonbeams, or they might garb themselves in the sleekest of modern fashions and accoutre-

ments, erudite hitmen in $5,000 suits. However they go to war, the Spring Court goes in style.

A Spring Court offensive is often carefully planned to minimize carnage off the battlefield. Many kings of the Antler Crown appoint members of their Court as Heralds, whose duty it is to both observe the conflict and adjudge who came out of the battle a victor, and also to arrange a time and a place for the battle to occur. This helps to ensure that mortals (or, perhaps even worse, other supernaturals) will not be caught in the crossfire and that the secrecy of changeling existence is not threatened.

The Spring Court may be overly chivalrous and concerned more with glory than victory in battle, but they are not, as a rule, stupid. Announcing when and where you intend to face your enemy is a good way to get yourself ambushed and massacred, which is why the Spring Court empowers its Heralds to make pledges in their king's name, ensuring that the battle will be honorably conducted. Heralds themselves are protected by pledges sworn between the seasonal monarchs as part of the formation of a freehold, and any who kills a Herald of Spring faces powerful sanctions.

Fires on the Battlefield: The Summer Court

War is the Summer Court's business. That much is obvious, but what many fail to appreciate is that the Iron Spear is focused on war stripped of all extraneous trappings. The armies of Summer — and armies is not an inept term, as the Summer Court often maintains full-time professional soldiers — don't care about honor or glory or breaking the enemy's spirit. They care about *winning*, and whatever tactic seems most likely to guarantee victory is the one the Summer Court will adopt. They freely employ tools and tactics both archaic and modern, sometimes in the same battle — it's not unheard of for skirmishers armed with axes and spears to be supported by snipers on rooftops with high-powered rifles, or for the massed cavalry charge to be adapted for ogres on motorcycles. Any Summer warrior worth his salt will be skilled with firearms and archaic weapons alike — simple weapons are most effective in the Hedge, after all, and the True Fae's vulnerability to cold iron is difficult to exploit with a pistol.

When fighting against the Gentry or their servants, the Summer Court shows no mercy or restraint, but when fighting their fellow Lost, the Iron Spear adheres to its own rules of war. Although not as structured or formalized as the Spring Court's code, the Summer Court recognizes that no one is benefited by engaging in total war except the Others. Every resource of the enemy's the Summer Court's soldiers destroys is a resource that will be unavailable when the Others come — and they *will* come, the Iron Spear has no illusions about that. Likewise, the Iron Spear refrains from making targets out of a changeling's mortal life: family members, friends, and establishments that form the pillars of an enemy's identity are generally off-limits. This is primarily a matter of practicality: once the Summer Court goes after a changeling's wife or father, the can of worms is open for the Summer Court's enemies to then go after *their* mortal lives.

The Summer Court is unique among the seasonal Courts in that, especially in freeholds where it has a large

presence, Summer Kings maintain standing "armies" of professional warriors. Though these armies seldom number more than a dozen or two men, they are invariably among the finest warriors in the freehold. Other Courts might boast Knights and fighters of great skill, but Summer is the only Court to regularly Contract soldiers who are entirely provided for by the Court's monarch. Freed of the need to earn money or Glamour, they devote themselves purely to combat drilling and tactical planning. During peacetime, these soldiers typically serve as the monarch's personal honor guard, but when the scarlet banners of Summer take the field, the King's (or Queen's) Guard take the most difficult and dangerous missions for themselves and lead the rest of the Court's members into combat.

Battle-Fear and Omens of Blood: The Autumn Court

If it had its way, the Autumn Court wouldn't go to war at all. Force of arms and brute strength are far and away the least efficient means of achieving your goals — the Autumn Court considers it a victory not when their enemies lie dead in the street or their queen lays claim to some new part of town, but when their enemies are simply too afraid to attack the Autumn Court in the first place. When they must fight, the Autumn Court favors surgical strikes against their enemies' strongholds, assassinations carried out unnoticed in highly public places, and similar tactics designed to terrify their foes into submission.

One popular story that makes the rounds of various Autumn Courts says that the Autumn Queen managed to avert a war with Winter by having one of her best agents leave an iron knife marked with the heraldry of the Leaden Mirror on the Winter King's pillow — while the king was sleeping, with a dozen bodyguards outside and the bedroom warded with potent magic. The Winter King, realizing he was in no way safe, immediately conceded to the queen's demands. Whether the story is actually true or not, it exemplifies the manner in which the Autumn Court prefers to make war.

None of that is to say that the Autumn Court is lacking in the capability for direct action, of course. For every skulking Darkling or grim Wizened, the Leaden Mirror boasts a cannibal Ogre, bloody-fanged and powerful, or a dread huntsman with his baying pack of hounds. Autumn Court warriors make liberal use of their Court Contracts to send an aura of dread before them, and even when war is not on the horizon the Court subtly seeds stories and legends about the enforcers of the Autumn Court. These warriors often adopt some unnerving personal habit (fighting in utter silence, never revealing their face, or simply leaving the horrifically-maimed corpses of their enemies where they are sure to be found) to further enhance their frightful reputation. One might wear the detritus of her dead fetch braided into her hair, another dresses in an impeccably clean, archaic doctor's smock and surgical mask, still another wears an executioner's hood with no eye-holes, which nonetheless does not hinder his accuracy with the twin .45s he carries.

The true strength of the Autumn Court in war lies not in its enforcers, however grim and terrible they might be, but in the Court's sorcerous might. Autumn Court witches call down curses and ill omens upon their foes, invoke mighty pledges with their allies, and do it all while quite removed from the battlefield. Through manipulation of Glamour and Hedge-shaping, they can deny their enemies access to useful resources, and by striking out at dreams they can both demoralize their enemies and gain a peerless source of information about the foe's plans.

The Leaden Mirror sometimes maintains ties with the other denizens of the World of Darkness, and may be able to call upon the aid of vampires, werewolves, and other creatures of the night for help in battle. Such alliances are seldom called up except in times of great need, though, for the Autumn Court understands little about such creatures and can never quite be sure what they might desire in return for their aid. Still, even the *threat* that such strange entities might be brought to bear is often enough to demoralize the enemy.

Cold War, Cold Hearts: The Winter Court

Wars are messy. Wars are big and loud and ugly, and most of all, they draw attention. The Silent Arrow doesn't much care for attention, and so it prefers to settle its conflicts in ways at once more subtle and more final. Open war is not the way of Winter, nor even the sudden swift assault. When Winter settles a problem, it does so with a quiet blade in the dark, a carefully constructed plan to break its enemies' spirits and drive them to despair and madness. The Winter Court does not declare war, it simply *ends* war. Oftentimes, the other parties involved never even know they were at war with the Winter Court.

Where Spring has its elaborate codes of chivalry and honor in war and Summer follows its rules of engagement, Winter labors under no such restrictions. A war against the Silent Arrow is a total war — Winter thinks nothing of destroying Hollows, assassinations of protected individuals, or even bringing the mortal world into the fight. Black rumors of atrocity often follow the Winter Court: the Winter Queen captures the mortal children of her enemies and sells them to the Others. The Winter Court burns Hollows to the ground and uproots trods, condemning its enemies to wander lost in the Hedge. Whether these rumors are true or not depends largely on the freehold, but Winter in general is more than willing to employ underhanded tactics to achieve its ends.

One particular stratagem the Silent Arrow often employs is to attack the Clarity of its enemies. Instead of striking directly against its rivals, they engineer dramatic, catastrophic changes that cause their enemies to risk Clarity loss. They might murder or abduct mortal friends and family

members of their rivals or even destroy buildings that have a special significance to the enemy. Burning down a childhood home or getting the city to condemn the bar where he met his wife can cause a sudden, unexpected change in the enemy's life, and that Clarity hit can undermine his will and his ability to fight.

Cry Havoc: Beasts

Unsurprisingly, Beasts are ideally suited to warfare. Their feral instincts allow them to react quickly on the battlefield, and with their Contracts of Fang and Talon, they can provide invaluable support and intelligence. Many prefer operating in groups, often with other members of their own seeming, and even kith. Working as a unit, these packs, prides, and herds support the war effort with savage might.

Broadbacks make excellent logistical support and long-distance messengers, but they can also be tenacious fighters. Their uncanny Stamina gives them the ability to fight on long after others have collapsed from exhaustion, and with a sufficient supply of Glamour they can easily shrug off deleterious effects like poison, tear gas, and the like. If a Hedgefire war takes place over a large area (such as a freehold governing a vast forest, or one taking place primarily in the Hedge where distance is relative), they might supplant Runnerswifts as the ideal messengers and scouts.

Hunterhearts are skirmishers and assassins *par excellence*. Some prefer the front lines, but most are more at home with the hunt, stalking and slaying their prey swiftly and from behind. With the aid of tokens and Contracts to enhance their Stealth, Hunterhearts can be viciously effective assassins, approaching their target unarmed and with the Mask strengthened, only to lash out with claws and fangs at the opportune moment.

Runnerswifts prove their worth as scouts and decoys, using their raw speed to get themselves into and out of trouble. In smaller conflicts, they might serve as messengers when relaying information via telephone or e-mail is deemed unsecure. Some Runnerswifts, particularly those who resemble animals regarded as meek or helpless (rabbits, mice, deer, etc.) play on that image of helplessness to lure the enemy into going after them and thereby leading the foe into an ambush. Sometimes the Runnerswift *is* the ambush — a .44 Magnum makes even a mouse a threat.

Skitterskulks and Steepscramblers alike make excellent spies. Their preternatural agility and reaction time helps them get into and out of guarded enemy strongholds with ease, and the creatures they emulate with their Contracts of Fang and Talon often provide them with even more means of lurking about undetected. They can also make excellent skirmishers, ambushing opponents from above when the opportune moment presents itself.

Swimmerskins rarely see specialized use in war unless the freehold happens to be on the coast, or at least near a large body of water. Given access to their chosen element, they can make useful saboteurs and infiltrators, particularly if the enemy holds territory along the waterfront, but they are perhaps most useful as scouts and resource-gatherers. Gateways to the Hedge aren't always located on dry land, and underwater Hollows, sometimes referred to as Grottoes, can provide not only places to rest and recuperate between fights, but also strange and sometimes useful goblin fruits.

Venombites, like Hunterhearts, make excellent assassins. They tend to avoid direct conflict, but when they can lash out with their poisonous bite against an unsuspecting enemy commander, they can achieve more than a brute Ogre crushing a dozen enemy soldiers with his bare hands. Depending on his affinity and the fauna native to the freehold, a Venombite might even be able to deliver the deadly blow while not even physically present, thanks to his Contracts of Fang and Talon.

Where Runnerswifts excel as scouts and messengers in a strategic sense, Windwings (especially in urban freeholds with plenty of high perches from which to observe) are ideally suited to serving as tactical observers. Watching from rooftops with cell phones or walkie-talkies, they alert their allies to approaching enemies, warn of ambushes, and the like. While they aren't capable of flight without magical assistance in the form of tokens or Contracts, in pitched battles they can provide some semblance of "air support" when armed with Molotov cocktails and the like.

Shadows of an Invisible War: Darklings

Open warfare is for suckers. Darklings manipulate events behind the scenes, engineering victory before the first blows are struck — or failing that, using their gifts for mimicry, stealth, and evasion to sow confusion and chaos in the enemies' ranks. Mirrorskin spies attend war councils wearing the faces of enemy Knights, Gravewrights call the dead to harry the enemy, and Tunnelgrubs exploit even the smallest chink in an enemy stronghold's security to worm their way in and come back out with vital secrets — or enemy's heads.

Although they seldom directly engage in the war effort, Antiquarians are veritable encyclopedias of useful martial knowledge. Their long research and thorough examination of topics myriad and sundry allows them to provide both strategic and tactical insight: from knowing the trods that will lead a war-party undetected to an enemy's back door to unearthing the frailties that afflict a high-Wyrd enemy general, Antiquarians are useful advisors indeed. When the enemy is one of the True Fae, Antiquarians serve an even more useful service, dredging up secrets gleaned from their time in Faerie to strike back against their erstwhile Keepers.

The dead haunt many battlefields, and Gravewrights can put that fact to good use. Though they cannot command the dead (at least, not without magics greater than their kith blessing), they can see and communicate with

the dead, and most are adept at bargaining with the shades that linger in this world. A Gravewright might be a passive observer, cataloging ghosts' actions in the hopes of discovering lost knowledge (perhaps seeing a ghost endlessly repeat the act of entering a kitchen and walking through the wall in a particular spot reveals a walled-over door to a forgotten basement, or a spirit hovering around a changeling leader points to some facet of an enemy's mortal life), or they might serve as diplomats to the dead, brokering service for service. The promise of a fetter's resolution might well be enough to urge a ghost to fight for the Gravewright, or at least use Numina to disrupt and terrify the enemy.

Leechfingers are seldom used directly in battle, but they excel at demoralizing the enemy. A Leechfinger armed with Contracts of Smoke and Mirror can slip into the enemy's camp while he slumbers, sap him of his vitality, and leave him none the wiser. Done night after night over the course of several days, the enemy might well give up the ghost before anyone even knows what's happening. Leechfingers with the Kiss of Life Merit (see sidebar) sometimes serve as field medics, performing a grim triage by taking life from the least injured to keep those closest to death alive a little bit longer.

Merit: Kiss of Life (••••)

Benefit: When you use your Sap the Vital Spark kith blessing, instead of using the stolen life energy to heal yourself, you may "store" the healing potential and deliver it to another character with a touch (despite the name of the Merit, this touch doesn't have to be a kiss). Healing another character has the same effect as healing yourself (you heal one point of lethal damage or downgrade a point of aggravated damage to lethal damage). At any time, you can choose to use this stored healing to heal yourself.

If your Wyrd is high enough that you can use Sap the Vital Spark more than once per scene, you can store up multiple points of healing and distribute them as you like with a touch. If you do not use the healing by the end of the scene, the vital energy dissipates.

It requires no great leap of logic to see how Mirrorskins are useful to a war effort. Even without Contracts of Mirror, their kith blessing helps them to emulate members of the enemy camp, and allows them to infiltrate war-councils and private meetings. Care must be taken that the individual being doubled is well away from the meeting-place, and as any spy will tell you it's dangerous to try the same trick twice in a row, but a well-trained Mirrorskin operative can infiltrate an enemy camp so thoroughly that the foe thinks there are a

half-dozen or more moles within her operation. Particularly clever Mirrorskins will mimic loyal members of the enemy's faction when they report back to their masters so that even if they're followed, suspicion will be deflected onto a patsy.

Mercurial Visage

In a scenario such as wartime espionage, when the ability to pass oneself off as a particular member of the enemy camp might be the difference between life and death for a Mirrorskin, it is perhaps beneficial to discuss more precisely what the Mercurial Visage blessing is and is not capable of.

• Mercurial Visage is not full-on shapeshifting; for that you need Contracts of Mirror. A 5'1" female Mirrorskin trying to disguise herself as a 7'4" male Ogre is going to suffer extreme penalties that the +3 bonus from Mercurial Visage isn't going to offset. See p. 87 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for details on using Subterfuge to disguise yourself and the sorts of penalties it might incur.

• Mercurial Visage *does* allow you to ignore penalties for lack of equipment, at the Storyteller's discretion. Minor changes to hair/eye color or bone structure suffer no penalty for lack of equipment, but drastic alterations to apparent height, body shape, or gender might still incur a penalty.

• Mercurial Visage affects both mien and Mask; however, these disguises are not independent of each other. If you choose to mimic a mortal (or other entity not protected by the Mask) both your mien and Mask resemble that person. If you mimic a changeling or other creature that has a Mask, your Mask resembles that changeling's Mask while your Mien mimics the target's mien. You cannot, for example, make your mien resemble a Fairest Knight while making your Mask look like the mortal bouncer at a nightclub.

• In general, lacking more potent Contracts, Mercurial Visage can accomplish roughly the same level of change you might expect from a professional makeup artist working with a full range of prosthetics, wigs and similar tools of the trade.

Tunnelgrubs, like Beastly Skitterskulks and Steepscramblers, are masterful infiltrators, capable of squeezing into impossibly small spaces to spy on the enemy and, if need be, to escape detection. Since their ability to squeeze often allows them to reach vulnerable spots in a building's architecture, they sometimes serve as sappers and demolitionists — although in recent years, with the mortals' increased worries about terrorism, blowing up the enemy's base of operations is a much riskier proposition than it once was, especially in North America.

The Oncoming Storm: Elementals

Born of stone and fire and winter storm, Elementals go to war with the implacable fury of nature itself. Where others might compromise or reach détente, Elementals do not give in, do not lose the will to fight, and do not surrender. Part of this attitude comes from their time in Faerie and their treatment at the hands of Keepers — one cannot entreat the sirocco not to raise flesh-stripping sandstorms, or surrender to the stormy ocean and expect mercy. Part of it too comes from their seeming blessing: Elementals have access to unrivalled reserves of physical endurance, allowing them to fight on past grievous injuries as long as they have access to a ready supply of Glamour. Augmented by their Contracts of Elements, Elemental warriors can mount a formidable defense against any onslaught. Powerful, high-Wyrd Elementals like Grandfather Thunder have a reputation for being nigh-invincible when they take the field.

Elemental attitudes toward war are further shaped by their curse: empathy does not come easily to them, nor do mercy or forgiveness. Elementals are not cold, unfeeling machines (at least, not most of them — some Manikins certainly fit that description), but they often find it difficult to understand why a beaten enemy should be allowed to live, or even be forgiven. Even on the losing side, most Elementals prefer to fight on to the bitter end rather than yield. The fact that their curse likewise makes them poor negotiators is yet another reason why surrender is seldom a part of their vocabulary.

Like Runnerswifts, Airtouched excel as scouts and messengers, carrying off dangerous missions within enemy territory and avoiding retaliation by simply outdistancing the foe. Their ability to enhance their Initiative as well as their Speed also makes them useful in the hit-and-run attacks that comprise most combat in a Hedgefire war. At their most potent, the Contract Become the Primal Foundation (Elements •••••) allows an Airtouched to transform into a being of thin air, making them ideal infiltrators and spies, and nearly immune to physical harm.

Sturdy and powerful, Earthbones bring raw physical might to the battlefield. While they aren't as adept at brute-force assaults as Ogres (since their blessing only applies to non-combat Strength-based rolls), they excel at providing support. Is the enemy holed up in a warehouse downtown behind a solid steel door? An Earthbones is just a few points of Glamour away from smashing it down. Trapped in a roadblock ambush? The Earthbones can toss a car out of the way and get out. Elemental Contracts of Earth provide high levels of Defense and Armor, making Earthbones valued defenders and bodyguards as well.

An affinity with the fiery aspects of the Contracts of Elements certainly makes Firehearts effective on the front lines, but their kith blessing also helps them to excel as tacticians and leaders in the field. Large-scale strategic overview isn't the Fireheart's forte, but when the guns come out and the swords clash, the ability to get a boost to Wits-based dice pools allows them to react quickly to the rapid changes of a fight. The ability to command and summon flames (through Contracts) likewise makes for a formidable tool for battlefield control: although changelings (unlike, for example, vampires or Prometheans) aren't especially susceptible to fire, the fear of open flame when used as a weapon is deeply ingrained in the human psyche.

Manikins might not bring a great deal of force to the battlefield, but what they do bring is an astonishing versatility. With the myriad powers of Contracts of Artifice at their disposal, Manikins can cobble together virtually any weapon or piece of gear a warband might need on short notice. Only the Wizened can match their ability as craftsmen and combat engineers.

Terrible and cruel as a blizzard, Snowskins are rightly feared on the battlefield. They are seldom leaders or team players, though. Between their kith's difficulty relating to others and their kith blessing to Intimidate rolls, Snowskins more often go to war as dread champions. Solitary and terrifying, they often don elaborate costumes of Hedgespun, and act to demoralize and frighten the enemy. These tactics are especially common in the Autumn and Winter Courts, but even Spring and Summer have their cold-blooded Knights to strike terror into the foe.

Like Swimmerskin Beasts and Water-Dweller Ogres, Waterborn are most effective when the Hedgefire war takes place on or near a body of water. Waterborn, however, are better adapted to aquatic environments (as they can use Glamour to breathe underwater indefinitely rather than hold their breath), and with Contracts of Elements at a sufficient level, even the smallest body of water can become a deadly weapon or a lethal trap. Stories tell of Waterborn assassins who can infiltrate even the most secure strongholds by pouring themselves through the plumbing, drown their target with little more than a tumbler of water, and be gone again before their presence is even noted.

In all but the densest of urban sprawls, a Woodblood is a frightening enemy to have. Given at least some natural vegetation to work with, Woodbloods are perhaps surpassed only by Darklings in their ability to observe the enemy, hidden and unseen. Sometimes the Woodbloods prove even more adept: shadows engender fear and paranoia, darkness invites the question of what might be hidden within it, but few think to grow uneasy at the sight of a bed of roses or a small copse in the city park. Woodbloods use that to their advantage, and forward-thinking (some might say paranoid) Woodbloods make sure that municipal parks and gardens near their rivals' territories are always well-maintained.

Glorious in War: Fairest

The Fairest are beautiful and terrible in all they do, and that includes going to war. Out of all the seemings, Fairest are most likely to view Hedgefire wars as ritual, almost-religious events. Where a Beast or an Ogre might spot a member of an enemy faction without any backup and simply jump him right then and there, a Fairest would be more likely to challenge him to a duel (or at least announce who it is that is kicking his ass for all to hear). Sometimes this has to do with honor and chivalry, but more often than not it's about glory and self-aggrandizement. The Fairest want to be seen as paragons of skill and prowess, want to be acknowledged as warriors *par excellence*; whether or not they deserve that recognition depends greatly on the Fairest in question.

The Fairest often envision themselves as great generals and leaders of men. Some of them are — but there are just as many if not more who fit the stereotype of the officer who gets his men slaughtered due to his lack of combat experience. Many (though by no means all) likewise cling to outdated or impractical ideals of war quite at odds with the street-brawl nature of most Hedgefire wars. A group of Spring Knights in full Hedgespun panoply, resplendent with the mien of the Antler Crown, might look impressive as they stride down the street, but they aren't much going to impress the Summer Court Wizened perched in a third-story window with an illegal, fully-automatic rifle.

Bright Ones charge into battle straightaway, shining like beacons to rally their allies to the fight. When possible, they use Goblin Illumination to disrupt the enemy's defense and keep them disorganized with blindness. Unfortunately, charging into battle while softly glowing is a good way to get marked as an obvious target, so Bright Ones either acquire the best armor (from Kevlar body armor to Contracts and tokens) or have a very short combat life expectancy.

Lithe and sensuous, Dancers go to war with the same sultry grace that gives them their blessing. To them, battle is an intricate ballet — they often learn martial arts like Tai Chi or Capoeira, which emphasize a graceful flow to combat. They are seldom leaders or front-line soldiers, preferring to skirt the edges of a battle and pick off the weak or wounded. They often favor light, speedy weapons like knives and small pistols, and they usually fight on the defensive, exploiting their blessing until the moment comes for an opportune strike.

Of all the Fairest suited to lead, Draconics are perhaps the best. Though arrogant and sometimes disinclined to listen to the advice of their subordinates, they seem to have a knack for bloodshed and brutality that many of their cousins lack. Their blessing makes them deadly unarmed warriors as well, second only to Hunterhearts and Gristlegrinders. Also worth noting is the fact that a Draconic's blessing can be used to reroll *any* failed roll with Brawl as a part of its dice pool, not just attacks. This can make Draconics

surprisingly adept at sizing up opponents or recognizing the specific school of fighting an enemy uses.

Flowering Fairest aren't terribly well-suited to war, and most of them know it. They find better use as spies and agents provocateurs, working the enemy like Mata Hari. In a Hedgefire war, such activities are even more dangerous than in mortal conflicts — espionage is a death sentence in fae wars just as it is among mortals, but given the much more intimate scale of changeling society, it's much harder to be an anonymous beauty in a smoky bar. Unless a Flowering Fairest is *very* good at playing his allegiance close to his chest (or has lots of dots invested in Contracts of Mirror), he runs a very real risk of being recognized and killed — or worse, being recognized and used to feed false information to their masters.

Like their Flowering cousins, Muses are ill-suited to war. They tend to focus on the arts, and their kith blessing is only usable on mortals, limiting its usefulness even further. They can make themselves useful in proxy wars, however; a Muse might inspire a mortal gang leader to stir up trouble with a rival gang, which might count changeling enemies among its number. Alternately, the conflict might serve as a smokescreen to conceal a more direct attack on the Muse's rivals. By working subtly and keeping herself removed from the front lines, a gifted Muse can run an entire war without anyone ever knowing she was involved.

The Red Ruin: Ogres

Ogres are many things, but they are not leaders. Tending toward dull-wittedness and gullibility, they do not deal well with the logistics of overseeing a war, or with large-scale strategizing and planning. What they excel at is front-line combat; indeed, it wouldn't be unfair to say that Ogres make up the bulk of changelings engaged in the actual fighting of most every Hedgefire war. Theirs is not a subtle warfare: Ogres don't slink into your house at night and put a poisoned dagger between your ribs, they hang out outside your favorite bar until you stagger out three sheets to the wind and they jump your ass with crowbars and chains. Sometimes they don't even exhibit that much planning, but luckily for them their kith blessing and their Contracts of Stone are usually enough to tip the scales in their favor.

Although they are less common than others, Ogres sometimes rise to positions of leadership, whether of the Courts or large, powerful motleys or even mortal organizations. They excel in organizations where brute strength or an imposing presence are more valued traits than eloquence and wit (the Summer Court, organized crime, longshoreman's unions, etc.) How successful such leaders are depends greatly on the loyalties of their underlings and the competence of their chief advisors. An Ogre chieftain might not be particularly adept at spotting treachery in the ranks, but if he's smart, he has a Chatelaine or a Flowering Fairest he listens to, whose job it is to ferret out dissent and report it to the boss. Once the boss deals with the troublemaker, repeat performances aren't common.

Cyclopean Ogres make use of their extraordinary senses to find difficult-to-locate enemies: Mirrorskin spies, Tunnelgrub infiltrators, and Wizened weaponsmiths, for example. They might work alone, or they might lead a pack of "troubleshooters" who specialize in tracking elusive prey. Sometimes these groups are attached to a Court or another group, but just as often they are freebooters, working for Glamour, tokens, and cold, hard cash. In a Hedgefire war, the race to procure the services of freelance groups of "bounty hunters" can sometimes be its own smaller war within the larger conflict.

Farwalkers are the exception to the rule that you'll usually see an Ogre coming. Farwalkers favor lying in wait, ambushing their enemies at a time and place of the Ogre's choosing. Unlike Hunterhearts, though, who relish the chase, a Farwalker is usually happiest when he can spring an ambush on totally unsuspecting enemies. He might stalk his quarry for a time beforehand, but that's usually to get a sense of the target's patterns and plan out the ambush before the "hunt." Farwalkers as a rule don't savor the fear their target would feel over a lingering chase — even Autumn Court Farwalkers prefer the sudden burst of sheer terror that comes when a slavering brute bursts unseen from the shadows to rip and tear.

Gargantuans are powerful and useful in a fight, but they must take care when using their abilities in population centers where mortals might witness them. The Mask will conceal a changeling's mien from the masses, but it can do little for a Gargantuan who grows to the size of a grizzly bear. Gargantuans, therefore, serve best when held in reserve until a fight is concealed from mortal eyes — inside a Court stronghold, for example, or in a Hollow.

Flaw: Fragile Mask

Your character's Mask is less foolproof than that of other changelings. Whenever your character uses a power that drastically alters the size or shape of her body (such as a Stonebones' Spurious Stature blessing or the Oddbody clause of the Contracts of Mirror), or which suffuses her with magical energy (such as the Armor of the Elements' Fury clause of the Contracts of Elements), her Mask drops and anyone can see her true nature.

Often feared and mistrusted even by other changelings, Gristlegrinders make excellent shock troops. Not only are they powerful fighters with deadly natural weaponry, they terrify and demoralize their enemies as they charge into battle, tearing flesh and snapping bones in their terrible jaws. Watching a friend get injured in battle is painful enough — watching her partially *eaten* by a grinning Ogre

is altogether more frightful. Some Gristlegrinders find their calling behind the front lines as interrogators and torturers. The prospect of an hour alone in a room with a Gristlegrinder is often enough to make a captive tell anything he knows.

If you need something protected, if your monarch needs to be guarded against assassination attempts and surprise attacks, you call a Stonebones. Between their kith blessing and their Contracts, one or two Stonebones bodyguards can hold off what would otherwise be an overwhelming assault — one story out of Cleveland holds that, during a Hedgefire war between the Duke of Autumn and the Grand Duchess of Spring, the Duke and his two Stonebones attendants were set upon by a full dozen Autumn soldiers, armed with magic, steel, and lead. The bodyguards were finally killed, but only after bringing down 10 of the attackers and giving the Antler Guard time to arrive and vanquish the rest.

Like their aquatic brethren among the Beasts and Elementals, Water-Dwellers are brought to bear in war where amphibious assaults are viable. They have an extra edge in their ability to see clearly in murky, dark water, and as such they can often be found in the sewer systems of larger cities, even landlocked ones. Their knowledge of the underground tunnels makes them ideal guides; sewers reach nearly everywhere in a modern city, which can mean surprise attacks from unexpected directions *without* the dangers of a trip through the Hedge.

Boys in the Back Room: Wizened

With the exception of the Soldier kith, Wizened seldom find themselves on the front lines of battle. Their talents lie in servitude, in crafting and maintaining a stronghold, and in developing new weapons and tokens their brethren can use to take the fight to the enemy. In fact, given that wars are often fought over resources, a particularly gifted Wizened might well find herself the *cause* of a Hedgefire war, as both sides want her services as a craftsman or a seer.

Artists in times of war might find their talents pressed into service creating or modifying weapons and armor. Whether working with delicate-seeming Hedgespun silks capable of turning bullets into songs or forging a perfectly-balanced sword just like the one the Fairest Knight carried in Faerie wars, an Artist's extraordinary acumen allows him to create tools and weapons in remarkably short order.

Brewers might not find immediately obvious uses for their talents in war, but the ability to brew a good quality beer or distill a fine, smoky whiskey (whether supernaturally enhanced or not) is a potent morale booster. Brewers sometimes prepare special batches expressly for members of their Court, Entitlement, or motley, and never shared with outsiders. These sorts of drinks serve to build camaraderie and boost morale, fostering a sense of belonging and *espirit de corps*. Some Brewers use their blessing to incapacitate key enemy leaders or warriors before a fight: all it takes is a hand

brushing against a water bottle or a glass, and a dangerous foe spends the battle sleeping it off.

Merit: Subtle Liqueur (•)

Prerequisite: Inebriating Elixir kith blessing

When your use your Inebriating Elixir blessing to ferment a non-alcoholic beverage, the drink's taste is not altered in any way; imbibers cannot tell that what they're drinking is alcoholic, much less preternaturally so.

Chatelaines are usually called in when the fighting is over, to negotiate a truce or the terms of a surrender. Their precise manners and formal knowledge of protocol help to soothe wounded egos and ensure that the transition goes smoothly. During a war, many Chatelaines find their powers dramatically increased: as kings and queens focus their attentions on the conflict, they often leave the day-to-day running of the freehold to their trusted advisors and seneschals, many of whom are Chatelaines. Such advisors can easily play the role of Iago, manipulating their masters into conflict to extend the reach of their own arm.

Chirurgeons, naturally enough, stay behind the front lines and patch up the injured as they come back from the fighting. Many keep well-guarded Hollows where orchards of healing goblin fruits grow, and those that do sometimes accompany the warriors into battle to perform battlefield triage. Since their blessing does little else to increase the speed of healing, though, most stay safely back and let the injured come to them.

Oracles advise, plan, and sometimes instigate wars. The Autumn Court especially takes Oracles and their predictions *very* seriously; if a respected Oracle says that doom will befall the freehold if the Winter Court is not eliminated, the Leaden Mirror starts mustering its forces. Even the other Courts usually listen to an Oracle's advice. Naturally, this leads some Oracles to fake their visions to advance their own political goals. To minimize this, many Autumn Courts group their Oracles into *norns*, groups of three Oracles, all of whom must agree that war is necessary.

Where Artists are pressed into service crafting the weapons and tools needed for a war, Smiths are set to work perfecting them. Many Courts institute a "war footing" by putting Artists to crafting weapons (both archaic and modern), then handing those weapons off to Smiths to hone them into especially deadly forms. Since a Smith's enchantment lasts only a day, Smiths are usually brought in right before a big push is made against the enemy.

Soldiers, unlike most other Wizened kiths, fight on the front lines along with members of more militant seemings. Their blessing makes them versatile and effective warriors, but leads them to favor melee weapons, which makes them vulnerable to changelings who fight from a more modern technology base. Many Soldiers choose to carry bizarre, exotic weapons for the intimidation value, especially those that require a Specialty to use without penalty.

Woodwalkers seldom see action in urban wars, but in freeholds that include large areas of wilderness (such as the Everglades outside Miami or the mountain forests of the Pacific Northwest), they often serve as guides for scouts and raiding parties. Their blessing grants the 8-again rule for any Survival roll, which includes navigating in the Hedge (**Changeling: The Lost** p. 219), so even in urban centers they can be useful as guides and watchers over the trods that might lead to vulnerable areas.

Fields of Battle

Unlike mortal wars, changelings fight on battlefields far more exotic than the deserts of the Middle East or the jungles of Southeast Asia. They fight on city streets, to be sure, but they also fight in twisting labyrinths of thorn and vine, in invisible fortresses hidden under bridges, and even in the dreaming minds of mortal and fae alike.

Given the choice — not that they always are — the Lost prefer to keep their battles from going too deeply into the Hedge. Many a work on military strategy stresses the importance of controlling the terrain. By holding the land, one can conquer the heavens. And the Hedge is just too flexible, too mercurial. Hedge-shaping can keep it locked into a particular form for a time: but the enemy usually has the exact same advantage, as the Lost fight other fae creatures far more often than they do mortals or other supernatural entities, particularly in the Hedge. The True Fae in particular are frequently better-versed at Hedge-shaping than are their former servants.

But sometimes there's no real choice. Sometimes one must stand against a tribe of border reavers in the Hedge to prevent them from harming anyone in the mortal world. Sometimes there's no better terrain to hold. Sometimes the Lost need the secrecy of a separate battlefield. And sometimes their Faerie blood simply calls to them, demanding that they risk it all among the Thorns.

The Hedge's Advantages

The most pressing arguments for fighting a battle in the Hedge come when its tactical potential outstrips, or at least seems to outstrip, the hazards of a battlefield among the Thorns.

• **Travel Logistics:** There's no denying that the Hedge offers travel opportunities, hazardous though they are, that the mortal world can't match. A path through the Thorns can make a perfect supply line of materiel, or enable a risky but swift flanking maneuver. Expert Hedge-guides are critical to this sort of use, as inexpert navigation can place a war party in a far worse situation than a simple tactical disadvantage. The ideal route doesn't go too deep into the

Hedge, but also avoids any potential portals that the enemy might know about.

• **Materiel:** Goblin Fruits and other oddments can be valuable resources, particularly those that have some sort of ability to heal wounds. A battle might be fought over a particular orchard, either to capture or to raze it. A war party might also need to besiege an enemy Hollow if its location is known.

• **Shifting Ground:** To some generals, the hazards of the Hedge might be a compelling lure — assuming one can arrange for an enemy to stumble into the brunt of the hazards while keeping one's own troops safe. This is a particularly tricky tactic, requiring strong intelligence on an enemy's movements, a sufficiently clever way to lure an enemy into position, and the Hedge-prowess to control the battlefield according to plan. Of course, changelings have a natural talent for deception and misdirection that can aid them in such an endeavor. In most cases, though, so does the enemy…

Hedge-Shaping in Battle

When the fae go to war within the Hedge, the nuances of Hedge-shaping cease to be subtle. Even when a motley fights a motley, the clash of Wyrd will shape the Thorns far more than the strength of any individual's fae identity. Unless one side attempts to actively control the battlefield through Hedge-shaping, the environment reflects the violence inflicted there. Flocks of fae carrion birds, corvid or vulturine or even serpentine, swarm overhead. The ground underfoot becomes warmer, sometimes even seeming to pour out two drops of blood for every one spilled. The Thorns rattle and rustle, even whispering and moaning echoes of the slain. Some seem to sprout skulls and bones impaled on the briars, or blood-soaked tatters of banner and clothing.

The Hedge-shaping rules described in **Changeling** apply as usual, but the presence of violence may impose penalties or bonuses to the roll. Attempts to shift the terrain to match the conflict receive a +2 bonus, while attempts to make the terrain less menacing receive a –2 penalty. Much as an open field might be preferable for a clash, the Hedge's psychoactive nature makes such a thing unlikely. The more bodies involved, the more tangled and bloody the Thorns.

Successful use of Hedge-shaping may grant minor environmental bonuses to rolls made by the shaper's side. For instance, calling up thick grasses to conceal artillery might grant a bonus to Stealth rolls. These bonuses are rarely too hefty — usually only a +1 or so — but they can still prove to be a battle's tipping point.

Duels

Changelings, regardless of what the durance did to them, were born human. They are capable of settling disputes rationally, and understand that on many of the most important and emotional subjects, no one has the "right" answer. But sometimes, in matters of honor, love or vengeance, the Lost must be satisfied. In such situations, they often enact the tradition of dueling.

Dueling doesn't always mean that one participant dies. Duels aren't always violent contests, in fact. In Lost society, a duel is a contest between two changelings (or occasionally two motleys) enacted to settle a matter. Once the duel is concluded, the matter is considered settled and pursuing it further is a serious breach of etiquette and propriety. This, for changelings, can involve more than just a loss of social face.

The Magic of the Duel

Travel to two freeholds on opposite sides of the globe, and both freeholds almost always have rules in place for settling disputes through dueling. Changelings that speculate on such matters believe that the tradition of the duel is a holdover from Arcadia — the Gentry use duels to settle their differences. Of course, Fae duels involve reshaping the world around them, changing form, altering natural laws, and such things are typically beyond the ability of the Lost. But the underlying principle remains the same: through the conclusion of a duel, a matter can be satisfied.

Changeling duels therefore share some properties with the notion of trial by combat. In this arrangement, the winner is assumed to be morally in the right. If this trial is used to settle a charge of murder, for instance, the accused is a free man if he can win the fight. A rational person would argue that because someone can win a fight doesn't mean he is innocent on an unconnected matter, but where the Fae are concerned, "rational" isn't always the highest consideration. Once the Gentry duel on a subject, reality (as they know it) reforms around the result of the duel — the winner is right, because winning the duel makes him right, because that was the agreement.

Given this, changelings don't normally duel over such things. It's not unknown for the Lost to engage in trial by combat, but it is extremely rare. Changelings, again, are still at least partly human and they have a human being's ability to reason. As such, only a changeling with an extremely loose grip on reality (low Clarity, that is) would accept the result of trial by combat as determining guilt or innocence in a criminal matter.

Oaths, love and honor, however, are other matters entirely. Changelings fight duels over these principles regularly, precisely because they cannot be settled to everyone's satisfaction by simple observation of fact, but the poignant nature of these matters means that closure is necessary.

Duels, then, are fought to achieve satisfaction. When the duel is over, the insult no longer matters, because honor has been satisfied. A changeling forced or tricked into breaking an oath can appease the powers of Glamour by entering into a lawful duel and winning. A man who has vowed to fight on his beloved's behalf can do so as a dem-

onstration of love, and she is bound to whatever actions she agreed to should he win the duel.

The Dark Side of the Duel

Duels aren't usually fought over physical property like land or wealth. Normally, something more ephemeral is at stake. Hector fought Achilles in single combat, knowing he would lose, because to flee would have marked him as a coward. John Henry entered into a contest with a steam drill knowing that the ordeal would kill him, because to back down would be to admit that machine could replace man. In such instances, the contest takes on a sense of inevitability, the feeling that outcome is not in question, but the ritual of it must be satisfied. And indeed, changelings often find themselves agreeing to duels that they don't stand much chance of winning, because it seems to "fit" that the duel take place.

More rational changelings see the stain of the Gentry on this attitude. The Gentry's duels resemble stories, and things fall into place as they should. Time spent in Arcadia often takes on a kind of fairytale quality. This only makes sense, but it does set changelings to wondering — if the Gentry live their lives according to the patterns and principles of stories, does that mean that such stories originated with the Others, or that humanity influenced Them? And where does that leave the changelings?

On a more concrete level, changelings that enter into duels sometimes feel, even for a moment, that they are adrift in their own bodies, their actions happening according to a pre-planned set of events that they can only influence on the most basic levels. And then the feeling passes and the duel continues, but for some changelings, the feeling lingers. Some of the Lost swear never to engage in duels to avoid giving the Gentry whatever perverse satisfaction they might gain, while others engage in duels as often as possible to study the phenomenon. And some changelings do their best to nudge others of their kind into duels, so they can watch from afar, trying to identify Gentry influence.

Reasons for Dueling

Why do changelings duel? As stated above, the motives behind dueling tend to be ideological rather than physical, but a more specific discussion of motive is of benefit to **Changeling** players.

Changeling society is, of course, built on oaths and agreements. From the magic that changelings wield (Contracts) to what power they hold over normal human beings (pledges), everything hinges on bargains and the power of the Wyrd to make them binding. Or, rather, the power to make consequences for breaking them — the Wyrd doesn't force others to act in accordance with their oaths, it only ensures that those who dare to break their oaths suffer for it.

Dueling occupies a unique niche in this society. A duel can offer reparations for a broken vow (rather than a broken Oath; see sidebar). It can also offer a changeling who is otherwise bound by an oath a way to gather satisfaction on a particular matter. For example, a changeling who has sworn fealty to the seasonal king's household cannot attack a member of that household without violating his oath, even if that noble has committed some unforgivable wrong to the Knight (deflowering his sister, for instance). The Knight can take his grievance up with his lord, of course, but this is chancy. It's probably the Knight's word (or his sister's) against the accused noble's, and changelings aren't immune to nepotism. But the Knight can challenge the noble to a duel and enact the Dueling Oath (see below). In addition to whatever other parameters are set for the duel, it sidesteps any existing oaths that would prevent the duel from taking place, including the Knight's oath of fealty.

This, in fact, is the major difference between an instance that could be settled by a *fight* rather than a *duel*. If, in the above example, the lecherous noble had taken advantage of the sister of a visiting changeling with no connection to the existing order, that changeling would be within his rights to jump the noble outside a bar and beat him with a sock full of quarters. The Wyrd would have nothing to say about it (the police might, of course, as might the noble's allies). The involvement of the Wyrd grants the disagreement certain weight, gravity within the ongoing saga that connects all changelings to their erstwhile masters in Faerie. When that weight is involved, it's best to make sure the duel takes place as it "should." Again, this makes some of the Lost wonder whether or not they have truly escaped Arcadia if they must continue to live by its strictures, but most changelings agree it's better to observe a little pomp and formality than risk getting yanked into the Hedge one dark night.

And besides, while not all changelings want to admit it, many of them get caught up in the spectacle, the formality and the chance to impress that a duel allows.

Honor

A duel for honor comes from a slight to a changeling's character, moral rectitude, or ability. An insult can result in an honor duel, if it is particularly acidic (or hits too close to the mark for comfort), as can an insinuation that a changeling in a given position within a freehold shouldn't hold it. An accusation of an actual, serious crime probably doesn't merit a challenge to a duel, at least not immediately, because the justice systems of both fae and man are well able to deal with such infractions. But while an insult or aspersion has no real consequence as far as the human world is concerned, a changeling's honor — his perception of himself and others' perceptions of him — can change him. The duel, then, is to prove to the changeling and to any who might doubt his honor that he is who and what he says he is.

Note, of course, that reality doesn't have to interfere. A changeling might call another a coward, and the accused can call for and win a duel — which doesn't mitigate the

Oaths, Vows and Other Promises

Not all promises are created equal. A changeling might promise to be back at his motley's side by morning; this is a vow, to be sure, more important than the previous promise, but it carries no magical weight. A changeling might swear on his name never to harm a woman — this is a pledge, and violating it carries some heavy consequences. The game draws a distinction between the two types of vow, though, and it's logical to assume that changelings do as well.

In the first instance, breaking the promise would constitute a violation of Clarity and a chance for degeneration, if the changeling's Clarity rating is 8 or higher. It is a promise, but the changeling has invested no real energy into it, and thus neither does the Wyrd. In the second instance, the promise is a pledge, and the changeling has invested magic and something highly personal in it: his name. Violating it would involve not only whatever sanctions are specified in the pledge itself, but also a chance for degeneration at Clarity 4 or higher.

Changelings can tell the difference between a casual promise and a vow enforced by the Wyrd, but that doesn't mean they don't regard both as important. Changelings regard breaking a promise as unlucky and dangerous — not only does keeping one's word reinforce the changeling's grip on reality, but *violating* a promise is bait for the Gentry. This means, though, that finding ways to get around the spirit of an oath while keeping true to the letter is an art form among the Lost. Duels are considered an honorable way to do so.

fact that the accused might actually *be* a coward. Honor can be satisfied regardless of truth.

Fighting a duel over honor isn't nearly as anachronistic a practice as it might sound at first. Most cultures have some concept of "face," particularly on the street level. A boss in organized crime may have to brutally put down anyone who somehow puts his reputation at risk. The word "honor" doesn't have to be mentioned at all.

Love

Changelings don't normally fight duels for the hand of a fair lady — changelings, again, are born of the modern world, and in the modern world, the fair lady gets to choose her own suitor. That said, a duel might be over the right to a kiss, the right to a date, or even the right to gaze upon a particular woman's face, if the lady in question consents (and, yes, change the gender and the point still holds). Sometimes a vow made out of love can result in a duel; a changeling who promises to defend his lover's honor is effectively at that lover's mercy, as she can claim a slight at any provocation, forcing the changeling into the position of challenging the offender to a duel whether or not the lover actually *feels* offended. Of course, this kind of trust is exactly what propels the vow in the first place, and the suitor probably gains something out of the promise (the lover might well suffer consequences from using it frivolously).

Another permutation of the love duel is the battle that takes place between two lovers. A couple's spat, between changelings, can take on dangerous significance if one party reveals a secret or violates an oath in the heat of anger, and a formal duel can give both parties time to cool down and approach the matter rationally. Also, a cynical changeling might say, a duel is very much like a lover's tiff anyway — it doesn't normally solve anything, when it *does* solve something it involves lots of heartache and tears, and it's probably indicative of a larger issue anyway.

Vengeance

Duels fought for vengeance are the most likely to be fought to the death. Honor can be satisfied with a touch, or a wound, or a point. Love duels aren't meant to be deadly — love is meant to survive. But for a changeling to challenge out of vengeance, he must want to hurt his opponent. The usual point about duels being secondary to physical, understandable crimes doesn't apply here — a changeling might challenge his brother's murderer to a duel before the subject is convicted (or even accused) of the murder.

Of course, it is possible to challenge a changeling to this sort of duel to avoid or even taint an investigation into such a crime. If the accuser murdered his brother himself, but then challenges his brother's enemy to a duel and kills him, in many changelings' minds that sets the seal on the enemy's guilt.

Using the Dueling Oath this way, though, is dangerous. While a duel is not a trial-by-combat (that is the guilty party doesn't always lose), the Wyrd doesn't like changelings using the duel for their own purposes or going into a duel with a double agenda. If the duel is to be sanctified, as it were, then the participants must believe in their positions. The accused in a vengeance duel doesn't have to be innocent, but he does have to be unrepentant (if he wants to win, that is, which he might not). The challenger, though, must have a clear mind on the subject of revenge. The vengeance must be important enough to invoke the duel, or tragedy might befall him (see the Dueling Oath, below).

The Etiquette of the Challenge

A changeling that challenges another to a duel is taking a risk; the usual etiquette allows the defender some latitude in determining the form of the duel. A changeling might

challenge another to a "duel of swords," but that might leave the defender to decide if the duel will be decided by first blood, a fencing contest in which no blood at all is spilled, or a brutal duel to the death with longswords. A "duel of words" might be rhetorical debate or a poetry contest. Different freeholds have different standards of etiquette concerning issuing challenges. This, of course, means that the Storyteller needs to decide what the prevailing etiquette is, or allow the players to do so, should it become relevant in the chronicle. Some possibilities follow (and remember that as the seasons change, customs change):

• **Defender's Choice:** The defender names the type and circumstances of the duel, and even designs the Dueling Oath. If this is the custom of the freehold, duels are clearly rare, since challenging another changeling to a duel automatically gives him the upper hand. Hiding one's own capabilities becomes an art form. A changeling might accept a duel, but then he has to name the terms, which means playing to his strengths while putting his opponent at a disadvantage. This is only possible if he knows what his opponent's weak points are. This kind of arrangement is most common when the Winter Court is in power.

• **Aggressor's Choice:** The changeling making the challenge makes all the arrangements, including creating the Dueling Oath, obtaining permission from the local ruler (if necessary), and procuring weapons, materials, space and Judges. Some freeholds require that all of this is in place *before* the challenge is even made, meaning that the defender can refuse the duel and put all of that work to waste. Others stipulate that the aggressor makes the challenge in a general way (making it clear that the duel is to be decided by combat, for instance) and then makes the rest of the arrangements once the duel is accepted. This format puts a great deal of responsibility on the challenger, but it also grants him tremendous advantage. In such a freehold, duels are seldom used to determine matters of life and death — duels of honor or love are more common. That isn't to say that combat duels are unknown, just that they usually go to first blood, rather than to death. Summer Court freeholds often use this arrangement.

• **Aggressor's Challenge, Defender's Oath:** In this arrangement, the challenger specifies the type of duel, in as much detail as he wishes ("I challenge you to pistols at dawn," "Let's settle this with a duel of magic," etc.), but the defender crafts the Dueling Oath. This allows the aggressor to set the immediate tableau for the duel, but many of the important decisions are up to the defender. Once the defender has accepted the duel, it is customary for the challenger to cope with whatever Oath the defender wishes to create, but terribly lopsided Oaths are grounds for the challenge being rescinded. This kind of arrangement places the two sides on roughly equal footing, but places much of the power in the hands of the defender — provided he is a canny oath-crafter. The Autumn Court favors this sort of arrangement.

• **All in Agreement:** The aggressor can challenge using as general or as specific a declaration as he wishes, but no duel takes place before all parties are satisfied with the wording of the Dueling Oath. Either side may employ an advocate (someone skilled in pledge crafting), and the process of coming to terms might take weeks or months. This has two effects. First, the contest is usually equal; even if one participant isn't as skilled as the other, he usually has time to shore up his abilities. Second, both participants have time to rethink their declaration and retract the duel. If other options for resolving the dispute become obvious during the negotiations, or if tempers cool, the duel might be avoided entirely or the terms softened. This system is most common when the Spring Court is ascendant.

Defining the Duel

A duel isn't always a physical fight. Changelings have invented or adapted so many different kinds of duels that selecting the duel is perhaps the greatest strategic move that a participant can make. Three main factors go into defining a duel: the freehold in which it takes place, the overall type of duel (physical, mental, mystical or social) and the matter over which the duel is being fought.

Freehold

The freehold in which a changeling lives exerts two obvious points of control over the duels the residents fight. First, all freeholds have traditions. Duels might always be fought under the full moon, or during the day, or in the Hedge (which would certainly prevent them from happening too frequently). Duels to the death might be forbidden, or they might be the only duels allowable. What sorts of duels are traditional in a freehold is, of course, largely up to the Storyteller, and some advice for figuring this out is presented later in this chapter.

The second point of control, of course, is the freehold's ruler. A king or queen might demand that no changeling die as a result of a duel, or they might stipulate that a lawful duel invalidates *all* other oaths. The ruler might wish to be present at all duels, but place no other restrictions, meaning the only wrongful duel is a secret one (lover's duels, of course, are often secret). The ruler might insist on a certain amount of decorum, a formal declaration of intent, even a signed letter. Many rulers insist on approving all duels, if for no other reason than to make sure that they know what is happening in their lands.

It is, of course, quite possible to have a duel without consent or knowledge from the ruler. A ruler only has power over those changelings that have sworn fealty. A stranger to the area, or a changeling who has, for whatever reason, refused to swear fealty, won't have much in the way of Court Goodwill but also isn't bound by the same restrictions. Of course, refusing to play by the rules means the outsider doesn't enjoy the same protections that everyone else does.

Examples

Track-Running: Some of the changelings in New York City practice this dangerous but exciting duel. The two challengers stand on the edge of a subway tunnel and wait for the train. At the last possible second, they fall forward, opening a gateway to the Hedge between the rails as they fall (normally, the participants have "seconds" waiting in the Hedge to catch them). The trick, of course, is being the last one to fall forward, having enough control to fall in the right place, open the gateway at the precise instant, and, of course, not get hit by a train.

The Blade Promise: During the season of autumn in a freehold near St. Paul, the Autumn Queen decreed some years back that anyone wishing to have a duel involving physical combat must use a sword, knife or other bladed weapon. Popular rumor has it that she did this to inspire fear of her own skills as a fencer, and it's true that her prowess with a blade is legendary. But the truth is somewhat more benign. The Queen's Keeper used her as a sparring partner, and over the course of her durance, cut her into pieces and reformed her so many times she has become the jigsaw-like Manikin she is today. Fighting with a blade means a desire to *hurt*, and she wants to make sure any potential duelists have considered that.

The Dueling House: Only a handful of changelings live in the area surrounding and including the University of Michigan, and most of them belong to the Winter Court. Any kind of duel is permissible here, and the ruler does not wish to know about them. All he demands is that the duelists go to an abandoned farmhouse miles outside of the city and complete their business there. No Judges or witnesses are allowed. The ruler and most of the changelings of the freehold do not want duels near them for fear that a contest between the Lost might draw the notice of a Keeper.

Intra-Motley Duels

Another, related possibility is that two changelings from an oathbound motley might have a matter that they believe can only be settled by a duel. This isn't as uncommon as one might think. Changelings, especially recent arrivals from the Hedge, often bind themselves into overly restrictive motley oaths and then find they have no way to settle legitimate grievances without angering the Wyrd. Entering into a lawful duel allows them to settle the matter without violating a previous oath.

Of course, an enemy can take advantage of this, especially one clever enough to poison the members of a motley against one another. If two changelings in the same motley fight to the death, what will happen to the rest of the members, even if their oath remains intact? Will more duels result, or will one of them simply break the oath that binds them, dissolving the motley?

Type

A "duel" can refer, among changelings, to any contest that requires a clear winner. This means that, no matter the type of duel, the parameters must be decided upon before the duel actually begins.

A *physical* duel is probably the easiest to judge. Physical duels may be fought with a variety of weapons, and be decided by a great number of factors: first blood, knockout, until concession, or death, to name a few. A physical duel might consist of a stilted swordfight in which switching from one hand to the other constitutes instant forfeiture, or a messy, unrestrained brawl with no rules except one: the man who doesn't get up loses. A physical duel might be fought with pistols, swords, knives, staves or bare hands, but then, it might not be a "fight" at all. A test of strength, endurance or reflexes is also a physical duel, and while changelings don't settle differences via arm-wrestling contests often, it's not impossible. Physical duels might consist of escalating feats of prowess. One participant lifts a weight, the next lifts a heavier one, and so on until one changeling is forced to drop out. More artful changelings might dance or execute graceful *kata* in duels that skirt the border between physical and social.

A *mental* duel makes use of the participant's problem-solving skill, knowledge or wits. A changeling accepting such a duel had best make sure the Judge (and such contests always require a Judge) is someone he trusts. If the contest is to be the first to work out a riddle or a puzzle, the winner can be identified fairly objectively, but what if the contest is decided by rhetoric or knowledge of obscure fact? The Judge, then, has to be conversant in the subject matter. For that matter, who *decides* on the specifics of the duel? A changeling who accepts a challenge and allows the challenger to spell it out is a fool. Mental battles are tricky because, normally, they have a right answer and someone knows it. Who's to say that someone isn't susceptible to bribery or pressure?

A *social* duel uses reputation, intimidation, shame and sometimes art as weapons. A social duel might take the form of a song contest — whoever moves the heart of the stoic Elemental, for instance, might win. Such a duel might take the form of the *tarocchi appropriati* parlor games of the 15th century, in which the precursors to modern Tarot cards were used to tell humorous stories about the players. Or, disregarding formality altogether, the contest might be a game of the dozens. The one who stands flustered or cannot think of a retort is the one who loses. Social duels are, obviously, highly subjective and thus require impartial Judges. Such duels sometimes take place before a crowd, and the laughter or reaction is used as the yardstick by which to measure the

winner. As with mental duels, choosing the wrong Judge or agreeing to the wrong challenge can be dangerous, especially when the outcome *can't* be judged objectively.

A *mystical* duel uses the participant's Contracts and power over the Wyrd to determine the winner. Mystical duels are actually fairly rare among changelings, for two reasons. First, it's rare that two changelings with similar mystical proclivities duel, but if they aren't using the same kinds of magic, it's hard for the fight to be considered fair. For instance, an Ogre who has mastered the Contracts of Stone might battle a Fairest known for his knowledge of the Contracts of Vainglory — but what form would the battle take? The Ogre might be ensorcelled before he lands a blow, or if he's not, one blow would probably kill the Fairest (this isn't to say that duels like this don't happen, just that they aren't common). Second, intense displays of sheer magic, while not exactly taboo, run the risk of alerting both mortals and the Gentry to the duel's location.

That said, though, it's very common for other types of duels to allow Contracts, but for some limits to be set. The changelings might be limited to one clause each (meaning that an Ogre could use Might of the Terrible Brute as many times as he wished during the fight, but could *not* use Ogre's Rending Grasp without forfeiting the duel), or they might be allowed to use only Contracts with visible effects (meaning that Court Contracts that alter emotion, such as Growth of the Ivy, are disallowed).

One particular kind of mystical duel that most freeholds recognize is the Glamour-gathering duel. The participants are each given a Hollow Heart (see sidebar) and a certain amount of time in which to fill it with Glamour. If the participants belong to the same Court, the contest usually requires that the changelings use the appropriate emotion to fill the bag, meaning an Autumn duel becomes a contest of who can gather the most fear in a given span of time. Both participants are normally given a chaperone to make sure they don't cheat by having a motley or an ally "prep" a group of mortals ahead of time. A rumor still floats around the American Southwest that an Autumn Court Hunterheart tried to help his Fairest lover win such a contest by luring a group of campers into a system of caves and chasing them through the tunnels, pretending to be a hideous monster. This ended badly, the story goes, when the Hunterheart called up an *actual* monster from deep in the Earth. The Fairest arrived, hoping to find terrified mortals, but found only blood, sinew, and no trace of her lover.

Token: Hollow Heart (••)

This token can be made out of any receptacle roughly large enough to hold a bowling ball, but the traditional material is the heart of a cow or a similarly sized animal. This receptacle must be left in the Hedge near an established gateway that serves as the focus for intense emotions (funeral parlors, comedy clubs, and churches during wedding season are good choices). When the token forms, it can hold Glamour, growing heavier as it becomes full.

A changeling cannot shunt Glamour from his own pool into the bag, but can fill it by harvesting Glamour from emotion as described on p. 89 of **Changeling: The Lost**. Once the Glamour is in the bag, the changeling can remove it and use it to fill his pool. A Hollow Heart holds up to 20 points of Glamour.

Action: Reflexive (must be activated whenever the changeling means to fill it).

Mien: No matter what the Hollow Heart was before becoming a token, its mien is a leathery, saggy, flesh-like sack. As it fills with Glamour, it becomes warm (if the emotions are predominantly anger- or desire-based) or cold (if they are sorrow- or fear-based) to the touch.

Drawback: The bag "smacks" the edges like lips, hungry for more sustenance. The changeling needs to be careful about fighting while carrying the bag. If the changeling is wounded, the bag absorbs blood (the purest form of emotion, one might say). It upgrades one bashing damage to lethal damage per turn.

Catch: The Hollow Heart is greedy, and it absorbs some of the changeling's emotions, too. This isn't enough to increase the Glamour, but it does make the use aloof and apathetic for an hour afterwards (calculated based on the most recent use). This applies a –2 to all Social rolls (which can be hell on collecting more Glamour) and a –2 to Initiative.

Matter

The matter of the duel has been discussed somewhat already, above. Most duels boil down to honor, love or revenge. Drawing a sharp distinction between the three matters isn't always necessary, as most freeholds don't treat honor duels differently than love duels, or even recognize such categories. The important thing when considering the matter of a duel is to examine what the duelists want out of the exercise.

In general terms, a challenger is looking for "satisfaction." He wishes to put his mind at rest on whatever the matter is. If he has been slighted, he wants to feel better about himself. If his love has been wounded (in whatever sense), he wants to feel that he has defended her. If he has been wronged, he wants to see his enemy suffer.

Duels are inherently a selfish exercise. No real attempt is made at justice or reparation; for this to happen, the accused would have to submit to higher authority and the result would be a *trial*, not a duel. In a duel, the stronger and more skillful opponent, not the more righteous, not the more passionate, wins.

As such, when undertaking a duel, either as the player of a challenger or the Storyteller of an antagonist character, consider what the objective is. Consider it from the strict perspective of the character, first. If asked, what would the character say the point of the duel is? How does the character envision a victory? And then, consider the question from a step back, from a more objective perspective. What is the character *really* seeking? He can't realistically get justice from slaughtering someone at dawn on a hilltop, can he? What is the real goal? Consider the duel from the vantage of the character's Virtue and Vice. Say a character with the Virtue of Charity and the Vice of Wrath enters a duel — which is more important? If the duel was the result of a rash insult during Court, the character is probably acting within his Vice by fighting it. If the character agreed to fight the duel on someone else's behalf, then Charity is obviously the driving force.

All of this is important when considering whether a duel is really what the character wants. After all, challenging another character to a duel usually puts a great deal of power in his hands. The defender normally names at least some of the specifics of the duel, and that means a challenger should expect to be faced with at least some disadvantage. Is the matter of the duel so important?

Duel Traditions — The Courts

While specific traditions tend to arise at the level of the freehold, rather than of Court, it's certainly true that the seasonal Courts do invite certain kinds of duels over others. That's not to say that Summer duels are always violent or that Autumn duels are always based on magical prowess, simply that the dominant emotions and goals of the Courts inform duels, as they do everything else about the fae that wear the Mantles.

Duels of the Spring Court

It might be tempting to say that a Spring Courtier would duel only for love, but it would also be wrong. The Spring Court is the Court of Desire, but also the Court of hope. It is a permissive Court, yes, but not a Court that allows freedom at the expense of someone else's. Among

changelings, as among human beings, someone is always ready to exploit those who feel, who pine and who *want*. And so the Lost of the Antler Crown have ample reasons, unfortunately, to enter into duels of vengeance or honor as well as love.

Spring Court duels tend to be focused on *renewal*. After the harsh, barren winter comes the new growth of spring, after all, and so when a Spring Court monarch approves a duel, her question is invariably, "How will this help you heal?" The changelings involved must know what satisfaction the duel should grant, but also what the next step after the duel's completion will be. If the challenger loses a duel of vengeance, can he be satisfied knowing he tried his best and failed, or will he seek other avenues of revenge? If a defender wins a challenge of love, does he feel compelled to make amends for whatever prompted the duel, even if he proved himself on the battlefield? If two changelings battle for honor, such an ephemeral, subjective notion, what is it they really *want*?

Another focus for duels within the Emerald Court is *passion*. The Court's duels may be formal, but they are in no way unrestrained. Combat duels surprise onlookers with their ferocity, while social duels move witnesses to tears with the beauty of songs or with the vitriol in the insults. A Spring Courtier would never accept a duel that wasn't important to her (which is something other fae should bear in mind when making challenges). A Spring Courtier might accept a duel as a formality (see p. 44), but if she does so, it is because she knows that *not* accepting the duel would be tragic — her passion still leads the decision.

Duels between Spring Court fae sometimes happen at dawn, somewhere that they can see the sun rising, but less formal duels can occur in pubs over copious amounts of alcohol (social duels, especially — *in vino veritas*, and all). The Spring Court has varying views on witnesses for duels. Some courtiers want to have as wide an audience as possible, seeking to showcase their skill (but mostly their passion). For others, especially those fighting in duels of vengeance, they would rather no one witness what anger can drive them to do.

Physical Spring duels are seldom fought to the death (with one major exception, explained presently). The Court's focus on hope and renewal makes them reluctant to believe that anyone is irredeemable. Contests of endurance and dexterity are more common than actual battles, but the Spring Court also boasts some impressive fencers. The one matter that commonly pushes a Spring Courtier to challenge an enemy to the death is betrayal to the Gentry. The Antler Crown, so focused on rejoining the world after an endless waking nightmare, cannot countenance a changeling willingly selling another out to the Fae.

Mental duels in the Spring Court usually involve solving a problem quickly, drawing on common sense and ingenuity rather than specific knowledge. Even when a changeling has to use what he knows, the Skills involved tend to be practical rather than theoretical — the changeling will be asked to *use* the Skill and create something, rather than just think about it.

Social duels, of course, are what most changelings think of if someone mentions "Spring Court duels," whether it's justified or not. It's true that the Court of Desire produces some of the most passionate works of art imaginable, and its members' attention to humanity allows them a constantly evolving base of knowledge with which to approach such duels. Song, poetry and other such contests of beauty are more common in the Spring Court than roasts — the Court seeks to arouse desire and create something new, even while burying hatchets.

Mystical Spring duels range from subtle, barely noticeable affairs in which each participant tries to alter the desires of the other to wild, raucous orgies concealing Glamour expenditures of truly momentous proportions. Some duels even involve the healing magic of the Spring Court — the first one to be unable to heal himself (and therefore the first to drop over from blood loss) loses.

Spring Court Physical Duel — Pistols at Dawn: This duel resembles the classic battle with pistols. Both combatants take 10 paces, turn and fire one shot. The guns are normally loaded with simple lead slugs, but if the duel is to the death it's not unknown for the combatants to use hollow point rounds or something equally unpleasant. Since the Spring Court is the only Court with easy access to healing magic, this duel is more common in the Spring Court because it is less likely to be fatal. In fact, this duel is considered serious when the participants battle barefaced. Over lesser offenses, they wear masks to minimize damage to the face should a shot go astray. **Systems:** Initiative and firearms rules as laid out in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Spring Court Mental Duel — The Bartender's Duel: Usually used to settle disputes of prowess, from "who's the life of the party?" to "who's the better lover?", the Bartender's Duel is a treat for any changelings in the immediate area. It requires an extremely well-stocked bar and a master Spring Court bartender (usually a Wizened Brewer), and isn't the sort of duel where anyone leaves unhappy. Both participants are given a list of three to five ingredients and a set amount of time to work, usually between 10 and 30 minutes. Whoever makes the best drink wins. "Best," of course, is up to the Judges, and a wise changeling doesn't agree to this contest unless he knows that his concoction will be judged by multiple changelings with whose palettes he is familiar. **Systems:** Intelligence + Streetwise (knowing the Judges and what sorts of drinks they like), Wits + Socialize (mixing the drinks; probably an extended action).

Spring Court Social Duel — Pygmalion's Battle: This duel is, on the face of it, a sculpting contest. If the duel is fought on somewhat friendly terms, or at least over a matter that neither participant wants to hurt or be hurt over,

the two changelings usually craft grotesque caricatures of one another. If the duel is more serious, however, they use special goblin fruits, mashed and worked into the clay, to allow the statues to come to life for a brief period. The combatants then send their monsters to fight, with the statue left standing determining the winner. **Systems:** Dexterity + Crafts to sculpt the statue, Manipulation + Expression to direct it in battle.

Spring Court Mystical Duel — The Strings of Desire: The Spring Court's Contracts allow them a terrifying degree of control over desire, and this duel makes use of these powers (Fleeting Spring in particular). This duel is normally invoked when the defender is accused of misusing such powers, or even his natural charisma, to seduce or manipulate a mortal in an exploitive manner, such as using Growth of Ivy to force a mortal into a sexual situation. Both parties prepare a drink for the other, sit at a table, and try to amplify the other's desire to imbibe the drink to the point that he has no choice. Of course, this duel quickly becomes an exercise in psychological as well as mystical warfare — Contracts of Fleeting Spring are the most direct way, but the changeling that takes the time to discover her opponent's favorite drink, and what subjects she can bring up that make him *want* to drink, is probably going to win. Traditionally, there are no rules against poisoning the cup, either. **Systems:** Fleeting Spring can be found on pp. 149–150 of **Changeling: The Lost**, but other dice pools might include Wits + Investigation (ahead of time, to learn the opponent's history), Wits + Subterfuge (to recognize psychological faults) and Manipulation + Intimidation (to unsettle the opponent enough for the Contracts to take full effect).

Duels of the Summer Court

The Summer Court, predictably, is known for duels of honor and vengeance, duels involving a variety of weapons and styles, and duelist codes that prohibit unskilled but passionate changelings from dying at the hands of formidable warriors. Many of the stories about the Court of Wrath and its attitudes on dueling are accurate — the Summer Court *is* known as a warrior's Court for a reason. But the Iron Spear takes duels very seriously, and it examines any challenge with this question in mind: is the matter at hand worth the possible consequences? If a duel would result in a changeling being exiled from a freehold for a year and day, that's one fewer changeling to fight against the Gentry, should it become necessary. If the duel would result in a loss of face or a broken oath, the political and emotional ramifications might present the fae of the area with a weakness that their enemies could exploit. Duels aren't forbidden in the Crimson Court, but the Summer changelings do try to approach them with the correct attitudes.

Of course, the Court of Wrath isn't just a pretty title. In fact, a major focus of Summer duels is *wrath*. A changeling who challenges another to a duel needs to care enough, to be angry enough, to make that bargain. Oaths are serious business to all changelings, but to the Summer fae, ready to lay down their lives rather than go back into slavery, the matter must be especially intense to lead to a duel. If the matter is transient and if the changeling could settle it with a simple brawl, that might be the way to approach it.

Of course, sometimes a standing oath prevents this, as discussed above, and a duel is the only recourse for satisfaction. The Summer Court understands this — the fae of the Court hunger for *justice*. It offends the Court's basic sense of fairness that a wrong goes unpunished, but by the same token, the Summer Court's ethics don't always lend themselves to letting a higher authority handle such things. A wrong that must be answered, but that is too slight for the local authorities (changeling or mortal) or that cannot be proven, might result in a duel. Attempts to hide such a crime from one seeking a duel is especially infuriating to the Summer Court — the mortal courts might presume innocence, but the Crimson Court knows guilt, and it presumes only justice.

Physical duels in the Summer Court take a wide variety of forms, not all of them combat-related. Yes, the Court engages in swordfights, pistol duels, boxing matches and elaborate, three-stage affairs incorporating all of these methods, and such battles are entrancing to watch simply because of the intensity of the combatants. But for duels between opponents of widely varying skill in combat, tests of endurance or strength are sometimes worked into the duel. Some Summer fae, though, feel that if a changeling doesn't have the skill to fight a duel properly, he shouldn't be doing whatever he did to invite the duel.

Mental Summer duels usually rely on the participants' knowledge of tradition and fact. Sometimes they argue their cases before an impartial Judge, sometimes (especially in cases of duels of honor) they recite history and precedent, hoping to convince a panel or jury. The preparation required for these duels is intense, especially since learning "precedent" is often a matter of tracking down other changelings who have fought similar duels and asking how those duels were resolved.

Social duels in the Court of Wrath resemble mental duels, but instead of quoting precedent and arguing from a factual or traditional standpoint, the participants do their best to persuade the Judge(s) by appealing to emotion. A Summer changeling who is known as a leader or a rabble-rouser might not have to rely on fact, but learns where the Judges' hot-buttons are and uses them to deafen the Judges to his opponent's arguments.

Mystical duels in the Crimson Court are just as varied and spectacular as physical duels. Summer fae don't have the same kind of fascination with magic that Autumn fae tend to, true, but they do recognize that Contracts rely on the same kind of honor and magic that swearing the Dueling Oath does. That is, by entering into the agreement with the Wyrd, by taking on the responsibility of using the

magic, a changeling places a limit upon himself. A mystical duel is about recognizing those adopted limitations while allowing Glamour to flow freely.

Summer Court Physical Duel — The Bladeless Battle: The two combatants arm themselves with blunt weapons. These might be highly ornate clubs or simple baseball bats, but the result is unrestrained combat. The battle is meant to go on longer than a fight with blades would, and some participants wear armor or padding (especially if the duel is over a matter that neither participant feels warrants severe injury or death). **Systems:** Standard combat rules; a Storyteller might rule that a called shot to the head inflicts lethal damage rather than bashing — see Specified Targets on p. 165 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Summer Court Mental Duel — Appeal for Peace: This duel is sometimes invoked when the aggressor in a challenge is clearly a far superior combatant than the defender. The defender can appeal for peace, making the case before a Judge (that both combatants must agree upon) that the fight doesn't need to take place, because the defender is innocent or justified. The participants can use any arguments they feel are relevant, and when both have made their cases, the Judge decides either in favor of the defender (in which case the matter is resolved, and the duel is over) or the challenger (in which case the matter is resolved by a physical duel, which gives the defender another chance to win, however slim). **Systems:** Manipulation + Politics (making the argument based on precedent); Presence + Persuasion (begging for clemency).

Summer Court Social Duel — Staredown: This duel might seem simplistic, but it is actually quite nuanced. The participants stare each other in the eyes, and, of course, if one backs down and breaks eye contact, he loses. But he has another option — throw a punch. If the punch is fake (that is, the aggressor pulls the punch before it connects), and the other participant flinches, the aggressor wins. If the aggressor pulls the punch, and the defender does not flinch, the defender wins the duel. But if the punch connects, and the defender remains standing, the staredown becomes a fistfight and the duel is resolved that way. Finally, if the aggressor throws a real punch but manages to knock the opponent down, the battle is over and the aggressor wins. **System:** Manipulation + Brawl (throwing a convincing fake punch) contested by Wits + Brawl (recognizing a fake punch); Strength + Brawl (throwing a punch; apply a penalty equal to the opponent's Strength instead of Defense, and success means the defender must check for Knockdown as described on p. 168 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Summer Court Mystical Duel — No Catches: This duel, commonly invoked between powerful practitioners of magic, prohibits the use of catches for Contracts. All Glamour for fae magic must come from the changelings' own pool, meaning the duel is a contest of Glamour management as much as anything else. One opponent might try to outlast the other, relying on avoiding her attacks until she runs out of Glamour. Or, an opponent might try to strike at the other's weak points, using Contracts against which he has no easy defense. **Systems:** Game mechanics for Contracts and catches, of course, can be found in **Changeling: The Lost**.

Duels of the Autumn Court

The Autumn Court probably has the greatest variety of duels in all of the fae Courts, simply because they choose their dueling traditions from as wide a palette as they do with their magic. They welcome the chance to learn how other Courts, freeholds and even supernatural beings resolve their differences, because, of course, a new approach to a duel might yield a new use for Glamour or a new weapon against the Gentry. Autumn fae are also more open than other changelings to fighting symbolic duels, in which little is actually at stake except the shame of defeat.

This is because Autumn duels focus on being *innovative*. Every duel should be a learning experience. Duels to the death are uncommon because they are wasteful, but duels in which the loser is assigned to serve the winner for a specific period of time (a lunar month, a single night, a year and day, etc.) are quite common. It's not unknown, in fact, for a young Autumn changeling who wishes to learn from a more powerful member of the Court to challenge him to a duel, knowing that the result will be a period of indentured servitude (and therefore apprenticeship, at least to some degree).

Duels in the Ashen Court, of course, are also *frightening*. No matter what the duelists stand to gain or lose, there must always be some element of risk. Autumn duels are commonly fought in the Hedge, and this by itself is enough to put some fear into the participants — using the weapons of the Fae, in their domain, under an oath? All of these are risky behaviors, and the Autumn Court combines them. But that is the point; the changelings of the Leaden Mirror are always looking for new possibilities, new glimpses of the Wyrd. And that involves risk, even the risk of recapture.

Autumn Court Physical Duel — Fight to First Blood: The combatants meet each other armed with special token blades that ignore armor and even cloth, meaning that fighting defensively becomes the most important thing in the duel. But a further wrinkle is that the duelists can deny the cut, spending a point of Glamour to prevent their wounds from bleeding visibly (this is also a property of the blades). A duelist, therefore, doesn't have any idea how badly injured his opponent is, and can continue to press on, hoping that the opponent will acknowledge her wounds and concede before he passes out from blood loss. **Systems:** Dexterity + Weaponry in a contested action against an opponent's attack to parry a blow (this is an instant action); both parties should reveal their intent to strike or parry at the same time. Wits + Medicine to guess how injured the opponent is based on his facial expressions and speed of movement.

Autumn Court Mental Duel — Traps: This duel consists of one or both parties being placed in a room and having to escape before something painful or fatal happens. The trap itself is usually the product of the opponent's imagination, but a duelist agreeing to this sort of contest needs to be careful — if he doesn't phrase the Dueling Oath well, his opponent might well hire a Wizened carpenter to construct a near-inescapable trap. The trap can be as simple as a collapsing wall or as fiendish as a maze slowly filling with carbon monoxide, depending on what is at stake and how the combatants want to approach the duel. In either case, escape through the Hedge is usually seen as both immediate forfeiture of the duel and a good way to save one's skin if escape becomes truly untenable. **Systems:** Dexterity + Crafts as an extended action (building the trap), Intelligence + Investigation as an extended action (figuring out the trap).

Autumn Court Social Duel — Psychological Warfare: Everyone has secrets they would prefer to keep buried. This duel, however, consists of protracted investigation of the opponent, followed by messages, hints and rumors designed to destroy his social standing by undermining his self-control and stability. The simplest way to attack a changeling's stability, of course, is to attack Clarity, and a good (if cruel) approach is to learn about the target's durance and arrange for a reenactment. Rumors fly, of course, about changelings whose durances were so faithfully recreated that their Keepers actually appeared to reclaim them. **Systems:** Intelligence + Investigation (learning about a character's durance); Manipulation + Intimidation (verbal psychological warfare); Resolve + Composure (resisting the terror of having one's durance revisited).

Autumn Court Mystical Duel — The House of Doors: Both participants must move through a series of gateways in and out of the Hedge, in a predetermined order. The duelists usually arrange to have "checkpoints" set up so that a third party verifies that the order of the doors is correct. The duel measures skill at navigating the Hedge, as well as physical speed. If the surrounding mystical terrain permits it, the duelists might be required to use keys to open certain gateways, rather than simply using Glamour. **Systems:** Mechanics for opening gateways into and out of the Hedge and for using keys can be found on pp. 210–220 of **Changeling: The Lost**.

Duels of the Winter Court

Do the Winter Courtiers even fight duels? It seems almost antithetical to the Court's mores that they would. But the notions of honor, love and vengeance are just as poignant to the Silent Arrow as to any other changelings, and sometimes only a duel will suffice for restitution.

What the Winter Court *doesn't* do, predictably, is make a show of it. Winter duels are normally resolved with only the duelists, a witness or Judge, and (depending on the nature of the duel), a second. If a Winter Courtier fights a member of another Court, he hews to whatever customs the freehold or the opponent's Court lays down, but if the matter is between two adherents of the Onyx Crown, odds are no one else hears about it until it's long over.

The reason for this focus on *secrecy* is obvious: the Winter Court believes that only by keeping its collective head down can it avoid the notice of the Gentry. The Gentry can be fooled, of course (every changeling refugee is proof of that), but duels attract them. It's no coincidence that changelings look to duels to settle disputes; they learned it from their masters, like Haitian slaves adopting Catholicism. That doesn't mean that duels are meaningless; the Winter Court is well aware of the satisfaction that a duel can bring (and the sorrow it brings to the loser). But publicizing them is asking to be swept back into captivity, and no matter is worth that.

Winter duels are sometimes called "whispered duels." The challenge is usually delivered silently, via written missive, rather than with a public slap across the face and declaration. The terms are decided through intermediaries or letters (or, nowadays, e-mail). When the time of the duel arrives — and the Winter Court chooses these times almost at random, not wishing for traditionally significant times of day such as midnight or sundown — the participants do what they must and agree that the matter is closed. More important than the matter itself is that the duel must never lead the Others back into the changelings' lives.

The second focus of Winter duels is *finality*. Whatever happens during the duel, that has to be the end of it. The Others can track down those They have lost through rumors and legends, and feuds fuel both. A Winter changeling that pursues a duel he has lost (or won, for that matter) can expect ostracism, at best, from his Court.

This doesn't mean that duels to the death are any more common in the Winter Court than in the others, only that all parties must recognize that, win or lose, the duel marks the end of the matter. Winter monarchs sometimes require that both parties swear an oath never to speak of the matter again, or at least of the duel, before they will grant permission for the duel to take places.

Winter duels usually happen outdoors, far from any gateway that could open to the Hedge. If this is impractical, the Court sometimes assigns a scout to hide in the Hedge and give a signal if anything dangerous draws near. Again, though, the Court prefers as few witnesses as possible, and it's not unknown for Winter Duels to happen with only the interested parties present, with no way to confirm the duel's results but on their honor.

Physical Winter duels are often fought to first blood — this enables them to happen quickly. The participants use small, concealable blades, or sometimes silenced pistols, and the battle is over in seconds. Other physical duels include races (usually vertical, as they require less ground to be under scrutiny) or tests of stealth in which both parties must hide themselves from a Judge — a Beast Hunterheart, a Fate-sniffing Oracle, or even a captive Briarhound.

Mental duels among the Silent Arrow, not surprisingly, tend to rely on extant knowledge to solve problems. That is, such duels reward quick, decisive action, rather than flashy leaps of logic or esoterica. If it takes too long to discover a fact, the enemy will move on to the next stratagem and claim victory. The Winter credo, as in so many things, is think quickly, keep moving, and rely on what one has at hand.

Social duels in the Onyx Court are subtle and brutal. The Winter changelings can't risk developing reputations, and so artistic duels usually leave behind beautiful but anonymous pieces. Insult contests are common, but often the duel is to determine who can deliver the most biting insult in the fewest words. Steel Mark, an Elemental with a penchant for brusque insults, once won a duel by saying only three words to his opponent: "Escape? Ha. Flotsam."

Mystical Winter duels aren't common because the Silent Arrow knows that grandiose displays of magic can attract the Others. Settling disputes through duels is fine, but the Winter Court is predicated on the notion that only by hiding can changelings remain safe. "Not common," though, isn't the same as "unheard of," and mystical duels among Winter changelings are likely to be matters of tragic love or vengeance — something important enough to make a member of the Winter Court take such a risk.

Winter Court Physical Duel — Ice Maiden's Embrace: This is a test of endurance, usually invoked to resolve matters of vengeance or honor. In either case, the challenger doesn't necessarily want to win, he just wants to put the other party through as much pain as possible. The traditional way to enact this duel is in a frozen pond or river, though a vat of freezing water works as well. Both parties are slowly lowered in. The first one to give up and ask for release, or the first one to pass out, loses. **Systems:** Stamina + Resolve each turn to withstand the cold. See the effects of temperate extremes on p. 181 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Winter Court Mental Duel — Riddles in the Dark: Riddle contests are common manifestations of the mental duel, but the Winter Court has a specific way of handling them. The participants retire to someplace cold, dark and silent, and trade their riddles for as long as it takes for one member to be unable to answer. Cheating at the riddle contest (that is, asking a riddle that has no answer, or not admitting it when the opponent comes up with a correct response) is a dangerous move. The riddle contest is one of the oldest forms of duels known to the fae, and tales of changelings swallowed up by the darkness keep potential cheaters in line. **Systems:** Intelligence + Investigation to figure out a riddle (or to get a hint from the Storyteller, if the player would rather suss it out), Manipulation + Expression (to make up a new riddle).

Winter Court Social Duel — The Whisper Gambit: The combatants must convince other changelings of their righteousness in the duel by writing letters and spreading gossip — but all anonymous. That is, the other changelings of the area know who is involved in the duel, but not which participant a given letter is from. As such, it's possible to win by writing letters meant to impersonate one's opponent. The Whisper Gambit requires a pre-established way to send and receive letters, as well as a way for the recipients to make their decisions known. The Winter Court, fortunately, is usually well-equipped for this kind of communication. **Systems:** Manipulation + Expression (to write a convincing letter; this duel can be represented as an extended and contested action).

Winter Court Mystical Duel — The Broken Glass: Similar, in some ways, to the Strings of Desire duel (above), this duel consists of both participants using magic to break a glass of liquid. The traditional way is to freeze the liquid, which expands, thus shattering the glass, but it pays to know one's opponent and what his magical proclivities are. The Broken Glass duel sometimes becomes a series of attempts to fulfill the catches on various clauses of Contracts, in an attempt to win the duel without expending Glamour (and thus attracting unwanted attention). **Systems:** Various, depending on the Contracts being employed.

The Dueling Oath

A pledge isn't necessary to cement a duel, but no sensible changeling would enter into a duel without the protection of the Wyrd behind it. Otherwise, the temptation to cheat is just too great (not that oaths completely obviate cheating; see below). The Dueling Oath is handled just as other pledges are (see p. 175 of **Changeling: The Lost**), but include a boon that most other edges don't: the Sanctity of the Duel. This boon allows the participants to break oaths in pursuit of the duel without facing the sanctions normally associated with these oaths. For instance, a changeling might enter into a duel to the death with a member of his freehold, even though he has sworn an oath never to take the life of a fellow citizen. The Sanctity of the Duel protects him from the sanctions associated with killing (and thus violating the freehold's oath). The duel, in effect, creates a loophole. The changelings can take actions *within the duel* that would normally be *verboten*.

The operative phrase, of course, is "within the duel." Dueling Oaths should be very specific, both because of the power that they grant and because a clever changeling can use a badly-worded Dueling Oath in his favor.

Dueling Oaths often do *not* add up to zero the way other pledges do; this is because they seldom grant boons and normally don't last longer than a day. The Sanctity of the Duel boon, though, is considered to be the "meat" of the pledge, and is important and powerful enough to make up the difference between the traits.

A Dueling Oath should include each of the following considerations:

- **Form of the Duel:** The most important consideration is what form the duel takes. If the Oath simply refers

to the duel as a "fight," and places no other specifications, one opponent might be within his rights to ambush the other and kill him in his sleep. The Oath should specify how the duel is going to be fought, where, when and with what weapons (if any).

• **Winning Condition:** How will victory be decided? If the duel is to the death, can one participant forfeit, or does someone *have* to die for the matter to be decided? If the duel is a mental or social one, is a Judge required? How will the Judge be decided upon? In duels where a Judge is necessary, the Judge usually swears a separate oath to remain impartial and to adjudicate based only on the matter at hand, rather than any external influence.

Participants need to be careful in deciding upon a winning condition. If the condition becomes impossible for whatever reason (for instance, the duel is meant to be a musical battle to win the heart of a Fairest maiden, but she chooses a new suitor before the duel is actually fought and refuses to participate), both participants run the risk of suffering the sanction of the duel — or, worse, becoming Oath-Locked (see sidebar).

• **Consequences:** The sanctions of the Dueling Oath apply only if a participant tries to cheat in the duel or otherwise dodge the particulars of the Oath itself. The consequences of the duel apply to the changeling who loses. If the duel is to the death, the consequence is obvious; but if not, the losing changeling might have to offer allocution, or even turn himself in to the mortal authorities and submit to their judgment (if he has committed a crime in the eyes of the law). He might need to serve under the winning changeling for a predetermined amount of time, or he might be forbidden from ever speaking of the matter at hand. In any case, the consequences of the duel often involve their own oath, which might be sworn when the Dueling Oath is sworn or when the duel is actually decided. In either case, both participants need to be certain the outcome is one they can abide by.

The Dueling Oath is *usually* a vow (that is, invested into the changeling's Wyrd), but duels to the death are sometimes made into oaths on the changeling's true name or name of a higher power (including Love).

Example: Physical Duel — The Back-Alley Brawl

The streets have their own code, especially where changelings are concerned. This form of the Dueling Oath precedes a fight in an alley, parking lot or other informal location.

— Whatever we find to use as weapons, that's what we'll use. Whoever is left standing, that's who wins. If someone breaks up the fight, it's on them, not us. Bring in extra help, pull out your own weapon, open a gateway, try to cheat any other way, and you'll never raise a fist again. Let's go out and settle this.

Type: Vow

Tasks: Forbiddance, Lesser (using outside help or weapons) –1

Boons: Sanctity of the Duel, Blessing (+1, with a reflexive Wits + Weaponry roll, participants can always find a weapon on the battlefield that inflicts 1B)

Sanction: Vulnerability, Violence (–2, breaking the terms of the duel)

Duration: Day (+1)

Invocation: 1 Willpower (both participants)

Example: Mental Duel — The Riddle Contest

The Riddle Contest, as mentioned above, is one of the staples of changeling society. Many True Fae are unable to resist a challenge to such a contest (not that it's generally a good idea to challenge them), and even brutish ogres and distant elementals show a strange interest in, if not always affinity for, word games and puzzles. It's just something in the fae nature. Using the Riddle Contest as a duel, though, requires some ground rules, and violating them always seems to carry consequences far beyond what the participants would expect.

— We two shall sit together, and be silent, but for the riddles and their answers. No questions shall be asked and no objection be raised. Each riddle asked must have an answer, and if one is unable to answer a riddle, the one who asked must provide the answer. To speak out of turn or to ask a riddle without an answer is to accept madness and loss of thought. The one who is unable to answer is defeated, and must accept that defeat, and never again speak of the matter.

Type: Vow

Tasks: Endeavor, Medial (–2, the contest itself)

Boons: Sanctity of the Duel

Sanction: Flaw, Medial (–2, derangement if a participant speaks out of turn or asks a riddle without an answer); Forbiddance, Medial (–2, the loser may not speak of the matter of the duel again)

Duration: Day (+1)

Example: Social Duel — The Painting of Death

This grim duel is reserved for matters of truly dire import, as it is a duel to the death. Both participants have one week in which to paint the other's death. Some versions of the duel place restrictions on the size of the "canvas," but murals using entire edifices aren't unknown. The ruler of the local freehold is usually recruited as a Judge, but anyone with at least Mantle •••• will do.

— It has come to this: one shall die and one shall live. Starting now, I shall each take seven days and seven nights and set down my vision of your death. In seven days and seven nights, I shall show my vision to [the Judge]. Whose vision is chosen as the truest representation of death shall live, and the

loser shall suffer the death that the winner has envisioned for him. Death shall watch over us artists, and protect us from the unforeseen, but claim either of us who attempts to take another's vision as his own.

Type: Vow

Tasks: Endeavor, Medial (–2, the painting)

Boons: Sanctity of the Duel; Blessing, Special (participants cannot die while the duel is underway; the last Health box simply does not fill, and miraculous coincidences protect them from incidental damage — a book in a pocket stops a bullet, etc.)

Sanction: Death (–3, to the loser *or* a participant who cheats)

Duration: Week (–1)

Example: Mystical Duel — The Duel in Dreams

Oneiromachy, discussed in detail on p. 198 of **Changeling: The Lost**, has served as a staple mystical duel for centuries. The Duel in Dreams oath, though, allows the battle to take place in the mind of a specific person. For duels of love, this is usually the mind of the "beloved" in question. For duels of honor or vengeance, the dreamer might be someone who was wronged, or someone who, by rights, should witness the result of the duel (that is, someone with a personal stake in the matter).

— Let my mind be the field of battle. Let my dreams set the stage for this duel. The duel begins when I begin to dream, and ends when I awaken. The one who strikes a blow last before I wake shall be the winner, if no winner emerges before then. I accept the shock of oneiromachy, but I accept no further attacks upon my person, and any such attack is forfeiture of both the duel and of the duelist's own dreams.

Type: Vow

Tasks: Dreaming (–2)

Boons: Sanctity of the Duel

Sanction: Flaw (–2, subject is unable to regain Willpower from sleeping if he cheats at the duel or directly attacks the dreamer)

Duration: Day (+1)

Cheating

Every Dueling Oath has a sanction built into it to punish unscrupulous fae who would ignore the rules of the contest. Some duels, though, aren't sealed with the Dueling Oaths, and sometimes a changeling decides that, for whatever reason, winning the duel by any means necessary is worth violating the oath. If the duel doesn't have the Wyrd backing it, cheating is just a matter of concealing one's actions from any Judges or witnesses (this, of course, is one reason why changeling duelists *do* rely on the Dueling Oath). If the participants have sworn the Oath, though, the question presents itself: why would a changeling cheat?

Cheating at a duel sealed by an Oath, after all, means that the changeling can't possibly "win" the duel. The Wyrd recognizes who won through the Oath, and a changeling that claims to have won is just perpetuating a lie. He also suffers the sanction from the Oath, and runs the risk of losing Clarity. Why take all these risks?

One possibility is that the changeling doesn't really care about the duel. He might be setting up the duel to cause a distraction for the other Lost in the area, perhaps as part of a coup for an ally to seize power. Loyalists and privateers, too, have been known to arrive at a freehold, challenge a prominent and powerful changeling to a duel, let the defender name the terms of the duel and design the Oath, and then cheat. This violation of the Wyrd sends up a flare, as it were, allowing the Gentry to find and (potentially) come to the aid of their servant.

Another possibility is that the cheating changeling really *is* invested in the matter of the duel, but doesn't care about the formality or the ancient customs surrounding the Dueling Oath. All he wants is the matter to be resolved, and if that means taking matters into his own hands and coping with the consequences, so be it. A changeling who agrees to a swordfight, but keeps a small pistol hidden on his person should the fight go against him, might just want the other duelist dead. The duel allows him to get close enough to finish the job, and maybe he can do it without cheating, but if he can't, he's willing to ignore the Oath he swore and pull the trigger. Tragically, of course, many Dueling Oaths are worded to preclude the possibility of cheating — the swordfight's Dueling Oath might state that any modern weapon produced during the duel simply won't work. The defender loses the duel, and probably his life into the bargain, because he couldn't play by his own rules.

A related question is this: what if the changeling waits until a (non-lethal) duel is resolved, and then attacks in a more mundane fashion? Consider, in the example above, if the swordfight is to be decided by first blood rather than a death stroke. The changeling with the gun waits until the duel is over, he has lost (or even won!), the matter is decided, and the obligation to the Wyrd has been discharged… and then he pulls the gun and shoots his opponent in the back. Does the Wyrd respond?

It depends upon the wording of the Oath, of course. Many Dueling Oaths include a clause stating that the matter is never to be mentioned again, for exactly this reason. As such, refusing to let the matter go is considered cheating, but it doesn't always have a specific sanction. Some changelings are simply unable to pursue the matter further — the changeling reaches for the gun, but cannot draw it, at least not in pursuit of the matter that instigated that duel (though if he were to find himself in a fight on an unrelated matter with his enemy, he could still shoot him). Changelings that are strong enough of will to ignore the Wyrd's directive to let the matter lie often go mad, becoming un-

able to do *anything* except purse the object of their obsession. Even if the mortal enemy that prompted a duel of vengeance, or the paramour that prompted a duel of love dies, the duel goes on. It is literally the only thing the changeling can think about. Such changelings become little more than ghosts, reflections of their previous selves. Many haunt the Hedge, because the Hedge responds to their thoughts and leads them to other changelings that might fall neatly into their delusions.

A third possible reason to cheat is sheer ignorance. Changelings who have only arrived recently from Arcadia, or who don't remember much or anything of their durance, might regard the notion of being magically *bound* to their word as silly. After all, human beings are used to being able to lie with impunity — yes, there are consequences under certain circumstances, but people can say whatever they want, guarantee or promise whatever they feel would be expedient, and change their minds later as it suits them.

Changelings do not have that luxury. A changeling that swears an oath risks losing Clarity in addition to whatever sanctions might be imposed if he violates it. A changeling *knows* when he has sworn an oath (it's almost impossible to do by accident, after all), but it's one thing to know and another thing to acknowledge. A changeling in denial about his true nature, believing this all to be a dream or evidence of insanity, might agree to a duel, swear an Oath, and then cheat, reasoning that this is all absurd anyway. This changeling is in for a rude awakening, though — the Wyrd doesn't care what a changeling believes or expects. What was sworn, was sworn, and there is no escaping the sanctions of the duel.

Formalities — Cheating the Wyrd

It's possible to enter into a duel with nothing truly at stake. This type of duel is called a *formality*. It might apply if the outcome of the duel isn't in doubt, but both parties would feel some satisfaction by "fighting" it, or are obliged to do so. For instance, consider a Fairest Draconic who is an expert hand-to-hand combatant. One night at a Court function, a Beast Runnerswift spills a drink on him and inadvertently insults his wife (said Beast is more than a little inebriated). The Draconic challenges the Beast to a duel to repair this loss of honor; the Beast, also drunk, agrees. Come morning, both parties realize what idiots they are — but they have already sworn the Dueling Oath, and not fighting it would involve sanctions for both of them. The duel therefore becomes a formality, since the outcome of the fight is a foregone conclusion.

A duel might also be a formality if custom demands that the duel happens, but both parties involved want the same result. For instance, consider a Darkling who has a mortal sister upon whom he dotes. He swears an oath to protect his sister, and to only allow a worthy mate to approach her — someone clever enough to best the Darkling in a riddle contest. Over time, a member of the Darkling's motley — an Ogre — proves himself to be loyal, strong and capable, and he and the Darkling's sister fall in love. The Darkling has to go through with the riddle contest, but he *wants* the Ogre to win. The duel, therefore, is a formality. It has to happen so that the Wyrd will be satisfied, but the riddle probably won't be especially hard.

The problem with this is that the Wyrd can often tell the difference between a duel fought earnestly and a formality, and it might view a formality as a violation of the Dueling Oath. If this happens, the changelings involved often experience a sick feeling when the duel is completed, and then both (or all, if the duel involves a Judge or a witness) feel the effects of the sanctions. A formality doesn't cause a changeling to risk Clarity loss.

Systems: If a player's character is involved in a formality duel that is sealed by a Dueling Oath, make a Clarity roll for each changeling character involved. This roll is contested by a roll combining the Wyrd ratings of all of the changelings involved. If the Wyrd roll garners more successes than *any* of the Clarity rolls, the Wyrd takes offense at the formality and the characters involved experience the sanctions.

Example: In the case of the Darkling/Ogre riddle contest above, each of the players rolls his character's Clarity (six for the Darkling, seven for the Ogre), while the Storyteller rolls a pool consisting of their combined Wyrd ratings (four for each character, for a total of eight). The Darkling's player rolls four successes, the Ogre's player rolls one, and the Storyteller rolls three. Since the Storyteller's roll exceeded one of the players' roll, the Wyrd notes that this riddle contest is being fudged. The "duel" concludes, but the sanctions apply. What this does to the love affair between the Ogre and the Darkling's sister is anyone's guess — perhaps now the Darkling feels the Ogre really *does* need to best him somehow to be worthy.

Storytelling Duels

The preceding section is meant to give the Storyteller an idea about how duels work in changeling society, why changelings engage in them and what they mean in system terms. This section covers the practical reality of using duels in a chronicle.

The Player's Character as the Challenger

If a character makes a challenge, it's up to the Storyteller to wring maximum drama and enjoyment out of the situation. That does *not* mean arranging the circumstances so that the character loses the duel or is playing to his weakest set of abilities. If the brutish Ogre challenges a character to a duel, it's probably inappropriate to have the defender stipulate a test of social niceties.

Yes, from a purely strategic standpoint, this makes sense. But it's not something that happens in literature, and that's because it doesn't make much dramatic sense. Changelings

fight duels because the instinct to do so has been ground into them during their time in Arcadia, and part of that instinct is a drive to make sure that the duel is, if not fair, then at least appropriate. When accepting or crafting a duel on the part of a Storyteller character, then, consider how to structure the duel so as to make it not completely one-sided (if the Ogre challenges a frail but devious Flowering, a battle with war-hammers probably isn't the best way to go), but to allow both sides to play to their strengths.

Quite apart from any consideration about Arcadia and the mindset of the fae, from a practical standpoint, if changelings couldn't expect a fair fight in a duel, the tradition of dueling would vanish from changeling society entirely. The Ogre, in challenging the Flowering, knows that he can't expect his opponent to choose trial by combat — or at least, if the Fairest *does* opt for a fight, the specifics will favor his style of fighting as much (or more) as that of the Ogre. As Storyteller, you need to keep all of this in mind when the player takes the initiative to begin a duel.

Consider, too, the implications of that last sentence — if a player wants his character to have a duel, he is taking the *initiative* to create a story within your chronicle. That means that the events of the chronicle thus far have inspired him, which means you are doing your job as Storyteller. Try to get a sense of how the player (and the rest of the troupe) wants the duel to go; make it challenging, but make it fun.

Of course, it might be that the challenge is completely inappropriate. A changeling fresh from the Hedge who challenges Grandfather Thunder can expect to be soundly thrashed for his trouble — but that's not a bad thing, in terms of the chronicle! Loss of a duel doesn't have to mean death, as this section has hopefully shown, and since the defender usually has some say in the nature of the challenge, the Storyteller has the ability to let the player's character learn his lesson, get his comeuppance, and come away from the situation a little wiser. That's good drama, and it's worth a Learning Curve experience point, too (see p. 217 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

The Player's Character as Defender

Player-controlled characters tend to be the exceptions, the instigators, the squeaky wheels, if you will. As such, it's inevitable that they're going to annoy, offend or anger someone during the chronicle. That someone might well respond with a duel challenge.

The advice above applies to players' characters as defenders. If custom dictates that the defender chooses the duel, it's incumbent upon the player to choose something that allows for an interesting story (though nothing says the player can't give his character the advantage — there's a difference between keeping things dramatic and abandoning strategy altogether). Look at the aggressor and the defender, and determine where the common ground is — what kind of duel would decide the matter and give both participants a good chance of victory? What kind of duel is thematically appropriate to the matter at hand?

Consider, too, that the aggressor is the one with the ax to grind, and is therefore more likely to cheat. Is that something the Storyteller-controlled challenger is likely to try? If so, why? If the defender realizes what is happening, does he have any recourse, or does he just have to tough it out and bring up the matter later?

If the player's character wins, is that the end of it? Duels are meant to decide matters, and so from a story perspective, it makes sense for the story to end with the duel. But some matters just don't die, and it's up to the Storyteller to determine whether revisiting the events of the duel in a later story would fuel good roleplaying, or whether it would feel redundant.

Duels Between Players' Characters

As mentioned earlier in this section, it's possible to use the Dueling Oath to get around other oaths, such as a motley pledge, that would normally forbid two changelings from harming one another. That means two player-controlled characters might wind up fighting a duel, and that's perfectly all right, provided the drama it creates is the good, within-story drama and not the uncomfortable, intra-troupe drama. This kind of duel might require greater arbitration from the Storyteller to make sure the Dueling Oath is sound and doesn't favor one party too much or create a gaping loophole.

Duels between characters might be best left up to the dice. Yes, good strategies (discussed below) can skew the duel in favor of one side or another, but if winning or losing comes down to who rolls better on a roughly equal dice pool, it's hard to argue favoritism. Then again, some players don't want to win by 10-sided fiat, and are perfectly willing to accept a Judge's ruling, as this gives them a chance to shine creatively. As with everything else about being a Storyteller, adjudicating this situation means knowing your players and knowing what *they* think would make for a good story. The best way to find out, of course, is to ask.

Preparing for the Duel

Both sides, whether controlled by player or Storyteller, need to come up with an approach to the duel. Once the particulars of weapons, type and Dueling Oath have been decided, the duelists need to figure out what they are actually going to *do* when the big day arrives. If time permits, the players might spend experience points on Merits, Skills, Contracts and Specialties that grant them bonuses in situations relevant to the duel (as Storyteller, know that it is *extremely* poor form to allow a player to purchase traits that he thinks are relevant to the duel and then base the duel on a different set of dice pools entirely).

Make sure the duelist's player knows what the physical space for the duel is going to look like. If you can, find pictures online of a similar space so that the player knows what he has to work with. Figure out what the weapons, if any, can do in game terms, and consider whether any special rules might be appropriate. Give the player(s) enough information that he can determine what the best course of action will be for the duel.

If the duel is a mental or social contest, preparing for the duel might require composing poetry, creating artwork, looking up and memorizing riddles, and the like. In situations like this, remember that the character probably has very different capabilities than the player. The *character* might have the Eidetic Memory Merit, but few of us can actually remember everything we've heard or read verbatim. As such, it's probably allowable for such a character's player to have a cheat sheet of relevant facts before the duel begins, even though the character isn't allowed any such crutch. Likewise, a character might be a master poet (high Expression) while the player doesn't know iambic pentameter from a dirty limerick. That's the time to let the dice do the talking. After all, you wouldn't make the player of a master swordsman stand up and demonstrate a riposte to make sure the character could do it, would you?

After the Duel

"Honor is satisfied" — but suppose it isn't? Once the duel is over, the characters are assumed to have worked the matter out of their systems. In reality, it's never that simple, but this isn't reality. Changelings often *do* feel satisfied with the results of a fair duel, whether they win or lose, and that is because they have agreed that this contest will decide the matter. As with so many things related to the fae, the agreement makes it so.

In story terms, too, once a matter is decided by a duel, not a lot of dramatic potential remains in harping on it. That said, the duel can certainly raise other plot points. A duel to the death ends with the character's enemy slain in honorable combat — but do the mortal police see it that way? What about the enemy's Keeper, still searching for him after many years? A social duel might garner a reputation for the winner (or, if the duel was unjustly decided, the loser). A mental duel might open up new avenues of debate among the changelings of the area, and today's philosophical debate can spawn tomorrow's revolution and coup. A mystical duel might open up new trods in the Hedge, spawn the growth of new goblin fruits, or, of course, attract the Gentry.

A duel story should probably resolve the matter, but the matter of the duel can be a jumping-off points for many other stories. The Storyteller and the players should look at the duel in the context of the ongoing chronicle, and determine, from there, what the duel really means.

War Magic

When the Lost go to war, they don't take any chances. The stakes, their freedom and lives, are too precious to be squandered. Over the millennia, the changelings have adapted several enchantments and mystical items for use on the field of battle.

Contracts of the Board

The Lost possess an intimate understanding of the magic of metaphor, how one thing can be so like another thing that altering one magically alters the other as well. Long ago, some clever changeling recognized the connection between games and war, and forged these Contracts with a power referred to as "the Great Board," the embodiment of strategy play. Each of the great Courts claims to have originated these clauses; while Summer Courtiers swear the shared history of their Court and these powers should be self-evident, the Lost of the Ashen Mirror often claim to have crafted it to beat the Iron Spear at its own game. Nobody mentions the fact that the Gentry so often have affection for powers just like these.

Contracts of the Board are considered affinity Contracts for all changelings.

The Honest Eye (•)

Winning against a skilled opponent can be difficult; overcoming a cheater can prove impossible. This clause helps a changeling level the playing field by unmasking cheating competitors. It can be used to identify a cheater in any formalized competition with a time limit and specified rules, including board games, card games, sports and even formal debates. Unfair advantages (such as those granted by kith blessings) do not count as cheating unless they break the rules of the competition.

Note that no use of the Contracts of the Board counts as cheating for the purposes of this power.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Wits + Wyrd vs. subject's Composure + Wyrd

Action: Reflexive and Contested

Catch: The changeling has caught the subject cheating (at any game) in the past without the use of this Contract.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling believes her opponent is playing honestly, whether or not she is.

Failure: The changeling can't tell whether or not her opponent is cheating.

Success: If the changeling rolls more successes than the subject, she knows whether or not he is cheating.

Exceptional Success: Not only does the changeling know whether or not the subject is cheating, she also knows how.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	Subject is a known cheater
–1	Changeling is a known cheater
–3	Changeling is cheating or has cheated during the same game in which she uses this power

Knowing the Competition (••)

Sitting across the board from someone, an infamous chess master among the Lost used to claim, is the only way to truly know them. Chances are, he was speaking of this clause. Use of this power allows a changeling to distill through Glamour her experiences playing a game with another individual into a brief flash of insight into the individual's methods, granting her a distinct edge. Note that the game the characters shared must be played to completion.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling uses this clause during a rematch of the initial competition.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling grossly misjudges her opponent. Her next roll against the individual is automatically a chance roll.

Failure: The power fails to have any effect.

Success: The changeling experiences a brief and sudden moment of insight into how the subject's mind works. She gains a +4 bonus to her next dice pool rolled against the subject, no matter what the pool is. (So yes, this power allows a character to throw a more accurate punch against a person after having played a game of gin with him.) The character must play another game with the subject before using this Contract on him again.

Exceptional Success: As per success, save the character may use the Contract again without having to play another game with the subject.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Game played was directly applicable to the current circumstances (i.e. when in war against a general the character played chess against or in a fight with an Ogre the character once arm-wrestled)
–2	The subject cheated during the game without the character's knowledge

The Living Game (•••)

At times of war, the Lost are sometimes confused to find their leaders playing games by themselves. If they wait long enough, they may well be shocked to see the game play back.

Cost: 3 Glamour

Dice Pool: Wyrd + Occult

Action: Instant

Catch: The character uses a game appropriate to the situation at hand. For example, using chess in a competition between two groups of roughly similar size and strength (such as a football game), blackjack in a situation where several groups are combating a single enemy or poker in a situation where multiple groups have taken to fighting every changeling for himself.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character learns inaccurate information about the battle or game.

Failure: The power fails to take effect.

Success: The movements of the character's phantasmal opponent's pieces or the composition of its cards represents the developments in a different conflict (of the character's choosing). Through this clause he gains a detailed account of the combat or competition that allows him to react to developments on the field without the need for reports. (This is especially useful when combined with the Game Master's Table, below.)

The information granted by a game is limited to tactical information. While the changeling knows that the loss of a chess piece means that an individual or unit is no lon-

ger relevant to the battle, he does not know whether or not that person was captured, injured, or killed.

Exceptional Success: The character's phantasmal partner performs actions *before* they occur on the battlefield, granting the character a +3 bonus on all rolls for determining tactics to use in the real conflict that the game represents.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	Commander of the enemy faction or team is also using this Contract and using the same game to represent the conflict
+1	Character has played the game against the leader of the enemy group
–2	Character has never personally met the leader of the enemy group
–5	Character is playing a game with which she is unfamiliar

The Game Master's Table (••••)

This clause allows the changeling to use her game board to give information as well as receive it. She must provide individuals or unit leaders with small tokens appropriate to the game she intends to play (such as playing cards or chess pieces) before the conflict begins. Then she may deliver orders to her troops by moving her pieces across the board (or whatever actions are appropriate to the chosen game). The troops are not compelled by this power, but they do recognize the impulses towards given actions as commands from their leader.

Cost: 4 Glamour or 4 Glamour and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The character takes time beforehand to prepare each game piece or card to be given out and used on the board, personalizing it to the character it will represent. This effort takes an hour of work for a standard chess set or deck of cards, requires access to the followers, and may necessitate one or more successful Crafts rolls depending on circumstances at the Storyteller's discretion.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The power takes effect, but the commands given come out garbled. This levies a –3 penalty on all attempts to command from behind the scenes for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The Contract has no effect.

Success: The game becomes magically bound to the character's followers. The character transmits commands to his followers on the field through the use of a game board or playing cards. This transmission is instantaneous and recognized by the receiver for what it is. The commands can only provide information of a tactical nature — a command to take a ridge or destroy an enemy unit works, for example, but not a command to put on a disguise or sing a song. When used in conjunction with the Living Game clause, this power allows a character to lead an army and respond to enemy movements without being anywhere near the combat.

Characters watching a changeling use this power cannot understand the connections between what she is doing and what is occurring on the battlefield unless they use the Living Game to do so. It has been said that some particularly decadent leaders duel or determine Court leadership by preparing two groups of humans (or, if rumor is to be believed, changelings) and then sitting at the same table, their dark game reflected in the deaths of dozens. Certainly the Gentry have been known to engage in such grim play.

This power has a range of (Wyrd) miles. The Contract's effect lasts for one scene, but the character may spend a Willpower point to extend the duration until the next sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first. At the end of the power's duration, the items provided to the followers to establish the connection transform into poetically appropriate detritus reflecting the Contract's user: a Fairest's cards might become rose petals while a Darkling's chess pieces may decay into dry cobwebs. The power cannot be used again without providing the followers with new pieces.

Exceptional Success: As above, save the followers react with exceptional speed and coordination, as if an extension of their commander's will. Characters under the user's command gain a bonus of +2 to all actions for the remainder of the scene (regardless of the length of the effect).

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	Commander of the enemy faction or team is also using this Contract and using the same game to represent the conflict
+2	Character chooses a game particularly appropriate to the conflict at hand
+1	Character has played the game against the leader of the enemy group
–2	Character has never personally met the leader of the enemy group
–5	Character is playing a game with which she is unfamiliar

The Cheater's Gambit (•••••)

Sometimes an even battlefield simply isn't even enough. This clause allows a changeling to wreak havoc on his enemies — by knocking over game pieces or using a marked deck in a game against an invisible opponent.

Cost: 4 Glamour and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Wyrd versus enemy leader's Composure + Wyrd

Action: Instant and Contested

Catch: Changeling has played this game with an individual who died within the past week.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The attempt at cheating rebounds on the character, causing the group she supports to suffer a –4 to all rolls during the next turn.

Failure: The power fails to affect the targets.

Success: The character cheats the subject's followers in the game of fate, levying a far-ranging if short-lived curse against their efforts. On the following turn, all followers of the subject involved in the conflict suffer a –4 penalty to any dice roll for their own actions (resistance dice pools are not affected). This penalty fades the following turn. This sudden downswing of fortune may manifest as a moment of bad weather, a broken communication line, a sudden rout or a simple turn of horrid luck. Whatever way fate takes its toll on the enemy, the subject of the Contract (i.e. the enemy leader) automatically knows that a character just messed with fate on a large scale. In short, he *knows* the character cheated.

Exceptional Success: As success, save the subject doesn't realize that a Contract was used.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	Commander of the enemy faction or team is also using this Contract and using the same game to represent the conflict
+1	Character has played the game against the leader of the enemy group
–2	Character has never personally met the leader of the enemy group
–3	Subject suspects that character will attempt to cheat in some way
–5	Character is playing a game with which she is unfamiliar

Contracts of Thorns and Brambles

The Lost have a tumultuous relationship with the Hedge. They fear what lurks in the darkened twists of that labyrinth, yet they hide among the Thorns and use gates into the Hedge to escape pursuit. In times of war, the Hedge becomes a series of supply lines, escape routes and battlegrounds.

The connection between the Hedge and the Contracts of Thorns and Brambles remains a mystery to most of the Lost. The Contract grants no additional ability to a changeling to manipulate the Hedge, instead granting them power over hedges and thorns of the mortal world. Yet some of the Contracts seem to function better in the Hedge than they do elsewhere. This dichotomy leads some savants among the changelings to suspect that the Contracts of Thorns and Brambles may have originated as some Faustian bargain between the Contracts' creator and the Hedge itself. Whatever the truth of the matter, use of the Contracts of Thorns and Brambles has become widespread among the Lost, and few Contracts are so valued during times of war.

Contracts of Thorns and Brambles are considered affinity Contracts for all changelings.

Bite of the Wooden Fang (•)

The most basic expression of the changeling's power to mimic the terrible maze through which they first fled their captors, Bite of the Wooden Fang demands the user tithe a fraction of his power to a blunt weapon made of wood, vine, or other plant matter. The weapon must inflict bashing damage for this Contract to take effect. An enemy struck by a weapon empowered by this Contract is slashed and bitten by dozens of thorns that rise invisibly from the weapon at the instant of contact.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Wyrd

Action: Reflexive

Catch: The changeling uses a whip made of plant materials, such as a hemp rope or even a thick vine.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The thorns bite back, causing the character to drop her weapon. Her instant action for the turn is lost.

Failure: The weapon does not grant any additional bonus.

Success: Invisible thorns appear along the length of the weapon, granting the weapon a bonus on the character's next attack equal to the number of successes rolled. This bonus stacks with the weapon's usual bonus.

Exceptional Success: As per success, and the weapon's damage is converted to lethal.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	Contract is used as part of a formal Hedge duel
+1	Contract is used in the Hedge (does not stack with Hedge duel bonus)
–2	Contract is used against a changeling benefiting from Armor of the Elements' Fury

Whips

Most whips are six-foot long (or longer) weapons of braided leather. They require more finesse to use than a baseball bat (or short sword), and thus attacks with a whip are rolled with the attacker's Dexterity + Weaponry. Most whips inflict 1(B) damage, though a character might affix metal objects at the end of the whip to upgrade the damage to 0(L).

Whips appropriate for the use of the above Contract are made of somewhat less sturdy stuff, however, and inflict only 0(B) damage. While such a whip can be upgraded to –1(L) with the attachment of pieces of metal or similarly dangerous objects, such upgraded whips cannot be used with the Contract.

No matter the type of whip, a character can make an attack with a whip at a –3 penalty to disarm an opponent. Even a single success demands that the opponent roll Strength + Stamina — attacker's Dexterity to retain his grip on his weapon. (Note that the opponent takes no damage from this attack.) A character may use Bite of the Wooden Fang to supplement this roll: the invisible barbs help grip the weapon in question.

Leechweed (•)

This clause empowers an area of hedge growth or brambles, causing it to drain Glamour from those bitten by its thorns. Though this Contract is used almost solely in the material world, it *can* be used in the Hedge. When used in the Hedge, this clause manipulates only growth created by way of the other clauses of this Contract; it cannot alter the Hedge walls in any way. The use of Leechweed in the Hedge can be profoundly dangerous.

Cost: 2 Glamour

Dice Pool: Wyrd + Occult

Action: Instant

Catch: The Contract is used against someone in service to the character's Keeper or against the Keeper itself.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The brambles cling to the changeling, draining her of one point of her own Glamour in addition to any other effects determined by the type of bramble. Rolling a dramatic failure on this clause in the Hedge causes the Hedge wall to open up and swallow the changeling. The changeling loses one point of Glamour and is considered off the path (p. 220, **Changeling: The Lost**). She is separated from her companions and must navigate her way out of the Hedge in the usual manner.

Failure: The clause fails to take power. If used in the Hedge, a failure on this clause counts as a dramatic failure.

Success: When used on pre-existing (natural) brambles or thorns, this power causes all thorns within Wyrd yards to drain a point of Glamour from anyone pricked by them. This enchantment remains for the scene's duration, but can only drain a point of Glamour from any given changeling per turn and can only leech a maximum number of points of Glamour from a given changeling equal to the user's successes on the activation roll. A character can avoid being pricked by the thorns by moving at Speed 2 or less. Glamour taken this way does not transfer to the user, instead remaining within the plant. Rumor has it that such plants occasionally grow goblin fruit, and changelings have been known to use this clause (before sacrificing their own Glamour to the plants) in an attempt to cultivate such succulent treats without the dangers of entering the Hedge. There have been, to date, no reliable tales of success in this endeavor.

When used to enchant thorns created by another clause of this Contract, the enchantment spreads to the whole of the brambles and remains until the other clause ends. The details of the leeching power remain the same, save that the Glamour taken will be used to fuel the continuation of the effect. Empowered thorns may store an amount of Glamour for use in this manner equal to the character's Wyrd, and the thorns cannot choose not to spend the Glamour.

Example: *Demeter, a Woodblood Elemental of the Autumn Court, summons forth a Shield of Thorns when surrounded by her enemies of the Iron Spear. Knowing that her spell will keep her pursuers occupied for only a few moments, Demeter uses Leechweed to empower her Shield of Thorns.*

Now her thorns sap Glamour from her adversaries in addition to simply harming them. The thorny lashes may use the Glamour harvested from those within (because Demeter's Wyrd is 5, the brambles can store up to five points of Glamour) to remain in effect, spending one stolen point of Glamour with each passage of a number of turns equal to Demeter's initial successes on the activation roll for Shield of Thorns. With the knowledge that her thorns will persist after she is gone, Demeter makes her escape.

This power has no effect on creatures without a Glamour pool or changelings whose Glamour pool has been reduced to 0.

Exceptional Success: Additional successes are their own reward.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Contract is used on thorns summoned forth by another clause of this Contract
+1	Contract is used in the Hedge
–2	Contract is used on thorns summoned forth by another changeling or fae creature

Briarpath (•••)

Often times a changeling must evade pursuit from a stronger, faster adversary. This clause helps a character do just that. Long, vicious thorns erupt from the enchanted surface, slowing pursuers and making vertical surfaces almost impossible to climb.

Cost: 2 Glamour

Dice Pool: Wits + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The character litters a handful of Hedge thorns behind her.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The enchantment hounds the character rather than her adversary, painfully lacerating her hands and forearms. She suffers a –1 penalty to all rolls requiring the use of her hands for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The Contract fails to take effect.

Success: The changeling leaves a trail behind her of thorns and brambles that impede her enemies. The trail has a width equal to the changeling's Wyrd in yards and grows in her wake (across any surface, vertical or horizontal) for a number of turns equal to the successes she rolled. A character that moves through the area suffers the following hindrances: her Speed is reduced by one for each success garnered by the changeling, and she suffers a penalty equal to the number of successes rolled by the changeling on all Athletics rolls (such as those to run, jump, and climb) made while in the area of effect. The trail fades at the end of the scene.

Exceptional Success: As per success, save that characters moving through the trail find their Speed reduced to 1 and all Athletics dice pools reduced to a chance roll.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	Contract is used in the Hedge
–1	Contract is used in an urban area
–3	Contract is used in a locale entirely inappropriate for the growth of brambles, such as inside a well-kept science laboratory.

Shield of Thorns (••••)

The changeling learns to summon forth brambles from even the driest of earth, creating an almost impenetrable defensive barrier that lashes at any enemy who comes near. While this Contract is occasionally used in the Hedge, a changeling does so at her own risk.

Cost: 3 Glamour

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling cuts open her own flesh (inflicting 1 lethal damage in the process) and pours her blood across the area to be shielded.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: In most situations, a dramatic failure on this roll results in the user being struck by her own briars, suffering an immediate attack that inflicts a dice pool equal to her Wyrd in bashing damage. If this Contract was used in the Hedge, however, the damage is lethal and the changeling loses a point of Glamour per Health Level lost.

Failure: The Contract fails to take effect, and the ground remains unbroken. If the Contract was used in the Hedge, however, a failure counts as a Dramatic Failure.

Success: The earth splits, sprouting dozens of tangled brambles about the changeling in a circle with a radius equal to her Wyrd. Any character that moves more than two yards in a single turn within the tangled area suffers an immediate attack with a dice pool equal to the changeling's Wyrd. The attack inflicts lethal damage and ignores Defense (Armor still applies), but the brambles can only attack any given character once per turn. The briars die and rot to dust after a number of turns equal to the character's success on the activation roll, though the character may choose to spend a point of Glamour for the briars to remain for an additional period of equal length (and may continue to do so until she runs out of Glamour or chooses to end the effect). The field of briars does not move with the character, and she may leave it behind to attempt to make an escape.

Exceptional Success: Additional successes are their own reward.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	Contract is used in a rural area or forest
+1	Contract is used in the Hedge
–1	Contract is used in an urban area
–5	Contract is used in an area unsuited to plant growth

Hedge Shifting

Characters versed in the Contracts of Thorns and Brambles often take time to learn the wood variation of the Contracts of Elements (p. 138, **Changeling: The Lost**), as well. The lesser clauses of that Contract make use of the clauses listed here somewhat less dangerous, while Control Elements grants the character some control over the brambles she summons forth.

Similarly, a character with Control Elements can attempt to manipulate brambles created by another changeling's use of these powers. Doing so levies a penalty equal to the successes garnered by the changeling who initially used the power. If both characters possess Control Elements, the roll becomes a contested roll of both characters' Manipulation + Wyrd.

Hedgewall (•••••)

With a bellowing howl, the changeling calls forth a series of massive fortifications or hedges and brambles. Young changeling soldiers, fear of their flight through the Hedge still fresh in their minds, have been known to rout in fear at the sudden sight of towering hedgerows in the midst of a freehold. Clever changelings use this clause to hem in and trap enemies or funnel an advancing force into the waiting arms of a Court's defenses. Few fae magics are as blatant and impressive as this clause, and its use has been known to violate freehold oaths that put a particularly heavy emphasis on secrecy.

Cost: 4 Glamour or 4 Glamour + 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Wyrd

Action: Extended (5 successes necessary; each roll represents 1 turn)

Catch: The character transplants a small hedge bush from a rural locale to the location where the Contract is to be used immediately prior (within the scene) to using the Contract. While the bush obviously need not be taken from the ground in the same scene, it must still be alive when planted.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The hedge fortification grows wildly in a manner that benefits the character's enemies, whether by separating the character's motley or cutting off his retreat. If a dramatic failure of this clause occurs in the Hedge, the walls of that maze suddenly open a trod that leads directly to Arcadia and alerts the Gentry to the character's presence.

Failure: The fortifications fail to appear. If used in the Hedge, failure on this clause counts as a dramatic failure.

Success: Hedge walls erupt around the character, forming a maze. The character has a huge amount of control over the growth of the hedges, allowing for a great deal of versatility, but the following rules apply:

The walls summoned forth are two feet thick and too tightly grown to allow someone to pass through without using a machete or other tool. The walls provide substantial concealment (–3) against firearms attacks (and only firearms — other ranged attacks can't penetrate) and prevent close combat attacks. This Contract cannot be used inside the bounds of a human building, even one open to the sky (like a stadium). Whatever design the changeling gives the walls, they are always vertical, meaning that someone within the maze can always climb out (though a clever changeling might use this clause under an overpass, effectively cutting off the escape route above). The walls can be climbed, but the plants shift to prevent individuals from walking across the top of them. A character attempting to do so rolls Dexterity + Athletics each turn; she may move at a Speed equal to her successes on the roll, which counts as an instant action. Failure on the roll means the character makes no progress, while dramatic failure sends her plummeting back to the maze floor.

The changeling determines the height of the walls, which can range from the changeling's Wyrd to 10 + the changeling's Wyrd in feet. If the height of the walls is obstructed, they stop at that height (rather than spreading outward or punching their way through barriers). The length of the barrier can be as small as Wyrd yards and as long as Wyrd times 10 yards. Furthermore, the barrier must be a single unbroken wall and must touch the changeling at least one single point when created (in other words, it cannot be created at range, but the changeling can put the whole of the barrier between himself and his enemies). Finally, the walls of the hedge maze must allow room for those within to move; no wall surface can be closer than three yards to another (and circular structures must have a diameter of three yards). Otherwise, the changeling's imagination determines the layout of the fortifications. He might create a confusing maze, a simple barrier, a wall to funnel enemies down one side of an alleyway, or even a circular fortification to trap enemies within.

The barriers last for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled on the activation roll. By spending one Willpower point, the changeling can extend this duration to the end of the scene. At the end of the duration (whether in turns or at the end of the scene), the changeling may expend two points of Glamour to maintain the hedge maze for another duration of the same length. The power ends, however, at dawn or sunset, whichever comes first.

These hedges can be empowered by the other clauses of this Contract. Using Briarpath on the maze hedge applies that clause across all of the walls (as well as the top of the walls), but not across the ground within the maze. Leechweed results in any contact with the hedge walls seeping Glamour from the changeling who did so. The Shield of Thorns clause results in the appearance of small tendrils along the walls that strike at anyone who touches the wall. The changeling can sense when such an attack is being made and can enhance it with the Bite of the Wooden Fang clause as a reflexive action. Such enchantments last until the end of the scene or the end of this power, whichever comes first.

Exceptional Success: As per success, save the walls automatically benefit from the effects of Briarpath and Leechweed.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+5	Contract is used within an already extant hedge maze
+3	Contract is used in a rural area or forest
+1	Contract is used in the Hedge
–1	Contract is used in an urban area
–5	Contract is used in an area unsuited to plant growth

Goblin Contracts

While Contracts like Cheater's Gambit and Leechweed are hardly on the up-and-up, when changelings do battle they are more likely than usual to use some of the dirty little secrets they've picked up on the cheap at the Goblin Market. Trading Luck for Fate, Shooter's Bargain, Burden of Life and Delayed Harm (p. 164 to 167, **Changeling: The Lost**) are common sights on the battlefield of the fae, as are the following Contracts.

Mirror, Mirror (•••)

Sometimes a changeling *must* know what an enemy is up to. This Contract allows the changeling to watch an adversary's actions through a mirror for a short period. Unfortunately for the character, the next time the adversary peers into a mirror, she will be able to see the changeling.

Cost: 1 Glamour + 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Resolve + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling must break the mirror (by cracking its surface) before using this power. Given the tumultuous relationship between the Lost and fate, surprisingly few changelings are willing to risk such a catch.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The power seems to fail, but the next time the *subject* attempts to look through a mirror, he sees the changeling and may observe her for a number of minutes equal to the changeling's Wyrd.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The mirror's surface seems to fog over for a moment; when the fog clears, the changeling can see (and *only* see) the subject of the Contract. The perspective is always from a corner of the room (usually an upper corner, where two walls adjoin a ceiling) the subject is in. If the subject is outside, the image usually hangs above him and to one side by two to three feet. Either way, the image moves with the subject but is otherwise set on the subject. The changeling has no control over it. The image remains in the mirror, even if the mirror is set aside or left alone by the changeling, for a number of hours equal to the changeling's successes on the activation roll. While the subject has no way of knowing she is being watched, any mirror she looks into reflects not her own visage but that of the changeling — including whatever she's doing at that time.

Note that for the purpose of this Contract, a mirror must have been expressly constructed for the purpose of being a mirror. No other reflective surfaces, including items that were designed to be reflective for aesthetic purposes (such as certain pieces of art, car windows or sunglasses), count.

Exceptional Success: As per success, save that the length of the effect becomes the number of successes the changeling rolled multiplied by her Wyrd in hours and can be ended at will.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	Changeling has some personal effect of the subject (hair, fingernail clipping, underwear, etc.); if the character has such an item, the below penalty does not apply
–1 to –5	Familiarity with the subject, ranging from intimate friend or lover (–1) to casual acquaintance (–3) to someone seen once or twice from a distance (–5)
–10	Subject is a complete stranger, but the character has some image of her available for reference. If the character doesn't know what the subject looks like, she can't attempt to use this Contract.

Royal Oil (••••)

This vicious Contract has been outlawed in many domains. It produces a viscous supernatural liquid that clings to a character, making her far more susceptible to the ravages of flame. The effect gets its name from its drawback, a phantom crown of fire that rings the character's head, marking him as a user of this Contract.

A character must touch a target before using this effect.

Cost: 2 Glamour

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The character drinks a tablespoon of castor oil prior to using the power. The oil causes mild but distracting cramping, levying a –1 die penalty on all rolls for the scene.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The oil oozes forth from the character's skin… and remains there. She becomes susceptible to attacks from fire, and any such attacks inflict aggravated damage. The crown of fire does not appear, however, but that might be cold comfort for the changeling oiled-up by her own hand.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: Oil seeps forth from the character's skin and slides onto the subject's skin and clothes, spreading across her. She takes on a slight yellowish sheen, and others trained to recognize the effect know that she has been oiled (barring supernatural obfuscation on the part of the subject). The oiled character becomes particularly weak against fire, suffering aggravated damage from all such attacks. If the character already suffered aggravated damage from fire (if she is a vampire, for example), then such attacks against her do an additional three dice of damage.

Meanwhile, a crown of flickering flames appears above the changeling's head, marking him as the user of the Contract to all who know what it means. This crown reduces all Stealth rolls to a chance die and provides a +1 bonus to characters making ranged attacks on the changeling.

This power's effects, both on the changeling and her subject, last for a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled to activate the Contract.

Exceptional Success: Additional successes are their own reward.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
–2	The subject is undead (vampire, zombie, promethean, etc.)
–3	The weather is rainy or the subject's skin is otherwise particularly wet
–5	The subject is a normally-ephemeral entity, such as a ghost or spirit; this penalty applies even when such an entity is manifested

Goblin Ward (•••••)

Particularly paranoid Lost swear by this Contract, claiming that the usual security measures changelings adopt in their Hollows (namely the Hollow Wards Merit) simply don't go far enough to protect from privateers, loyalists, hobgoblins and the other dangers of the Hedge. Detractors question just how effective against hobgoblins such a ward can be if it is readily available at the Goblin Market.

The Lost paints an occult symbol in the location she hopes to ward against intruders. This is often a Hollow, but the power does not necessitate that the ward be placed within the Hedge. The Lost may specify any individuals she wishes to remain unaffected by the ward's magic. Thereafter, any other person who enters the area is temporarily mentally enervated, allowing the character to defend herself or make her escape.

Note: Changelings of Clarity 7 or higher who suffer the effects of this Contract must roll to avoid a loss of Clarity (four dice). This does not apply to any other form of the Morality Advantage.

Cost: 2 Glamour + 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wyrd + Occult

Action: Extended (5 successes necessary; each roll represents 10 minutes of ritual)

Catch: The character paints the ward in the blood of a murdered enemy.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The fae madness the character attempted to bind into the symbol escapes, overwhelming his senses. He suffers vivid hallucinations, possibly for hours. The character suffers a –5 penalty to all mental and social rolls until the following sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first.

Failure: The Contract has no effect.

Success: The character binds a fraction of the Wyrd into the symbol. The number of successes she rolls determines the potency of the ward. If the ward is never triggered, it remains in place for a month. If, however, characters not attuned to the ward approach within the changeling's Wyrd in yards, the ward goes off, showering everyone within the room or within 10 square yards (whichever is smaller) with mad fae magic. While the ward differentiates between those its creator attuned it to and those she didn't, the magic that pours forth when the ward has been set off is not so discriminatory, and will even affect the creator if she is within range. Each character in the area of effect must roll Composure + Wyrd at a penalty equal to the number of successes rolled by the ward's creator. Any character that fails this roll becomes overwhelmed by the madness of Faerie, his senses twisted and distorted and his mind numbed. He perceives enemies where there are none and mistakes strangers for friends, all tinged with the palpable magic of the fae.

A character affected by the ward suffers a –3 to all dice pools and a –2 to his Defense and Initiative. He suffers hallucinations, but may roll Resolve + Composure –3 to gain clarity for a number of turns equal to his Resolve. (This clarity does not reduce penalties, but does allow the character to differentiate a raven from a writing desk.) The effects last for a number of minutes equal to the ward creator's Wyrd. Once the ward's magic has been discharged, the ward becomes inert, its magic spent.

The creator, for his part, suffers from the amount of fae magic he must invest into the ward. He does not benefit from his seeming blessing (seeming curse and kith blessing are not affected) for as long as the ward exists, though he regains those benefits the moment the ward fades or is set off (allowing him to know that his fae alarm has been tripped, regardless of his current location). A changeling may have only one Goblin Ward active at any given time, and may end the Contract's effect at any time by physically destroying the symbol.

Exceptional Success: If the creator rolls 10 or more successes, the ward lasts for an additional month without further expenditure on the part of the changeling.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
–2	Ward is set anywhere aside from the Hedge or Arcadia

Tokens

Tokens form an indispensable portion of the magical firepower of the soldiers among the Lost. Tokens have the distinct advantage of offering a (more or less) predictable effect without siphoning too much Glamour from the user. Unfortunately, even the greatest token is twisted by ill-fated energy, making its use on the battlefield a dubious advantage.

Deadman's Mask (••)

This morbid item is a changeling's death mask left in the Hedge to absorb the magic of Faerie. The white plaster mask adopts a green tinge, sometimes taking on exquisite scrollwork or other imagery. When worn, the Deadman's Mask allows a changeling to abandon her current seeming and kith for that of the changeling whose face the mask bears. The character loses her usual seeming and kith blessings and curses for those of the deceased (meaning that any given Deadman's Mask "contains" only 1 seeming and kith combination). Furthermore, her appearance changes to reflect the shift in her fae nature, but only so much as to appear as she might have had she become a changeling of that seeming and kith in Faerie, limiting the token's usefulness as a disguise. (At best, the mask provides one or two bonus dice on a disguise roll.)

The mask remains on the character until such time as she chooses to remove it as an instant action. Afterwards the mask cannot be used again for an amount of time equal to five times the period the mask was worn. If she wore the mask for only an hour, the changeling must wait for five hours before she can wear it again. If she adopted the second identity for a year, the mask remains inert for five years.

Most changelings find the use of such a mask distasteful, and someone known to make a habit of it should expect no warm receptions from her fellow Lost.

Action: Instant

Mien: When used, the mask melds to the character's face, quickly adapting to it and taking her features. A rush of magic runs down the body like a shudder, obliterating the old seeming and replacing it with the new. Finally, the mask's eyes open.

Drawback: Some part of the changeling's fae being rejects being so casually tossed aside. After removing the mask, the changeling's seeming curse immediately returns, but neither her seeming nor kith blessings return for one week. During this time, the character seems somehow *less fae* than usual, sometimes resulting in suspicion from other changelings.

Catch: The changeling allows the Deadman's Mask to determine how long it wishes to remain on his face. The Storyteller rolls one die. If the result is a 1, the duration is in minutes. If it ranges from 2 to 7, it is in hours, and if it is 8 or above, it is measured in days. The Storyteller then rolls two more dice. The mask remains on the character for an amount of time equal to the sum of the two dice in a unit of time determined by the first die. The changeling does not know how long the effect will last and cannot remove the mask under any circumstances.

Dawnspear (•••••)

Legend has it the founder of the Dawn Court once wielded this mystical weapon. With it he promoted change across the lands he ruled, vanquishing those who clung too tightly to the hoary past. When inactive, this weapon seems nothing more than a long spearhead at the end of an equally old piece of wood (+1(L), grants a +1 bonus to Defense).

When activated, the Dawnspear grants a single character impressive prowess in combat. Her Defense and Speed are both doubled, and she gains a +4 bonus to her Initiative. When the character makes all-out attacks, her Defense falls to its usual value. When active, the Dawnspear grants a weapon bonus of +4(L). Furthermore, her attacks with the Dawnspear inflict aggravated damage against the Gentry.

Action: Instant

Mien: When activated, the head of the Dawnspear seems preternaturally sharp and polished to a sheen that reflects a misty green light from its point that trickles down the spear in a thin conical shape. Spirals of green so dark as to be almost black wrap through the ephemeral light, and the overall effect makes the weapon seem more a jousting lance than a spear.

Drawback: Use of the Dawnspear turns the character into an agent of change, whether she likes it or not. Wielding the weapon *always* results in some unplanned-for (and almost always unpleasant) consequence that changes the character's life (and typically the lives of others). The alien grace she shows while holding the weapon may inspire a companion to betrayal or the character may accidentally plunge the weapon through a loved one.

Catch: The weapon requires the wielder never live a static existence. Each use of the weapon without tithing Glamour results in the character developing some permanent change to her body or life. Initially such changes are merely cosmetic: scars, tattoos, additional horns, etc. Heavy use of this catch, however, carries heavy burdens. After 10 minor changes the character begins suffering significant changes, which can range from a shift of Merit points (up to 4 at the Storyteller's discretion) to a change of kith within the same seeming (again, Storyteller's choice). After 10 major changes, the character's body ceases to be able to maintain the dynamism ransacking it. Further uses of the catch result in major physical changes, often the loss of a body part (such an eye or leg), which usually includes the accumulation of a Flaw. A character that has garnered 10 physical changes (meaning one who has used the Dawnspear's catch 30 times) simply disappears, taking the spear with her. Stories usually arise of the Dawnspear's use in some distant location, but no further word is ever heard of the missing changeling.

War Pledges

Changelings involved in open combat with other changelings, hobgoblins, the Gentry or stranger things yet often turn to pledge-craft as a way to protect themselves from their enemies. Such war pledges are often short-lived affairs, pacts made with other warriors for the same cause. Furthermore, changelings are disinclined to swear particularly demanding oaths with their brothers in arms, some of whom they may not know well. As a result, changelings at war often try to milk the most power they can out of the pledges by placing incredibly vicious sanctions on the pledges. After all, if a changeling can't cleave to a relatively simple task for a short period of time, she deserves whatever she gets.

The Ironwood Pact: A Sample War Pledge

—Those gathered here today do solemnly swear upon my crown of office that we shall march as one into battle. As one our weapons shall cleave our enemies in twain, rend their flesh and shatter their bones. Our fists shall fall upon them like thunder, and the glory of Eternal Summer shall assure that we never falter from pain or weariness. Know though, that the first and last of you to betray this compact shall not only be ostracized from our Court, but be struck down with glorious fire that will course through your blood and char your soul.

—All right, maggots. Everybody's hands on the sundial. For today, we're family. We watch each other's backs. We keep one another alive. We don't fuck one another over. Tomorrow can be business as usual, but today, we're kin. With our family at our back, we'll be shit-kickers. Our punches will land harder, our blades will be sharper, our guns will shoot straighter and our feet will run faster. We won't feel pain until we're on death's door. But if you fuck over one of your family, I will personally see to it that your flesh is burned away from your yellow bones. Understood?

Type: Corporal, Courtly Emblem

Tasks: Alliance, Medial (–2, all to one another)

Boons: Adroitness, Lesser (+1, Weaponry, all); Adroitness, Lesser (+1, Athletics, all); Adroitness, Lesser (+1, Brawl, all); Adroitness, Lesser (+1, Firearms, all); Blessing, Medial (+2, Iron Stamina ••, all)

Sanction: Pishogue, Greater (–3, The Lord's Dread Gaze, all); Vulnerability, Glamour (–2, all)

Duration: One Day (+1)

Invocation: 1 Willpower

This potent pledge is representative of an agreement a leader of the Summer Court might make with her soldiers before entering the fray. It grants bonuses to every combat skill, ensuring that the changelings under its power can

fight well in a variety of circumstances, as well as providing the oathsworn the stamina to keep the struggle up until they're on death's door. The price for forswearing such an oath, however, is high, and the retribution levied upon the offender a bolt of blazing light in the form of one of Summer's most potent Contracts.

As a pledge forged for the greater good of the Court, it is remarkably even-handed, holding the leader to the same standards as his soldiers. The changelings bound in such an oath will recognize this, perhaps fighting more valiantly out of respect for their commander.

hy, do you not recognize me?

I am your prince. Your Prince Charming.

My kiss awakens the slumbering pretties. My sword cuts out the hearts of the wicked stepmothers. I know the answer to your riddle! My boot will crush your poison apple!

What's that, you say?

The smell? A refuse heap, you say?

Stop your vile tongue or I'll stop it for you. You'll not know my true name, troll. The first syllable of a sibilant whisper and I'll wrench your worm's tongue from your accursed mouth!

What? Those aren't corpses, lowly maggot, tiny dwarf. They're Manikins, dolls upon which I keep my suits of armor and my princely attire. Attire I might wear to a beautiful ball, a ball at which I will meet my true love, a lowly girl like your sister, an ugly duckling who shall be made into a crystal shoe! Yes!

That is not blood matting my hair. Not at all. My locks are naturally bronzed. It's the way the light plays off them. You think to confound me, frog prince?

You cannot! I own these stories! Ha, ha, yes! I've got the snake by the throat *and* by the tail, and it coils and bites when I command it — not before.

Here, then, horrible witch, take this pouch of gold coins and go buy yourself a—

Pardon me? Subway tokens? You must be daft. Those are gold coins, taken from the dragon's belly, spun from sugar and wished into being! I'm done with your lying mouth, your burning oven, witch.

Meet my sword!

Happily ever after for me.

Once upon a corpse-heap, for you.

Ha-ha!

Chapter 2
The Loom of Fate

Yeah. I think maybe that's what I want to leave you with, in lieu of a goodnight kiss,
that word which children respect instinctively,
that word whose truth we only rediscover as adults in our stories...
and in our dreams.
Magic.
—Stephen King, "Danse Macabre"

Stories have layers, and your **Changeling: The Lost** tales are no different. On the one hand, the Storyteller is the narrator of this tale, but that's not really true, is it? No, the players are the secret tellers of your myths and legends, the ones writing the story as it happens, right? Maybe not. Maybe their characters, the changelings who are so intimately bound with the threads of fate (so much so that they're positively *garbed* in it), know more than they're letting on. Maybe the characters control the players, not the other way around, and if the characters control the players and the players control the Storyteller, who's really telling the story, after all?

Other layers exist too — on the surface, a story is a plot that moves characters from Point A to Point B. But stories are also explorations of theme. They work as allegories, and feature metaphors that make one thing out of another thing. A character can be a representation of an idea, a moral, or of a player's own feelings and history. A story can be a straightforward moral narrative or a subversive whisper in a lusty ear.

Point is, stories are not one thing, and their tellers are myriad. This is doubly true in **Changeling**, where fate's infinite yarn entwines the players, providing them with equal parts "lifeline" and "hangman's noose." This chapter seeks to pry open the inner workings of the story, to examine its many delicate cogs.

Part of this is about everybody examining the motifs of stories both old and new so as to understand how it can enhance your story, but it's also about having the characters literally grab the reins of the story for their own strange purposes. Do they usher the story along at a hesitant trot, or do they whip it into a froth and kick it into a dangerous gallop? Does fate like its new master, or does it buck and bite?

Talecrafting

Stories speak with a universal language. Patterns and symbols emerge from the narrative. Characters undergo triumphs and tragedies that, on the surface, seem wildly different and wholly unique. Dig deeper, though, and one finds that many common threads link the tales, with archetypal elements shared betwixt the two. This is true for ancient mythology, local folklore, timeless fairy tales, and comes full-bore into the present environment of literature, television, film, and even video games. The same patterns reveal themselves time and time again. Same hooks, different faces. Old ideas, new presentations. The symbols lay obfuscated, and it takes effort to see them. But they're there, waiting only to be discovered.

Pull back for a moment. Take a look at fairy tales. Changelings exist as part of their *own* fairy tales. On one level, they participate in these fairy tales as characters you, the players, control. On another level, though, changelings in the World of Darkness might actually realize that, lo and behold, they're *actually* fairy-type creatures living through a kind of narrative. No, this doesn't mean the fourth wall comes crumbling down and the characters are able to gaze at their players; changelings do not think themselves puppets in a roleplaying game.

That said, changelings may start to notice the patterns emerge. They're taken from this world, carried away to a magical place of wonder and horror, and then escape from that place and return to the world they left. Often, this terrible adventure is straight from the pages of fairy tales. Vladimir Propp, an early 20th Century Russian scholar, analyzed Russian fairy tales and found that each contained a number of analyzable patterns ("morphemes") that could be further applied to fairy tales outside the Russian mold. Of these 31 functions, the first is that the hero suffers "absention" or that he leaves home or is taken from home. The next two steps or patterns suggest that the hero confronts a rule that he breaks (i.e. the "interdiction" and the "violation" of that interdiction).

Framed from the perspective of a changeling, this should sound eerily familiar. Those taken to Faerie often break some cardinal rule. "Don't walk on Brigman's Bridge at night," or "If you say the name 'Bleeding Heart' into the mirror three times with the lights off, she'll come and take you away through the mirror." Of course, the character broke that very rule upon getting taken — she walked on the bridge at night, or she thought to thumb her nose at silly folklore with her sorority friends and say the phrase to the mirror. Violating the rule forces her to be taken from her home.

Joseph Campbell's examination of the heroic myth finds similar patterns — the hero leaves home, the hero crosses magical thresholds, the hero enters the "belly of the whale" and there suffers a metaphorical or literal death that transforms him, and eventually the hero returns home "changed." Again, a changeling's experience doesn't sound too far off from this, does it? Leaves home (abducted to Faerie), crosses thresholds (any Hedge gate, or entering one's dreams), entering the belly of the whale (initially, Faerie itself, where the human side suffers death that lies somewhere between metaphor and reality), and returning home changed (no longer precisely human, the character comes back to the world to find he no longer has his place).

The point is this: fate is a major architect in the land of Faerie, and changelings may recognize that they are not only marked by fate, but have the ability to adjust the rudder, so to speak, when it comes to "steering" the nature of destiny. Fate, at its barest level, seems to confirm patterns and symbols throughout fiction. (Though there a "chicken and egg" conundrum arises —– does fate attempt to model all things after those patterns contained in fiction, or does fiction subconsciously model those patterns that fate provides? Does it even matter?)

Peer into the Loom, Reach for the Thread

A changeling looks to her life and the lives of her fellow Lost, and she notices patterns that are similarly present in myth, folklore and fairy tale. It can't be a coincidence, what with the character actually *being* a fae creature herself, right? Plus, the changeling also knows that she has some influence over fate, lest she herself be fate's own puppet.

That changeling may draw a conclusion, and that conclusion is this: all of life is a story, or at least a loom of many stories winding together. If one is astute enough to notice the patterns emerging, one can see what kind of story is slowly being stitched together. By noticing those patterns, one can then attempt to influence *future* patterns, predicting what may come and trying to usher events toward a more favorable outcome.

On one level, this can be fairly basic. The changeling knows this is the part of the story where the "villain" harms one of her loved ones, so she moves to diligently protect them. Nothing magical there, beyond an awareness of troubling patterns. The character knows that a truck is barreling down the road toward her and her family, and she hopes to step out of the way.

But, some carry it further. Some changelings are able to orchestrate events so that the stories twist, so that destiny works *for* them. It's a risky action, of course. Fiddling with the knobs, so to speak, can often have unwanted repercussions. It isn't cut and dry. Fate doesn't like to be toyed with, and yet those changelings who recognize their power to do so find that it's a little bit addictive. (Truth is, some tickling part of the True Fae exists in the hearts and minds of those changelings who escaped their imprisonment. The True Fae are said to battle one another in vast games of

It's Magic

Make no mistake. This takes fae magic to accomplish. This isn't a mundane exploitation of events — this is reaching in with hands wet with Glamour and grabbing hold of the story's steering wheel, if only for a moment.

Moreover, it helps confirm what we already know to be true: yes, your game has one person labeled "Storyteller," but in actuality, *every* player at the table is a Storyteller, too. Talecrafting is just a more overt, in-your-face expression of the player's power to have his character change the terms of the tale. It has rules, of course, rules that are indicated below — but, before you allow Talecrafting to occur in your **Changeling: The Lost** game, you'd better be comfortable with the players and their characters mucking about with what might have been carefully orchestrated events on your part.

Then again, you should've been comfortable with that already, don't you think?

proactive storytelling — the so-called "Game of Immortals" — and a part of that lives on in the Lost.)

They call it "talecrafting," though that is a term that perhaps reveals how most changelings who participate in this game think of themselves as having more power than they really do. They're not really crafting new tales, or even crafting new elements to old stories. If anything, they're tweaking the tales, twisting them (hopefully) to their service. They're hoping the rules of fate and the laws of story can be manipulated in *just such a way* to provide a fortunate outcome.

For Every Rose, Many Thorns

Talecrafting has a bite, a sting. Fate cannot always be mucked with successfully. A changeling who tries to turn destiny's laws to her favor may find that they do so, but that for every turn to the favorable, the tale contorts like a snake in one's grip and comes back to bite the hand that held it. It's not universally true; the lucky or powerful changeling escapes this bite-back. But for many, it's a dangerous gamble nevertheless. Some changelings who grow addicted to toying with the story's loom stop caring about the downsides — even a turn for the worse is still a turn that the changeling invoked, filling them flush with the promise of delirious puissance.

System: Turning the Tale

The system by which this process works is, on the surface, fairly simple. The process features a number of steps, but in each step is hidden a number of story opportunities, potential conflicts and pitfalls, and mechanical tweaks. Read on.

Step One: The Pattern

A changeling either identifies a potential story pattern, or actually conspires to create events that lead to a desired pattern. Take, for example, the idea that in stories, "the third time's a charm." It's a bit of a cliché, sure, but it holds true in fairy tales. Goldilocks finds that the third bed, the third chair and the third bowl of porridge are the right ones. In the old Portuguese "Maiden and the Beast" story, it's the father's third daughter who is the best. In the Bible, God often blesses three times (and "three" is a symbol of divine completion). In reality, an oft-noticed pattern is that on the television show *Let's Make a Deal*, the third door was the one most often picked, and had the best prizes. The third point in a triangle is what makes the shape complete — two points do not create completion, but three do.

The changeling has two options — she can passively identify a pattern as it unfolds, or she can proactively attempt to create the pattern. Both have rules ramifications, but we'll get into those a little bit later.

Identifying the Pattern

The changeling might stumble upon the pattern already in action. She's standing at a craps table in Las Vegas, surrounded by onlookers. She's just bet twice on two rolls of the dice, hoping to score big, but so far, it's turned up snake eyes. A lot of her money's gone, now, dropped into the deep dark hole that is the coffers of Sin City.

She wonders — is it best to leave? Just back away from the table and be done? If she bets anything, she has to bet it all to get what she needs, but that's a risky gamble.

Ah! But it's then that she realizes. This is a *classic* scenario. It's played out in movies, books, stories. She's blown two dice rolls, but — *third time's the charm*. She's found a pattern. Fate may have been ignoring this situation, but now she can turn its fickle eye toward the velvet table, toward the dice, and toward her trembling hands that hold them.

It's possible that the player notices the pattern and has her changeling recognize it automatically. A Talecrafting character is usually on the lookout for such instances, sometimes even seeing them when they're not really there. The Storyteller is free to ask for a roll, though, to have the character actually spot the pattern forming in the tale's loom. In such a case, the player should roll Wits + Academics (as combing through the vagaries of all the old stories is largely the province of study and research) to determine whether or not the character can see the potential pattern.

Forcing the Pattern

A changeling can force the pattern, meaning she actively tries to *nudge* fate into ramping up toward her desired goal.

She has two ways to accomplish this. The first is by mundane means, implying that she sets events into motion with nothing more than her own clever wherewithal. The second, which is easier but ultimately more dangerous, is calling upon a bit of old-fashioned fae magic to elbow the tale into putting all the proper factors into place.

So, looking back at the changeling at the craps table, we'll now visit her before she's even thrown the first pair of dice. She went to Sin City with the story element in mind that *the third time's a charm*, and hopes to capitalize on it by tricking fate into giving her what she wants: a big fat payout at the casino.

Of course, for her to achieve that story element (what some changelings call "The Hook," the same changelings who sometimes refer to Talecrafting as "The Con," or "The Confidence Game"), the pattern must first be in place. If either of the first two rolls of the craps dice result in even meager successes, the deal is blown. The pattern cannot be built. And, as a result, the Hook will never come to pass.

Let's say she endeavors to create the pattern via mundane means. Maybe earlier, she snuck a pair of loaded cheater dice into the dealer's hand, so she has it on

good authority that he'll throw two failures in a row. Or maybe she's paid him off, and the *dealer* is the one doing the cheating for her, setting her up for the Hook. One option is also, of course, to just let the course of action go as it may — she lets the two rolls fall as they may on the craps table, and if one turns up a success, well, shit happens. She'll aim for the pattern and hope for the Hook again tomorrow.

Alternately, maybe she really doesn't want to risk all that effort, knowing that it could come up bad for her no matter how hard she tried to engineer circumstances in her favor, and right now she can't wait for the big payout. The freehold needs to pay a ransom, or maybe she owes some other Lost bookie a fat sack of cash lest she get herself tossed back into some True Fae's prison wagon. She decides to use her fae magic to give her a guarantee.

This costs her two points of Glamour and some plea to fate: maybe she knocks on wood, throws salt over her shoulder, says a little prayer. Something to give her an extra kiss of luck. No roll is necessary. Spending the points and making the entreaty is all she needs.

(Note that this does *not* create the Hook. It doesn't confirm the desired outcome, it only builds the pattern desired. Under the "Magical Stranger" element on p. 69, using fae magic in this way would force a meeting between the changeling and a stranger, but it would not yet confirm his magical state, and wouldn't create the end result the changeling seeks — that's handled under Step Two, below.)

The changeling expends the Glamour, and here she decides to pass the dice around to let some of the onlookers blow on them "for luck." Both her first two dice rolls come up with nothing, and she loses the bet. This is, of course, what she hoped for. Now the pattern is in place, and she's set up for the Hook.

Step Two: The Hook

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Wyrd

Action: Instant

Cementing the Hook can only occur once the rest of the pattern is in place, as noted above. Then, once more, it necessitates that the changeling attempt to cajole, twist, or trick fate into finishing the pattern.

Tweaking fate in this way — i.e. Talecrafting — can only be done once per chapter (game session) of the story.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character fails to find the Hook — the desired effect does not come to pass, and in addition, the character suffers from one Cruel Twist of Fate (p. 73).

Failure: The desired effect fails to occur. Fate has not been urged or changed. The character doesn't suffer from a Cruel Twist of Fate, however.

Success: The desired effect occurs (see example, below). However, the character suffers from one Cruel Twist of Fate.

Exceptional Success: The desired effect occurs, and *no* Cruel Twist of Fate is born as a result.

Suggested Modifiers

+3	The outcome of "the Hook" helps confirm or contribute to an already-made pledge
+2	Changeling possesses any dots in Contracts of Hearth
+1	Changeling has a Clarity score of 7 or above
+1	Changeling is of the Muse Kith (Fairest), Artist Kith (Wizened) or Oracle Kith (Wizened)
+1	Changeling identified a pre-existing pattern in the story and did not have to "force" the pattern to fruition
+1	Changeling has any dots in the Fame Merit (as it allows fate's eye to turn toward her more easily)
+1	Changeling has a Title (i.e. belongs to an Entitlement)
–1	Changeling has a Clarity score of 4 or below
–1	Changeling has no dots in the Academics Skill
–2	Changeling has to spend Glamour to "force the Pattern"
–2	Changeling possesses a mild derangement
–2	Changeling possesses any of the following character Flaws: Amnesia, Forgetful, or Behavior Blind (pp. 218–219, **World of Darkness Rulebook**)
–3	The outcome of "the Hook" goes against or would help undo an already-promised pledge
–3	Changeling possesses a severe derangement
–3	Changeling is suffering under any negative sanction born as the result of a pledge

Example

The changeling standing at the craps table spends two points of Glamour to force the pattern, and the time comes for her to seal the deal and catch the Hook. The changeling has a Wyrd of three, meaning she has three dice to roll before considering modifiers. Because she forced the pattern with Glamour, that incurs a –2 dice pool, but, luckily, she also has dots in Contracts of Hearth and she's maintained a Clarity of 7, and each respective roll give her a +1 bonus, so she's back to three dice. She rolls them, and gets one success. The resultant Hook — Third Time's the Charm — comes true.

However, because she did not manage an exceptional success, that also means the Hook brings with it a Cruel Twist of Fate, chosen by the Storyteller. The Storyteller looks through the options and sees one that seems wholly appropriate: All That Glitters.

So, because of the Hook, the changeling gets her big payout. She earns big money on the third dice throw, and that's more than enough to pay back her bookie at the freehold and avoid her Keeper's collar once more. Unfortunately, because of the Cruel Twist of Fate, the money (i.e. "the gold") isn't everything it was cracked up to be. The Storyteller decides that this means that maybe the money ends up being marked as part of a "cheater's sting" at the casino, or maybe that the changeling goes to take the payoff to the bookie and finds him dead, with a message written on the walls in the hands of the changeling's Keeper. (As noted under Cruel Twists of Fate on p. 73, the negative happenstance never *undoes* the Hook's blessing. Here, the changeling still has the money, but the Storyteller is free to introduce new wrinkles to the story, just as the changeling's player introduced her own wrinkles.)

New Wizened Kith: Fatemaker

This Wizened may have skin like old parchment, with indecipherable words drifting across her papery flesh. The Fatemaker's blessing is **Turn of the Tale:** the changeling can, when Talecrafting, spend an additional two points of Glamour on a Talecrafting roll. Doing so ensures that, upon success, the changeling does not suffer a Cruel Twist of Fate (though such a twist will still feature in a dramatic failure no matter what).

Reversal of Fate

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Wyrd versus Wyrd

Action: Instant and contested

For most changelings, a Cruel Twist of Fate is something that happens to them (or, more particularly, happens to their story) as a result of them mucking about with narrative destiny. However, it's possible that a changeling *seeks* a Cruel Twist of Fate to occur as a curse against another character's story. This can only work against another changeling, and doesn't seem to manifest against mortals or other types of characters (though an exception might be made for those mages who have their own fate-based magics at hand).

The process is roughly the same, in which a changeling either identifies a pattern on process or can help to force one (via the same means found on p. 62). Except here, the changeling seeks to "hook" a negative outcome — i.e. a Cruel Twist of Fate — for the opposing changeling. If the character finds someone around the freehold bragging about some recent "win" against the Margravate up north, then the changeling may find that this is an apropos time to invoke the Cruel Twist of Fate, "That Job Was Too Easy" (p. 74). That twist assumes that one's accomplishment was gained too easily, meaning it was perhaps a set-up for something bad to happen, or that the character that completed the task didn't really finish the job like she thinks.

Like with any Talecrafting, it counts as "one" instance per chapter (game session).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling fails to turn fate against her foe — as a result, she draws destiny's callous eye toward *her*, instead, suffering a Cruel Twist of Fate.

Failure: Nothing happens; the story remains unchanged. (The opposing changeling wins the contest.)

Success: The victim changeling suffers the Cruel Twist of Fate chosen by the character. However, mucking about with fate in such a way and pointing fate's malicious finger in such a targeted away is a sin against Clarity 5.

Exceptional Success: The victim changeling not only suffers the Cruel Twist of Fate as above, but also finds that the "story" robs him of a point of Glamour if he has one to spare (and if he doesn't, a Willpower point goes away, instead).

Suggested Modifiers

As with normal Talecrafting, see the modifiers on p. 63.

Story Elements: The Hook

Below are a number of example story elements that a changeling might bring into play as a tweak to the narrative. This list is far from exhaustive, and players are encouraged to come up with their own hooks. Stories – fairy tales and myth, in particular – tend to follow a series of patterns and feature a wide variety of tropes that appear again and again. The Storyteller isn't expected to know all of these, and she may not feel qualified to vet a player's request and example. In that case, feel free to open the discussion up to the table. If one player suggests a trope that isn't listed here, what do the other players think? Is it fair? Have they seen that pattern before in stories? Use the collective knowledge of those gathered — we've all read books and movies, we've all heard the stories from the Brothers Grimm (whether watered-down or uncut). Does it pass the smell test?

Buried Treasure

In a number of the stories, the best treasure remains buried. It's certainly a key fixture in pirate stories (with dread pirate captains concealing their pillaged loot beneath the ground), but the idea lives on in a number of stories — heaps of gold hidden in dungeons, ancient secrets buried in subterranean temples, or the clandestine treasure of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Gold Bug."

Dark Corners Made Bright

Where can you look for good inspiration for story elements ("hooks") to use in Talecrafting?

Fairy Tales: Already mentioned, but it bears repeating: fairy tales the world over follow certain sets of tropes and patterns, and are home to a series of archetypes (sleeping hero, wicked stepmother). You can find a robust discussion on using fairy tales in your World of Darkness game on p. 78 of this chapter.

Myth and Legend: Whether we're talking about myths of Greek gods or Sumerian demons or urban legends about the Mexican Rat or the Choking Doberman, these stories are pervasive precisely because they follow certain patterns and contain shared elements. Heck, the Mexican Rat (whereupon someone brings an "exotic dog" home from Mexico but finds it's a diseased rat) is an interesting and perhaps unexpected example of the All That Glitters Twist of Fate.

Pop Culture: Modern narrative tales are given over to a number of tropes — slasher films have their own language (the Villain Isn't Dead!), mystery stories offer up tropes tailored to that genre, and comic books often use the Joseph Campbell "Hero's Journey" as a template. (Visit www.tvtropes.org for a good look at the patterns found in pop culture narrative.)

Symbols: Number 13 is unlucky, but the number three *is* lucky, for instance. While not explicitly narrative, they can be applied to the narrative, as they are throughout myth, religion and fairy tale (numerology in the Bible alone is worthy of a whole book's worth of words).

Clichés: Generally, in fiction we try to avoid clichés, because they are seen as a negative. And that's true, they are. But this is a bit of a meta-game scenario in which changelings are trying to *exploit* clichés for their own gain (or for the harm of others). A cliché, as the story goes, isn't born in a vacuum and has some nugget of truth. Whether fate feeds from the stories or the stories feed from fate doesn't much matter – what *does* matter is that a Talecrafting changeling might be able to bring clichés ("Third Time's A Charm!") into play because of their narrative reliance.

The Pattern: The changeling must find something buried or somewhere underground (hidden in the wall of the old city sewers, in a closed-down silver mine, in a Hedge cave).

Setting the Hook: This is a bit like Schroedinger's Cat — the promise of what lurks within a box is defeated if the changeling already knows about the box's expected contents. This only works when mystery is present. If the changeling comes upon an old metal cashier's drawer (closed and locked), a shut door, or even a bound satchel, she can only Talecraft this element if she is genuinely unfamiliar with what lurks inside or beyond. However, crafty Lost can engineer events to serve their needs. One Talecrafter was known to have a pledge with an ensorcelled mortal, requiring that the human go around periodically and bury cigar boxes around the freehold. The cigar boxes always contained *something*, but rarely anything of value (a damaged teddy bear, a ream of paper, a bunch of heavy rocks). The human would duct tape the boxes shut, and never disclose the contents to the Talecrafter. When the Talecrafter would eventually find one, she could exploit the whims of fate when finally opening the box, confirming the fact that the best treasure is always buried. A changeling hoping to force the pattern by spending Glamour can do so, and automatically find buried treasure wherever she is, even before digging it up — but, of course, doing so can end in negative results, later. Fate doesn't mind being nudged, but it snarls at those who force it.

Result: The changeling finds some kind of treasure. She can never dictate what treasure it is, or even what she expects to find – what she gets, she gets. A box of money? A long-forgotten token? The hand of a powerful Keeper? If it's an item that can be represented by dots (like the Token Merit), then the character can only keep the item if she spends the experience points to do so. Otherwise, she can use the token – but, without points invested in it, the item can just as easily be destroyed or somehow turn against her. Storytellers, note that this is a good time to bring in items and treasure that the character doesn't expect, that serves to highlight the story and perhaps even reveal a secret (maybe what the changeling finds is the diary of the Winter Queen, which is truly valuable *and* contains a passel of story hooks and plot secrets).

Children Never Stay On the Path

It's true. In the stories, the child won't stay on that path, and that leads to horror and adventure. Little Red Riding Hood (or "Little Red Cap") is drawn from the path by a predatory wolf. Hansel and Gretel think they're so smart, but birds eat their trail of breadcrumbs and so they end up lost, and off the path.

The Pattern: A child must first be on the path before she can stray from it.

Setting the Hook: The changeling might identify the pattern already happening: a boy rides his bike down the sidewalk to his friend's house with a message in mind from his parents to "ride only on the sidewalk." Or a little girl runs down a park trail looking for her lost dog, knowing she's only supposed to check the path for the dog and not go into the woods. Alternately, a changeling can try to engineer events herself — setting a child on a path to the store, for instance, with explicit instructions to "not stray from Maple Avenue" or some such entreaty. By forcing the pattern with Glamour, the changeling may stir events to conspire to put a particular chosen child on a particular chosen path.

The Result: The child strays from the path, and some story event is born from that. The story can be good or bad — the child perhaps discovers treasure in the woods or is able to spy on a meeting that the changeling could not herself overhear. The story can also go badly, with the child taken by True Fae or even a human abductor. As with nearly all the patterns and Hooks, the end result should be tied to the ongoing story in some way, and not be some random event (unless this random event is meant to spur on a whole new plot or tale). Keep in mind that if something bad happens to the child, it should be considered a sin against Clarity 3.

Conjuring the Archetype

Fairy tales are home to countless archetypes. Examples include:

• **The Evil Twin:** Technically, the fetch already serves this role amongst the Lost, but in fairy tales and fiction the trope is clear that one twin is good and the other is evil. (The Yuma folktale of "The Good Twin and the Bad Twin" has a nice twist on this, where the good twin is actually the ugly sister, and the pretty sister is the evil one.)

• **The Helpful Animal**: The snake from "Three Snake-Leaves," the Frog Prince, Puss-in-Boots, Hans the Hedgehog… all serve as examples of helpful animals in fairy tales, animals who come to help the protagonist realize their destiny or transform into mates for them. The transformation part isn't what's important here, but the "animal helper" angle certainly is.

• **Prince Charming**: While it needn't actually be a prince, the idea is the same: a handsome and likely wealthy individual awaits the protagonist girl at the end of the story, even if she's not a princess (and she probably isn't).

• **The Sleeping Hero:** A true protagonist, a "hero," is often literally or metaphorically hidden away from the world. King Arthur is a good example of a metaphorically sleeping hero — he's unaware of his destiny until he pulls

that sword from that stone. Merlin, alternately, could be considered a protagonist who is literally sleeping, as he's trapped in an oak tree before he's set free.

• **The Wicked Stepmother:** The Snow White and Cinderella stories are probably the most well-known examples of the wicked stepmother in fairy tales: one's mother is pure, and her death equals the death of purity. Nothing good can come of that, and so the resultant stepmother (usually marrying an ignorant father) wants nothing good for her new surrogate children. She's downright evil, and will endeavor to undo the stepdaughter's work or even murder her.

• **The Wise Old Man:** Whether you look at Merlin from Arthurian legend, Tiresias from Greek myth and tragedy, or Aslan (or Gandalf or Dumbledore) from modern fantasy fiction, you'll see the wise old man archetype repeated. It's easy enough: a venerable old sort, often a magician of some ilk, has a great deal of wisdom to bestow upon the protagonists. Without his wisdom, in fact, it's likely the protagonists could not triumph.

The Pattern: The archetypes cannot be set unless they have a character upon which they can be applied; without such a character, the pattern must be forced, as noted below.

Setting the Hook: Invoking this Hook means that the Talecrafter applies an archetypal, universal role to another character (likely a Storyteller character) in the story. If the target of the Talecrafting has a stepmother, that is the pattern — it is therefore possible to twist fate and make the stepmother wicked. If the target has no stepmother, then it remains possible to manipulate the pattern into being, which might necessitate the changeling working on getting the target's father to fall in love with another marry-worthy woman. Forcing the pattern with Glamour is possible, too, and by doing so the character kicks the narrative into place regardless of having any pre-established conditions. In this case, forcing the pattern would actually bring a woman seemingly out of nowhere to marry the father, and the woman would of course be deliciously wicked.

The Result: The result is simply that the archetype applies to the target. The changeling may use this as a curse against another (the Wicked Stepmother archetype isn't one she'd want for herself, most likely), or may use it to further her own means (delivering unto herself a Prince Charming for love and lust, or a Wise Old Man who can give her the wisdom she needs to destroy her enemies). Some further examples follow:

• She has a rival in the Autumn Court that continues to plague her. At every stage this rival focuses all his attention upon her, gumming up any of her plans. She needs to distract him, and will use the "Evil Twin" Hook to do so. It's possible she'll use a pre-existing pattern to make this happen: say the rival has a fetch that the rival has chosen to ignore. The fetch hasn't been a problem because he's locked away in a nuthouse, but with the invocation of this archetype, the "Evil Twin" now emerges from the nuthouse, crazy and cruel. On the other hand, maybe no such fetch exists and the changeling has to conjure this narrative out of thin air by forcing the pattern. She does so successfully, and the rival is suddenly plagued by a twin — maybe his fetch is "reborn," or maybe he discovers that he has a brother he never knew about, a brother who is also coincidentally a changeling. The rival is now distracted, and the changeling can breathe easy for a while.

• The Talecrafter wants to sneak past a guard standing vigil over a locked door. The changeling notices some blackbirds in a shrub nearby, picking at the winterberries hanging from the branches. The changeling invokes the "Helpful Animal" archetype, and one of the blackbirds now thinks the guard's fleshy face parts look considerably like delicious winterberries. It's enough to send the guard running off for a few minutes, which gives the changeling plenty of time. (Note that this archetype doesn't create some magically-sentient animal or allow the changeling to control a creature — it just means that the animal will help the changeling in some potentially unpredictable way.)

• The character is a Winter Court changeling and wants to defer attention away from herself-as-protagonist. As such, she finds someone within the freehold who is generally viewed as worthless or "too young" to really be of value to the Lost, as yet. She uses the "Sleeping Hero" Hook upon him to make him the emergent hero of the tale, a hero that she can manipulate from behind the scenes. She doesn't want the glory, because glory brings all the slings and arrows.

• Alternately, maybe she makes the "Sleeping Hero" out of an imprisoned individual, someone who's been in the state pen for two decades, now.

• Some element of the story seems unconquerable for the character. She just can't get her head around how to unseat her rival or destroy the ancient beast that swallowed her Hollow. She recognizes that this is just the time for a Wise Old Man, and so she sets forth to invoke that Hook. She can either find a suitable candidate within the freehold, which won't necessitate forcing the pattern, but that might take some time. She instead decides to force it. Emerging from the Hedge, then, is an old hobgoblin whose flesh is that of the Hedge itself, and he scratches his mossy, thorn-struck beard and tells the changeling he can help her, if she so wishes…

The Devil Told Me Your Name

If you know Rumplestiltskin's name, you can send him away. If you call out the Nix's name, the creature from Scandinavian myth will flee. Old legends say that the reason unbaptized children are so easily taken by evil fairies is because they do not yet have true names, and as such do not have power. A changeling can use this Hook on just about anybody, applying it to them, or to herself.

The Pattern: Easy enough, the changeling must somehow discover a person's true name, or stop a person from discovering hers.

Setting the Hook: Discerning someone's true name is easy enough in advance: ask around, perhaps, or pry into official records. Of course, it's only easy when it comes to dealing with human beings. The Lost and other supernatural monsters are well-aware of the power that true names hold, and as such make reasonable effort to keep those names hidden. A changeling calls herself Mary O'Brine because she's a Swimmerskin with breath that stinks of seaweed, and because it distances her from her "old self" whose first name isn't Mary, and her last name isn't O'Brine or even O'Brien. A vampire takes the name Loki not because that's his birth name, but because it's a badass trickster god name that puts distance between his once living self and confirms that nobody knows who he really used to be. It's possible that a changeling discovers someone's true name unbidden, or has to investigate it. Alternately, she can spend Glamour to force the pattern, at which point the name will come to her in a dream the following night. However, it's worth mentioning that the changeling can work this in reverse. While knowing someone's true name gives her power over him, she can also diminish his power over her by reminding jo, (and by proxy, reminding fate) that *he* doesn't know *her* true name. She can't really force this pattern, but she can endeavor to make her true name all the more hidden. Unfortunately, once you put it out there ("You don't know my true name, so you stand weak against me"), it's a good bet your victim will do some digging when given half a chance…

The Result: If the changeling learns another's true name, she gains power over them. It isn't dramatic power; fate has reserved such potency for greater magic. But, it's enough for some. The changeling gains a +3 Social bonus against that target, as well as a +1 Physical bonus against him. The changeling can only hold this bonus against one target at a time, and cannot learn the true names of everyone in the freehold, for instance. And, once she rescinds her power by invoking another target's true name, she can never reclaim that power — she'll never possess that particular edge again. Alternately, if the changeling confirms against another that *they* don't know *her* true name, that defeats some of their power against her — that target suffers a –3 Social penalty and a –1 Physical penalty on all appropriate actions taken against the changeling. As above, this only works on one person at a time, and once the changeling withdraws the Hook from a particular individual, that individual can never be the subject of this Hook again.

Incest Twist

Fairy tales and folk stories often highlight the cruelty of family, and incest is sometimes a manifestation of that theme. In All-Kinds-of-Fur, a dying queen exhorts her widower king to only marry a woman as beautiful as she was — and the only person as beautiful as the queen is the king's own daughter, so he tries to marry her. In the Romanian variant of "The Girl with No Hands," a girl refuses her brother's sexual advances and as a result, he chops off her hands and exiles her to the forest. In Finnish myth, a warrior-hero named Kullervo unknowingly seduces his own long-lost sister.

The Pattern: This one is variable, and has a few ways to approach the pattern. The first pattern is that the target of the Talecrafting is approached by a family member with a lascivious purpose. The second is that the target is already sleeping with someone who will turn out to actually *be* a long-lost relation (mother, father, sibling, cousin — anything other than a safe so-called "kissing" cousin).

Setting the Hook: Having a target approached by a lustful family member necessitates forcing the pattern by spending Glamour. The other side of the pattern, wherein a target is sleeping with someone who ends up related to them, is easier to establish. The victim must be sexually engaged with someone about which they know little — a one-night stand, for instance, or someone who has been lying to them about his identity. Alternately, the pattern can be forced if the victim already knows their sexual partner well, meaning that the expenditure of Glamour actually rewrites the story somewhat, likely causing the sexual partner to end up as a liar ("I've been lying to you all along") or someone who doesn't know his own history well enough ("My mother abandoned me when I was three").

Result: The victim sleeps with a relative and comes to realize it. This results in a mild derangement for the victim that is permanent. It can, however, be cured through therapy. This is a sin against Clarity 3 for the Talecrafter if the union results unknowingly — if it ends up non-consensual, then it is a sin against Clarity 1 ("heinous act of depravity").

Lucky Object

Myth and fairy tale is home to many sacred and lucky objects. The snake brings three leaves that can resurrect one from the dead. Arthur has a magical sword that only he can withdraw from the stubborn stone. Consider the flying carpet, the magic mirror, or the magic flute. These "power objects" are key throughout fairy tales, and a changeling can exploit the fact that every story "must" have a magical object.

The Pattern: The changeling must discover or uncover an item of note.

Setting the Hook: Without forcing the pattern, the changeling must unwittingly come across some manner of special and unique object. Normal mundane objects will not do. A sword is unique, but a butter knife is not. An antique chalice counts, but a "World's Greatest Grandpa" mug most certainly does not. A golden pocketwatch, yes; a cheap plastic Hello Kitty watch, not so much. The change-

ling can of course have someone plant an unknown object in her path where she expects to discover it, but as with the "Buried Treasure" Hook she mustn't know anything about it beyond the mere happenstance of the occurrence. As usual, forcing the pattern with Glamour can work. This allows her to empower an item she already possesses, or alternately empower an item that is ultimately mundane (which explains, say, turning a handful of dry beans into *magic* beans, instead).

The Result: One of two results occurs in regard to the exploitation of this Hook. The first is simple, and costs the changeling nothing. The object at hand becomes bound up with one of the changeling's Skills — a sword is easily tied to Weaponry, a chalice might have something to do with Socialize (as per drinking) or Occult (as per a sacred object), while the pocketwatch may apply to something like Intimidation ("As the seconds tick away, so do your chances of keeping those fingers unbroken. You have 30 more seconds to tell me what I want, friend"). That Skill gains a bonus equal to successes gained on the Talecrafting roll whenever the object is present and visible. This only lasts for the remainder of the story. The other result is that from this Hook, a token is born. The changeling and Storyteller can work to design the token or use a sample token found in any of the **Changeling: The Lost** books. Because Talecrafting has a number of potential downsides (Cruel Twists of Fate, or addiction), this allows the token to be purchased at half the normal experience points necessary. This Hook, regardless of result, can only be implemented successfully once per story.

Magical Stranger

The magical stranger is the "Other," a being from outside family, friends, or even from the "village" that brings good fortune, bad luck, a long-forgotten secret, or some manner of wisdom. Some magical strangers grant wishes. Others deliver terrible curses. In film, think of the movie *Pleasantville*, where Don Knotts' character answers the protagonist's wish to live in a *Leave it to Beaver*-type 1950s TV town. In fairy tale, look at Grimm's "The Three Snake-Leaves." In that story, a princess falls gravely ill and her soldier husband meets a snake (the stranger) who provides him with three magical leaves that can bring the dead back to life. The soldier uses it on the princess, and it works — but she then plots to have her soldier husband killed so that she can take up with a mysterious sea captain. Of course, the soldier husband is brought back to life with those same leaves, and then the husband and his father-in-law basically throw the princess into the ocean. Like with the "Monkey's Paw," this is classic wish-fulfillment gone awry, and actually serves as a great Talecrafting example: while the mysterious stranger snake offers a magical boon (the Hook), it turns out that the princess is a murderous adulteress (a Cruel Twist of Fate).

The Pattern: The changeling encounters someone she doesn't know, but who appears to be "not from around here," and doesn't know her, her friends, or her family.

Setting the Hook: If the character encounters someone whom she doesn't know and, even better, actually seems mysterious, then she can invoke this story element and turn the stranger from a relative "nobody" in the story to someone who will deliver some means of magic or wisdom. Forcing the pattern by spending Glamour actually brings a mysterious stranger to the changeling's door directly, seemingly conjuring this "plot point" out of nowhere. That, of course, can backfire — the mysterious stranger may bring a Cruel Twist of Fate with him, perhaps without ever bringing any boon at all.

The Result: The mysterious stranger offers something of value to the changeling. She can't ask for something specific, but she can be assured that whatever the stranger brings will be relevant to the story at hand — a secret about an enemy, a blessing for an upcoming battle, a curse against one's social rival in the Court.

Oversharing Villain

When in a dominant, stone's-throw-from-victorious position, the story's prominent antagonist will share secrets and spill her plans, usually to rub the protagonists' noses in the steaming brilliance that is her strategy.

The Pattern: The protagonist (the changeling, most likely) must be defeated by the antagonist, with the foe appearing securely in-charge of the situation.

Fairy Tales Have Many Faces

We make a lot of declarations in this chapter: oh, Snow White had a wicked stepmother, and she ate a poisoned apple; except, in some variants, she was targeted by a jealous mother or she was made to draw a poisoned comb through her hair. Plus, Snow White is different from the one in the "Snow White and Rose Red" story. Point is, we mention well-known versions of the stories and tales, but cannot possibly go into every variant lest we spend the next 70 pages talking about whether or not Sleeping Beauty is called Briar Rose and whether she was asleep for seven years or a hundred and whether or not it was just her that fell into slumber or all those living in the castle, and so on, and so forth. What we hope is that it encourages you — and even your changeling characters — to investigate all the little nuances of fairy and folk tales for use in your **Changeling: The Lost** game. Mixing up the variants is a good way for Storytellers to keep players on their toes, too…

Setting the Hook: The Talecrafter may end up in this situation without manipulating it to this end: if she gets beaten down or has a sword-tip at her throat, she may identify the pattern at its cusp. Alternately, she may have to arrange for events to be this way. It might mean that she actively puts herself in harm's way, getting caught on purpose (or *faking* weakness) so that the antagonist's dominance is confirmed. This may necessitate some acting rolls on her part (usually Presence + Expression or Manipulation + Subterfuge), but she can eschew these rolls by forcing the pattern with Glamour. Doing so means the scene plays out as she describes, regardless of rolls, as long as it ends with her (or another protagonist) defeated and the antagonist victorious.

The Result: The enemy spills everything. He suffers verbal diarrhea, letting fly with a stream of secret plans and as-yet-unrevealed details. It doesn't matter if the villain before-hand was the type to keep his mouth firmly shut; fate conspires to force him to blabber; probably with a great deal of pride, to boot.

The Presence of Poison

Poison finds its home in many a fairy tale. Poison apple? Poison comb? Poison corset? Poison spindle? Ah, but here's the rub. First, the poison is generally only directed at the protagonist of the tale: the wicked are not poisoned, no, the wicked are the poisoners. Second, the poison is never fatal. Snow White tumbles into a stupor after eating a poisoned apple, and Sleeping Beauty (or Briar Rose) enters her fairy tale coma after being poked by a poisoned spindle.

The Pattern: Easy enough. The target must have something that can be poisoned — a bowl of soup, a sewing needle, a silk glove — but that she has not yet seen or touched.

Setting the Hook: It's uncommon for a changeling to have to force this pattern, because the world is home to many objects and foods that could be easily poisoned. Everybody eats. Everybody touches sharp things. Everybody wears clothing. The trick is to find something that they haven't touched before — an apple they've never seen, a new pen lying on an old desk, a thimble never before noticed in a girl's sewing kit. If they have seen

it and handled it prior to now, the pattern must then be forced by expending Glamour.

The Result: The result is obvious, in that the item becomes poisonous. The first problem, though, is that the victim gets a chance to sense suspicion. This is emblematic of the tales, of course — Snow White is suspicious of the poison apple, and Sleeping Beauty's father knows it is a poisoned spindle that will do his daughter in. The victim gets a Wits + Occult roll to unconsciously sense that something's "off" about what's put before her. Of course, the changeling can attempt to turn that around by contesting that roll with a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (in Snow White, the witch demonstrates the apple's safe nature by eating from the unpoisoned half, thus convincing the girl to eat). Regardless of whether or not the individual notices it, the item is now dangerous to use or ingest, featuring a poison whose Toxicity is equal to the Talecrafter's Wyrd score. If the victim falls prey to the poison, that individual enters a coma whose duration is a number of days equal to the Talecrafter's Wyrd + Clarity score. Of course, here the fairy tales hold true, too — if the torpid victim receives a kiss from someone with the Striking Looks Merit *or* someone who has been assigned the Prince Charming archetype (p. 66), the poison-coma ends prematurely and the victim awakens.

The Riddle Is the Rule

Lots of old tales play host to riddles and riddle-games. Rumplestiltskin's guessing game (which is also featured under the "Devil Told Me Your Name" Hook) counts as a riddle. The Norse god Odin would win riddle contests by asking riddles to which only he could possibly know the answer. Oedipus gains entrance to Thebes by answering the Sphinx's riddle. The "Twelve Dancing Princesses" have a father who puts forth a riddle about his 12 daughters' shoes, and whoever answers the riddle correctly can have his pick of the daughters as bride, but answering falsely earns that person nothing less than death. And that's the trick to this Hook: each riddle is bound to elements of forbiddance and consequence (see below).

The Pattern: The target must confront something he wants, something the changeling hopes to forbid him from achieving. The riddle is the forbidding element, a preventative lock whose only key is the answer to the riddle. Consequence comes into play in regards to the person answering the riddle. A wrong answer leads to a negative consequence for the target, but a positive answer must absolutely remove the forbiddance, earning the target access to what they seek.

Setting the Hook: The biggest thing here is the riddle itself. The changeling must set the Hook with a riddle, and if she doesn't know any off-hand, she must force the pattern by spending Glamour — at which point, fate will be kind enough to provide her with a riddle. (Storytellers and players, feel free to poke around the Internet for good riddles. Also, if you want a metric to measure whether or not a character could know a riddle without forcing the pattern, feel free to have them roll Intelligence + Academics.) As above, the target must be confronting something that she wants, that the riddle prevents. She wants entrance through a locked door. Or she wants the changeling's token for herself. Or she needs to know the name of her father's killer. In that latter example, the changeling does not herself know the name of the killer, but she can prevent the knowledge of it by offering a riddle. This can be a curse against an enemy ("You'll never know the killer's name until you answer this riddle") or a hopeful blessing for a friend ("If you can just answer this riddle, you'll automatically know the name of the killer"). Of course, as noted below, failure to answer correctly is forever equal to terrible consequence. The changeling cannot provide the riddle's answer, nor can she even hint at it. Doing so undoes the entire Hook (and, if the Storyteller-as-fate is feeling particularly saucy, may invoke a Cruel Twist of Fate just for trying to game the system). In addition, the target must come up with the answer herself. If she searches on the Internet or receives hints from a friend, the pattern unravels and the Hook cannot be set.

The Result: The riddle stands in the way of whatever the target wants. Answering correctly earns the target exactly what they want, no conditions. Free of charge. Answering incorrectly, however, causes a negative consequence. It is the changeling's decision before making the Talecrafting roll exactly what the consequence will be, though the following options are possible:

- For each wrong answer, the target suffers one Cruel Twist of Fate.
- For each wrong answer, the target suffers one point of lethal damage, or…
- One point of Willpower loss, or…
- One point of Glamour loss, or…
- A mounting –1 penalty on all dice rolls, cumulative, lasting for the remainder of the story.

Should the changeling seek to then further prevent or stand in the way of whatever it was that the target desired, the changeling will suffer one of the above consequences for every day she attempts to prevent the target from receiving what's owed. This Hook can actually work as a loose pledge mechanic — if the changeling says she'll clean the target's house to spotless perfection for one year if the target can answer the riddle, then answering the riddle correctly means the changeling is bound to do that very thing. She'll suffer *daily* if she fails to meet fate's promise. And woe to the changeling who sets wide open conditions on such a thing, such as, "I'll clean your house spic and span every day" without setting a time limit. (No time limit, of course, is the same thing as "forever.")

Significance of Seven

Fairy tale and folklore features the numbers three and seven fairly prominently. "Three" is covered below (Third Time's the Charm), while "seven" is covered here. Think about how often seven ends up as a significant number: seven dwarves, Sleeping Beauty slumbers for seven years, Thomas the Rhymer goes to live in a faerie kingdom for seven years, in Tam Lin the fairy queen must pay a tithing to Hell every seven years, the seventh son (sometimes *of* a seventh son) is a werewolf or prince or devil, and so on and so forth.

The Pattern: Generally, a pattern must be set of at least three in a series, at which point the Talecrafter may push fate to continue that series to a conclusion of seven instances. This can be in reference to a timeframe, a number of items or a number of individuals.

Setting the Hook: If the changeling already has three instances in place ("I've already fought three wolves," or "The girl's already been gone three months," or "Black Tom has already searched through three sunken shipwrecks," the pattern can be considered in place and the changeling can attempt to Talecraft seven as a number of significance. The changeling can also attempt to create this pattern (in one of the above examples, the changeling might forcibly loose three wolves for himself or a foe to fight), but if she can't, she can attempt to force the pattern by spending Glamour. In this case, she can attempt to force it before any pattern has been set (before any wolves have been fought, just after the girl was taken, or prior to Black Tom's examination of even a single sunken shipwreck).

The Result: The manifestation of this Talecrafting element is wide and varied, and some changelings will certainly get creative with it. Ultimately, it means that the pattern will go to seven and end there. This can be used as a positive or a negative, depending. A changeling who knows that the Hedge outpost is home to a dozens-strong army of militant Lost might be able to "limit" the number of combatants she must fight by invoking this rule; fighting seven surly soldiers is better than fighting dozens upon dozens, after all. Alternately, a changeling might use this to curse someone. A foe might be expected to have to unlock one door to get to the bedroom of his victim, but the changeling might create a pattern by which seven doors must be unlocked – even if the house is only home to three such potential doors, the story will *manifest* four more doors (or, if the changeling forced it by spending Glamour, it may manifest six or even seven locked doors), all of which serve as impediments to the enemy. A changeling may bless or curse a woman with seven sons. She may claim that a human taken by a Keeper will be gone seven years, seven months, or only seven minutes (though that would only be how long it would *seem* that the abductee is gone, as time is not so plainly defined whilst beyond Arcadia's strange borders). What's interesting here is that the more one uses this Hook, the easier the Hook becomes — fate seems keen on setting several instances of the number seven as opposed to just one. *If* the Talecrafter successfully used this Hook in the prior game session (i.e. chapter), then the Talecrafting roll gains +1 during this instance. This has a maximum bonus of +7, obviously. Fate is funny that way.

Third Time's the Charm

The third bowl of porridge, the third bed, the third chair — they're all the best, because the third time's the charm.

The Pattern: Two instances must come first. Goldilocks tries out two beds, two bowls of porridge, and two chairs before settling on the desired third of each — the first two bowls of porridge, for instance, are too hot and too cold respectively, and so it is the third bowl that is "the charm."

Setting the Hook: If the changeling is going through a series of events or items (two poker games out of three, checking a series of doors down an empty hallway to see where someone might've stashed an abductee, two coin flips out of a series), she can see this pattern and evoke it provided that the first two choices turned up as failures (she found nothing behind the doors, she lost at both poker games or coin flips). Alternately, she can cheat to set the pattern or spend Glamour to force it, confirming the two losses or failures so that she's nicely set up to win or gain on the third instance in that series.

The Result: The third in the series is a resounding success. One caveat, though, is that this won't work on situations where the series continues past the third, and where the third "win" isn't actually that significant. An example of this would be the World Series. If the changeling's favorite team loses the first two in that contest, she cannot evoke this Hook for the third because "the third time's a charm" really isn't true. Even if the team wins the third game, they still have several games to go, which defeats the pattern fate sets out. The third needs to be a big win, and an ultimate conclusion to the series of events, examples or contests.

Transformative Fate

It's an almost alchemical transformation that happens in fairy tales, where the utterly mundane (lead) is turned to something of potent wonder and value (gold). Rumplestiltskin spins straw into gold. Homely Cinderella is made into a princess (and accordingly a pumpkin ends up as a coach, a rat becomes coachman, and so forth). A frog ends up as a prince after a kiss.

The Pattern: Something seemingly worthless and ugly must exist before it can be transformed into something both valuable and beautiful.

Setting the Hook: The changeling must find something that is genuinely ugly and/or worthless before she can turn fate's fickle eye toward it and transform it into something

Narrative Flexibility

Just a caveat: if you allow Talecrafting in your game, you and the players should sit and discuss the joys of narrative flexibility. While Talecrafting is certainly given over to a number of systems, the ultimate result of these is, as noted, that the players get to rewrite the story. Everybody at the table should be committed to working together not to achieve selfish results for individual characters (or for the Storyteller's predetermined story), but for getting the coolest results out of the story itself – and that demands everybody embrace flexibility. The story will buck like a wild horse, and that's okay. A changeling gets betrayed. A Storyteller's expected plot revelation is lost amid a new revelation. A beloved Storyteller character suffers a terrible fate or becomes a powerful enemy, instead. Again, while rules preside over the Talecrafting process, the actual *results* can sometimes change the fundamental nature of the tale, and everybody best be comfortable with that fact.

beautiful. A 1989 Pontiac Grand Am with 150,000 miles on it but still in working condition doesn't count — sure, it's not a sought-after car, but it's not precisely *worthless*, either. Now, if that Grand Am had gone through a fire, or was in a wicked accident or had the seats stained with the blood of a murder victim (say the driver murdered his girlfriend in that very car), it's likelier to count. However, the changeling can still attempt to coerce fate — she can invoke the pattern herself by *making* the target ugly. She might take to the Grand Am with a baseball bat and propane torch. More cruelly, she might take to an average-looking human male (or even to herself) with a straight razor and a bucket of slop in an effort to "uglify" the target so as to glean the benefits of this Talecrafted element. As usual, though, the changeling can eschew such an active attempt and try to force the pattern by spending Glamour.

Result: The results can be varied depending on what exactly the Talecrafter is attempting to affect. First and foremost, it must be stated that this Hook doesn't transform something into another thing entirely, like with what happens in some fairy tales. A frog cannot become a prince — only a human man can become a human prince, the frog just gets a makeover. The aforementioned Grand Am ends up as a pristine auto of its class, but cannot become a 1967 Mustang or a cigarette boat. The changeling cannot explicitly determine how the target of this Talecrafting event is improved, she can only turn fate's eye toward the dross in question. The Storyteller determines how such an object or individual improves. It's usually cosmetic, though some additional functionality is possible. A human likely gains the Striking Looks Merit at four dots, while an object usually increases in value by three dots of Resources. A non-cosmetic option for objects is that it takes successes gained on the Talecrafting roll as an equipment bonus (so, three successes equals +3 bonus), whereas a person might gain that bonus to Social rolls. One last caveat: the transformation cannot change out in the open. Fate prefers to work unseen, and will only transform the target in question when no eyes fall upon it.

Cruel Twists of Fate

As with the above story elements, the Cruel Twists of Fate listed below aren't meant to be a complete list. Players and Storytellers will certainly come up with a whole host of ideas that we didn't think of. Again, either the Storyteller or the entire game troupe is free to see if any new ideas pass the smell test before allowing their implementation in a game from a seasoned Talecrafter. That being said, the Storyteller may not want to "show his hand," as it were, when applying a Cruel Twist of Fate. Such a stinging rebuke from fate is sometimes best when its effect remains unknown by the Talecrafter (and by proxy, the player). Also, as noted earlier in the chapter, a Cruel Twist of Fate should never undo the Hook orchestrated by the Talecrafter — the negative effect may be related, certainly, but success on a Talecrafting roll is just that, a success.

All That Glitters

It's from Shakespeare, that quote — "All that glitters is not gold." The Prince of Morocco says it in *The Merchant of Venice*. (A similar but less quoted line reads, "Gilded tombs do worms infold," which is right in line with this Cruel Twist of Fate.) The idea here is either that the gleaming object you hold or the person you truly admire isn't as valuable as its appearance may suggest, or alternately that one's reward is not a reward at all — a curse more than a blessing.

Result: The changeling still receives whatever reward she conjured, but it has a side effect. Want examples? She helps to transform an ugly duckling girl into a supermodel — problem is, the ugly duckling had a very nice personality thank you very much, and now the supermodel is a raging egomaniac drunk on her own beauty. Or a "magical stranger" comes and is able to teach the changeling a long-forgotten Contract, but she doesn't know that somewhere, a pledge exists binding a True Fae to hunt down any who learn such forbidden magic. Again, it's important the result of the Hook is kept (the woman remains beautiful, the Contract is still learned), but that unintended negative results occur.

Bad News Travels Fast

Those that tempt fate may find that fate coils back and bites — but that it doesn't bite them. Fate has a funny way

of balancing the scales, and here, it takes its pound of narrative flesh from someone the character knows. Someone not immediately close by, so that the bad news can travel to her swiftly.

Result: A Storyteller character close to the changeling suffers in some way. It may be unrelated to the Talecrafting that the changeling performed (a sister loses her job, a business associate suffers a heart attack even though he's young, a fellow changeling in one's noble order accidentally breaks a pledge), but whenever possible, the bad news will in some way be related to the Talecrafting deed performed by the changeling. An example could be parallel to the Talecrafting performed: the changeling sets the Hook for Transformative Fate, turning something ugly into something beautiful… but her sister across town has the opposite happen, whereupon something valuable of hers is made worthless. Or a mysterious stranger brings blessings to the character, but the same stranger brings a curse to an old friend. It's also possible that the bad news happens as an unintended consequence of the Talecrafting result. The changeling uses "Third Time's A Charm" to win big on the third hand of an underground poker game, but a few bookie thugs come to break her legs. Unfortunately, they have the wrong address, so they end up at the sister's house and shatter *her* kneecaps, instead. Whatever the consequence, it should happen within 24 hours of the Talecrafting.

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished

It's an old idea that doing good deeds isn't an act that's rewarded — you don't perform charity because it puts money in *your* pocket, after all. The cliché is born out of the idea that doing something good not only fails to offer reward, but it can actually harm the do-gooder. A person gives money to charity, but is bitten by some obscure tax law which only makes her pay more. Or a character embraces her faith wholesale but finds that her family rejects her because of it, disagreeing with her brand of religion.

Result: The next time the changeling regains Willpower through her Virtue, she discovers that whatever act she performed has negative ramifications. It's best if this is tied to the story at hand as opposed to being a random event. For example, a changeling brings an enemy to justice, going to great lengths to bring the criminal before the Court. One of several negative events can result — perhaps the Court finds no reason to grant mercy and executes the offending Lost, and as he dies he whispers to the changeling that he's going to his grave with a powerful secret regarding her. Alternately, maybe the Court holds a secret grudge against the do-gooder changeling and orchestrates evidence that places her at the heart of the conspiracy along with the offending changeling, so they throw her in a jail cell with her old enemy.

Someone Close is a Secret Villain

Betrayal isn't precisely uncommon among the Lost, and some speculate that this is because betrayal is so common among the True Fae, and maybe *that's* because betrayal is a staple of fairy tale and fiction — a father betrays his daughter and chops off her hands because he fears the Devil, for example. It's too often that the betrayal comes from someone close, someone who was thought to be an ally but is now an enemy.

Result: Fate snaps back with a mean bite — it literally converts one who was an ally of the changeling to an eventual enemy. It needn't happen overnight (though it can), and it doesn't *appear* overtly magical. It's not as if an ally suddenly grows murderous. Rather, the ally begins to have a change of heart and mind; he turns thoughts of the Talecrafter over and over in his head, and any positive vision he had of her begins to break down. Light turns to dark. And slowly but surely, that once-friend slowly plots against the changeling. (Of course, because fate and time are together so cruelly wound, it's not impossible that an antagonist that has long plagued the changeling is rewritten to be a long-held ally, family member, or friend.)

That Job Was Too Easy

It's a staple of fiction (heist tales, in particular) where a task at hand seems too easy because it *was* too easy — either because it was engineered to appear as such or because the protagonists failed to actually achieve what they think they achieved.

Result: When next the character performs a task (hunt down a hobgoblin, negotiate a truce between two factions, or steal a car for a local chop-shop), it seems to be a cakewalk. It is, in a way, but the end result has unintended consequences. The changeling kills the hobgoblin but the next day learns of an ancient curse that says, when one hobgoblin is killed, three more of its kind shall rise the following morning. When she negotiates a truce between Lost factions, she later discovers it was part of a *noir*-ish plot to get her to leave the freehold so that a close ally could be turned or even murdered. Stealing the car for her chop-shop, the Talecrafter discovers that it wasn't just *any* old Cadillac Escalade, but she happened to steal the Escalade belonging to King-9, the gang thug "king" of a brutal changeling gang who soaks their do-rags in the blood of their victims.

The Villain Isn't Dead

It's a staple of film and literature: the antagonist one thought is dead or defeated really isn't. The obliterated slasher gets back up. The Terminator keeps on coming. The assassin refuses to die. Here, fate snaps back and brings this Cruel Twist of Fate to bear against the Talecrafter.

Result: The next time the changeling kills a foe — a vicious hobgoblin, a Keeper, a mortal hunter, a privateer

changeling — fate works to keep that foe alive, and the changeling only *thinks* she killed him. The hunter ends up in the hospital and later returns, hobbling along with a ton of prosthesis and hate in his heart. Or the Keeper crawls through a Hedge door and slinks his way back to Faerie, the changeling's broken blade still lodged in his mad heart — a blade he'll soon withdraw and reforge to use against his once-kept slave.

Tick-Tock

Look no further than Cinderella for this Cruel Twist of Fate come to bear: Cinderella gets hold of a lot of sweet bonuses (pumpkin carriage, mouse horses, lizard footmen), but it's all on a time-limit. Another example might be the 1902 novel *Brewster's Millions*, where a man inherits seven million dollars from his grandfather but *only* if he can spend a million dollars in one year.

Result: The Hook takes, but it's on a time limit. The time limit should be tight, but also not unreasonable — the Storyteller is the best judge of this, whether it's 24 hours or something more magically symbolic like seven weeks. Note that *if* this Hook is used, the character should be told that this is the Cruel Twist of Fate applied to the reward. While some of the others are best-served if they happen unbeknownst to the changeling, here the changeling *knows* about the time limit, which is part of the curse in question.

> ***Fate = Wyrd***
>
> When we say "fate" in this chapter, it can be considered synonymous with Wyrd. Wyrd is bound up tightly with fate and time, and Wyrd is the inscrutable law by which fae magic works. You mess with fate, you're messing with the Wyrd.

Addicts and Archetypes

Talecrafting — essentially where one toys with fate — isn't really safe, nor sane. It can offer incredible results, admittedly. Grabbing destiny by the back of the head and forcing it to gaze at the tale unfolding before you is no small task. Unfortunately, it has unintended consequences, chief among them the Cruel Twists of Fate that so often seem to follow forcing fate to bend its knee to one's strange desires.

However, it can have another unintended consequence: *addiction*. Forcing fate is a rush, a real thrill. It fills one with the feeling of power, of ego, of the certainty that the character has just been let in on a small but important secret — even if she can only control fate by nudging the rudder, that's *huge*. Even a Cruel Twist of Fate isn't enough to curtail the mighty endorphin rush, and can actually con-

tribute to the sense of addiction by infusing the Talecrafter with a sweet pump of adrenalin. It makes sense, really. Any addiction has highs and lows, with negatives that come part and parcel with the process — risky behavior with big reward brings intense feelings, and Talecrafting can bring those feelings in any changeling that does it.

Getting Hooked on the Hook

The system by which a changeling can become addicted to Talecrafting is simple: every time she Talecrafts successfully beyond the first, she must roll Resolve + Composure. The first time she rolls it, it isn't penalized. But each time thereafter, she suffers a cumulative –1 die penalty for each Talecrafting success. So, Little Oaken Annie successfully Talecrafts the first time, and feels the nascent power that allows her to command the narrative that belongs to her and the world around her. That's huge, and the second time she tries it she must roll Resolve + Composure to make sure she doesn't become addicted. She succeeds, so that's all well and good. Sure, even when Talecrafting goes awry with a Cruel Twist of Fate it fills her with a heady rush, but she doesn't *need* to do it, and it hasn't yet mutilated her view of the world. The next time she does it, though, the Resolve + Composure suffers a –1 penalty. And the time after that, a –2, then a –3, upwards to a maximum of –5 dice. Eventually, if she Talecrafts long enough, she's going to get hooked on it… and when that happens, everything changes.

All of Life is a Tale: The Addiction

The changeling begins seeing fairy tale and fictional motifs everywhere. She exhibits elements of borderline personality disorder, where all of life is cast in shades of black and white, good and evil. Grays do not exist. Righteousness and wickedness are absolute; neutrality is a myth. Becoming addicted has a number of non-system effects:

• The character may begin scouring through fiction (fairy tales, mythology and folklore in particular) looking for new patterns, new Hooks, new ways to Talecraft. She becomes obsessed with this.

• The changeling sees patterns where they don't necessarily exist. She thinks all things are once upon a time and that they'll end happily ever after. She expects that she will overcome, that her enemies will fail. She becomes wanton in this disregard for her own and for other's safety — she'll march onto the field of battle or blithely insult the Winter Queen because she's sure that *she's* the protagonist of this tale and ultimately, she will overcome.

• She begins to see fairy tale archetypes where they do not necessarily exist. She may identify someone who slights her as the "Villain," even if that's plainly not the case. She might see an animal following her, certain that it's an old enemy of hers taking a trickster's transformative form. It's madness, really. A best friend may be relegated to "Sidekick." A once-allied Queen is now "the Wicked Stepmother." The changeling may, in the midst of tussling with a lover under the bed sheets, scream out and be suddenly certain that the man she's sleeping with is her long-lost brother.

• Complexity is lost on her. Fairy tales are simple. Characters don't really develop. Moral lessons are learned. Fears are highlighted and overcome. Everything is right or wrong, and so the changeling stops seeing shades of gray, and cannot understand the vagaries and ambiguities of real life.

• Like those who suffer from borderline personality disorder, the changeling suffers very intense moods. Upon waking for the day, the player should pick a single mood (angry, happy, grief-stricken, whatever). The character *is* that mood until she sleeps. She exhibits an extreme, seemingly unstoppable version of that mood. That means ultimately that even the most positive of moods (charitable, for instance) are taken to such excessive lengths that they become damaging (the happy character beams and laughs even when her friend dies before her, or the charitable character just traipses about and gives away all her possessions).

In addition, the changeling is now subject to the following systems:

• Complexity disturbs her. If she cannot easily find simple patterns and a good-versus-evil perspective on a situation, she must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll or be otherwise stymied into inaction. She can spend a point of Willpower to overcome this forced inaction (which lasts for the rest of the scene or until the complexity is withdrawn or otherwise made simple), but spending that Willpower forces her mind to assign roles where they could not before be assigned. Someone must be good. Someone must be evil, even if it's a close ally or motley mate.

• In addition, whenever she fails a roll, she must spend a point of Willpower (though if she has none to spend, nothing happens). She cannot abide by failure, and doing so stings her self-worth and her seemingly unshakable certainty that she's the protagonist of this tale. Protagonists, after all, do not fail. Of course, they actually *do*, but try explaining that to the crazy Wizened who styles himself the Flawless King of Flawless Diamonds.

• Any rolls having to do with real life and "real people" (driving a car to work, chatting up a local bartender, studying for a research paper) have dice pools limited by the changeling's Clarity score. If her Clarity is 4, and she has a Dexterity + Drive pool of seven dice, she only has four dice to roll (though the new dice pool can be modified by bonuses and penalties, including those gained from spending Willpower). Rolls that directly relate to the fae, however, or that otherwise can be construed as a "part" of the tale, do not suffer from this limitation.

• It's easy to hemorrhage Clarity, too. In addition to putting herself into situations that probably wound her

Clarity, she suffers a –1 to any dice pool made to resist Clarity degeneration.

• Any time she's confronted by a narrative pattern (real or imagined; the Storyteller is encouraged to have a little fun with this), the changeling must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll with a –5 penalty. Success means she doesn't *have* to engage in Talecrafting, though she's still free to give in. Failure indicates that she has little choice but to try to engineer some measure of narrative control for herself, usually through Talecrafting. Even if it remains a situation that she cannot technically Talecraft, she's still forced into the attempt, obsessively trying to form a cohesive fairy tale narrative that she can manipulate with Wyrd and Glamour.

• Fate favors the addicted, sadly. The changeling gains +3 to any Talecrafting rolls. In addition, she gains +1 to any Contract rolls, as her mind revels in the potential of magic to solve all her problems.

Getting Clean

This isn't a sane addiction. A changeling can't just trade out this addiction for something else — Talecrafting has no methadone. This addiction is magical, and as such can only be fixed by relinquishing her grip on and avoiding all things Wyrd. This necessitates:

• Spending a number of days equal to her Wyrd + Clarity scores in a relatively isolated place, preferably one that isn't claustrophobic or strange. Better to be out in nature (say, overlooking a windswept desert or a serene lake) than be trapped in a locked room. Isolation is isolation, though, and one must make do.

• She must also spend these days performing no fae magic. That means no Talecrafting, above all else, but it also means no Contracts, no tokens, no oneiromancy. She must also stay out of the Hedge for that time. She can come into contact with other changelings.

• During the time, she must work on the "getting clean" roll, as noted below. If at any point she gives in and uses magic or removes herself from isolation, the process is over and must begin anew.

Cost: 1 Willpower point per day, spent upon awakening

Dice Pool: Resolve + Composure

Action: Extended (each roll is equivalent to two days' worth of struggling with her addiction; she must achieve a number of successes equal to two times her Wyrd score in the timeframe allotted, which is equal to her Wyrd + Clarity score)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: If the character suffers a dramatic failure at any point during this process, she gains a mild derangement as a result of building frustration, isolation, and withdrawal.

Failure: The changeling fails to make progress on getting clean. If she fails for two days in a row, the process ends and she must start the time anew.

Success: The changeling makes progress on getting clean. When she reaches the target number of successes, she isn't yet considered clean; she must continue out the time equal to Wyrd + Clarity in days, but at the culmination of those days she's free and clear of the addiction. Any use of Talecrafting past that point works as if she's never done it before, though renewed prolonged use will potentially push her down the same path.

Exceptional Success: The character pushes past the addiction with surprising speed and strength of character. If she has lost any Willpower *dots* during the course of this story, she can regain that dot without spending any experience points to do so (it normally costs eight experience points).

Suggested Modifiers

+3	The character is in a peaceful, serene location
+2	The character has no Glamour in her pool
+1	The character has a Clarity of 6 or higher
–1	The character has a Clarity of 4 or lower
–2	The character is witness to a changeling, hobgoblin, Keeper or other monster performing some manner of magic or supernatural ability
–3	The character is isolated but in an unpleasant location (hospital room, boiler room, locked in a coffin underground)

Clarity and Talecrafting

Manipulating fate to cause harm to someone is easier than causing the harm directly, just as it's easier to pay someone to kill an enemy than it is for the changeling to take the knife and slide it between the victim's ribs himself. But that doesn't lessen the end result. The consequence is still murder, even if it ends up being "murder by proxy." In that instance, a Clarity (or equivalent Morality-stat) roll will be necessary to determine if degeneration is on the menu.

Same goes for Talecrafting. Some changelings approach Talecrafting callously — "It's not me doing it, it's just the story!" Well, okay, but it *is* the changeling doing it even if she's able to invent some wild justification for it, as if she's just playing her part in a narrative rebalancing.

Because of this, whatever the end result of the Talecrafting is, it doesn't lessen the changeling's chance at degeneration if the consequence would normally cause one's Clarity to buck and shudder. Of course, it doesn't increase the chance, either.

Talecrafting Merits

What follows are some Merits for those changelings interested in Talecrafting.

Narrative Master (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd 3

Effect: Talecrafting comes naturally to the character; she has an implicit feel for the weave and weft of the tale bound up in fate's loom. As a result, on any Talecrafting rolls, the character can spend Glamour to gain bonuses on her Talecrafting rolls. This is in addition to the Glamour she must spend as part of the roll already. Each Glamour spent in this way gives her +1 to the roll. She can only spend a number of points of Glamour per turn as dictated on the Wyrd chart (p. 84, **Changeling: The Lost**). The initial point of Glamour spent on the Talecrafting roll counts toward this limit.

Unseen Sense, Talecrafting (•••)

Prerequisite: Wits •••, Academics ••

Effect: As per the Unseen Sense Merit on pp. 109–110 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, the changeling has a "sixth sense," but in this case it's not related to ghosts or spirits or anything like that, but actually triggers when she comes across an opportunity for Talecrafting. Any time a potential pattern lies in wait, ready to be manipulated with a tweak and twist of fate, the changeling's hairs raise, she gets goosebumps, she feels her heart race, or she feels some other physical effect. No roll is necessary. It doesn't tell her what kind of pattern awaits, only that *a* Hook is ready to be set.

Common Threads

From the first days of humanity, as far back as when Neanderthals warmed themselves around fires in their caves and told each other tales about the monsters that lurked out in the darkness, mankind has defined themselves and the world around them with stories. Mythology, fables, folk tales and fairy tales are among the earliest stories that were shared from person to person. Short, simple, and easy to remember, these stories can be found in literature long before more lengthy forms evolved. Longer narratives such as the novel, in its current form, cannot be found in Europe any earlier than the Renaissance, and in the East before *The Tale of Genji*. Even epics such as *The Odyssey*, *The Kalevala*, and *The Ramayana*, written in verse, are predated by shorter works.

During the Middle Ages, an entire class of stories — fairy tales — evolved among the peasantry of Europe, mirrored by similar stories in cultures all around the world. The Others appear in some of the earliest tales still in existence. Satyrs and nymphs in Greek and Roman mythology, the Rakshasa found in the *Ramayana*, the Tokoloshe of Zulu folklore, and the Curupira, dreaded to this day by the Tupi Indians of Brazil, share characteristics that mark them as Fae. They and many others have been known for ages by the people who tell their stories as otherworldly creatures to be respected and feared. Although not all fairy tales tell stories of the Others, the Gentry can be found in a surprising number of stories, such as the fairy godmother in *Cinderella*, the wicked thirteenth fairy in *Sleeping Beauty*, and the malevolent little man who spins straw into gold for the miller's daughter in *Rumpelstiltskin*. Even in tales where a character is not specifically identified as Fae, their place among the Gentry is obvious by their actions and characteristics. The giant in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, the ogre in *Puss and Boots*, and the troll princess in *East of the Sun and West of the Moon* all qualify as inhabitants of the realm beyond the Hedge, by this definition.

Fairy tales give examples of what happened to those who encountered the Others, warn readers of the fate of those unlucky enough to be stolen by the Fae, provide clues by which to recognize the Gentry, and hints about how to escape their notice or ward them off. Some of the methods of protection against the Gentry recounted in these stories have been known to work on occasion, although not always. A great number of old tales describe how cold wrought iron can be used as a bane against the Others, for example. Less common are tales of using salt, church bells, or rowan to ward them off. Other methods of warding off and harming the Fae have no effect, and may be either garbled and mistranslated retellings of methods that do work, or could have been deliberately invented by the Gentry to give mortals and Lost alike a false sense of hope. But the repeated appearance of these elements in the stories illustrates the fact that commonalities exist. These common threads, if perceived by those who read or hear the stories, can point to things useable as weapons or protections against the Fae, and as a sort of guide to help discern the particular laws that govern the Hedge and the various domains within Arcadia.

Though their whims and sudden shifts imply great mercuriality, the Others are also creatures of pattern and habit. More than one changeling, upon escaping, has told the story of how she was forced to sing, or dance, or write poetry for her master, once she was spirited away. Just as the Gentry cannot comprehend mortal emotions such as love, joy or hope, they have a difficult time in creating anything original such as sculpture, stories or poetry. Many changelings and mortals believe such originality is completely alien to the Fae, and may well be beyond their reach. Thus, it may be that because they cannot create anything original, the Gentry hew again and again to the patterns observed in these stories.

The behavior of the Gentry and the laws that shape their realms, if Faerie can be considered to fall under any laws, indicates that this may be true. Whether they are

snatching a hapless child out of their bed, forcing a hero to face a set number of challenges to win a prize, or turning a fair maiden into a swan, these patterns can be inferred from the old tales and used to provide valuable information to changelings who hope to prevent their Keeper from reclaiming them, escape her in the first place, or simply make her way through the lands beyond the Hedge while facing as little peril as possible.

Magic Numbers

Some of the most visible and powerful patterns formed in fairy tales are those drawn by magic numbers. Mortals have realized the innate power in certain numbers for at least as far back as there are historical records, and changelings recognized the role of those same numbers in shaping events, themselves, and even the realm of Faerie itself. The numbers three and seven are the most common numbers that re-occur in fairy tales, but other numbers are found throughout such stories to a lesser degree.

The number three is the one that seems to be the most powerful, and its preeminence in fairy tales is obvious. Stories such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, *The Three Little Pigs*, *The Three Dogs*, *The Three Little Birds*, *The Three Fairies*, *The Three Little Men in the Wood*, *The Three Heads in the Well*, *The Three Spinners*, *The Three Daughters of King O'Hara*, and *The Three Crowns* are visible examples of this.

In the fairy tale *Donkeyskin*, the unlucky princess tries to dissuade her father the king from marrying her by demanding three dresses from him that she thinks he will not be able to provide: a dress of sunbeams, a dress of moonbeams, and a dress that exactly matches the sky. In the story *Puss in Boots*, the miller has three sons, and it is the third son who ends up with only the mill cat as his inheritance — a cat that, it might seem from its intelligence and ability to speak — was a changeling or one of the Others in disguise. In *Rumpelstiltskin*, the little man gave the princess exactly three days to guess his name, or he would steal her child away forever — a sure sign that he was one of the Gentry. Astute changelings one might also observe include the three treasures stolen away from the giant in the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*: the bag of gold, the magical harp that played itself, and a hen that laid golden eggs.

The number three is considered to represent the unity of body, mind, and spirit, and in many a fairy tale or old legend, when a hero sets out on any quest, she generally faces three challenges before reaching her goal: one physical, one mental, and one spiritual. The number three also represents a complete story, containing a beginning, a middle, and an end. In some old tales, the Gentry and other denizens of the supernatural world, such as the Djinn, demons, and even certain mortal mages, are bound by mystical laws that compel them to answer a question with utter honesty when it is asked three times, or must perform a task if they are asked three times to do so.

The number seven can be found in almost as many fairy tales as the number three. There are seven days in a week, seven deadly sins, seven virtues, and seven wonders of the ancient world. It is the rare changeling who hasn't heard the tale of one of the Others seeking out the seventh son of a seventh son, or of the seven-league boots owned by a particular member of the Gentry. Japanese tales speak of seven lucky gods, and stories from the Guaraní tribe in Brazil and Argentina speak of seven hideous monsters that plagued their land for decades.

In the fairy tale *The Six Swans*, the king has seven children from his first wife, six boys and a girl. In the story *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, many a changeling has recognized parallels to their own captivity in the tale of the princess driven out into the woods, who spends years keeping the house of seven otherworldly little men. In *The Brave Little Tailor*, the tailor at the heart of the story kills seven flies with one stroke of his belt, and embroiders 'Seven at one stroke!' on his girdle. On his travels, he tricks giants, warriors, and kings, and ends up married to a princess. A variant of this tale has the tailor killing a dozen flies with one blow, and 12 is considered another magic number. Another tale with strong ties between the Others and the number seven is that of Tam Lin, who feared that he would become the tithe to Hell given by the Fairy Queen every seven years.

Finally, the number 12 occurs frequently in tales all over the world. Among the stories that revolve around the number 12 are *The Twelve Brothers*, *The Twelve Wild Ducks*, *The Twelve Months*, and *The Twelve Huntsmen*. Perhaps the best-known fairy tale that features the number 12 is *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*. The story tells the story of a king who locks his 12 daughters away every night, but in the morning their once-pristine shoes are always ruined. He declares that whoever solves the riddle of how the princesses' shoes end up in that condition can marry whichever of his daughters he chooses, but whoever tries to discover the answer and fails must be put to death. At last, a soldier manages to follow the princesses one night, thanks to a cloak of invisibility given to him by an old woman. Thus hidden, the soldier sees them descend into a beautiful fairyland, where they spend all night dancing with handsome fairy princes. He breaks twigs from the trees of gold and silver and diamond to take back to the king as a token of where the princesses have gone, and then returns with them. In the morning, he presents the twigs to the king along with his story, and is wed to the king's oldest daughter as his reward.

In most of these tales, the number 12 represents difficulty. The challenge to the soldier in *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* was to follow the girls without being discovered. In the stories *The Twelve Brothers* and *The Twelve Wild Ducks*, the 12 protagonists of each story are turned into birds — ravens in *The Twelve Brothers*, and ducks in the

other story. In both stories, the sister of the 12 sons must suffer through painful and dangerous perils and tasks — wearing coats of thistles, weaving suits of nettles for the boys — without speaking for seven years, even in the face of death. In *The Twelve Huntsmen*, the spurned fiancée of a prince who has promised his dying father the king he will marry another princess gathers 11 maidens to her who bear a strong resemblance to her. Disguised as huntsmen, they travel to the prince's Court so the girl can watch over her former fiancée, and face numerous tests from the prince, who has been told by his companion, a magical lion, that the huntsmen are really girls.

In each of these stories, the hapless main character faces trials and tribulations that could result in pain and death. The execution facing the soldier if he failed to discover how the princesses' shoes ended up worn out, the transformation of the 12 brothers into birds and their sister's unwavering devotion to them despite pain and the threat of being put to death, the constant tests faced by the girls disguised as huntsmen — all echo the torment faced by the Lost in the hands of their Keepers, and the difficulty they face in finally escaping through the Hedge.

The influence of these magical numbers in everyday changeling life is visible to those who choose to look. The Lost in Las Vegas pass around the story of the Summer Court Knight who found that his fetch had become involved with the Mafia in his absence, and had to fight his way through three groups of gangsters, each group containing three burly, ruthless thugs, over a period of three hours, before he could reach his fetch and kill him. In London, changelings still speak of the Courtless Jack the Jester, who tricked seven motleys into elevating him into the position of the city's seneschal, advisor to all four of the seasonal Courts, a position he held for seven years. And Tokyo is home to the legendary Tanaka Chiyoko, champion of the Court of the West, who single-handedly fought and slaughtered 12 hobgoblin samurai sent by her Keeper to retrieve her — and suffered not so much as a single scratch during the battle.

The Fairer Sex

Fairy tales have almost always portrayed female characters differently from men. Male heroes in fairy tales are usually similar: brave, strong and handsome. They differ mostly in terms of social class. The hero in *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* is described as an old soldier, the lad in *Jack and the Beanstalk* is a lazy, careless peasant boy, and the hero in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* is a prince. But despite their differing ages — we might guess them to be from their early teens (Jack) to their late thirties (the old soldier) — only their economic dissimilarities differentiate between them, and this seems to be because men were judged by their class when these stories first entered the world.

Not so for women. Women, who had little economic value of their own, were valued for what they contributed to the family, especially through familial roles: a young daughter who could be married off to cement an alliance with another family; a mother who would breed strong sons to work in the fields or go off to join a noble's army at war; or a grandmother who might be relied upon to watch the little children while their mother worked at endless tasks around the home. Roles for women were broken down not by class but by their phase in life — maiden, mother, or crone.

As women were limited in their roles in the real world, so were they in fairy tales. However, in stories, unlike real life, though the type of character they might be cast in would be one the audience might be familiar with — a peasant girl lost in the forest, a hard-working mother fretting over an indifferent child, or an aged grandmother trying to help shape the upbringing of their children's children — the difference was that the characters were the heroes, not nonentities relegated to the sidelines. Most female characters in fairy tales and folklore fall into one of three traditional roles: maiden, mother, or crone. There are exceptions to this, but they are few and far between.

Maidens can be found in tales such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*, *Vasilissa the Fair*, *The Disobedient Daughter Who Married a Skull*, and *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. Maidens in fairy tales could range from as young as the tiny girl-child in *Thumbelina* to the seven-year-old Snow White to the marriage-aged king's daughters in *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*. The only defining characteristic was that of childlessness, rather than age. Even a girl of 14 or 15 was no longer a maiden once she had borne a child, such as the miller's daughter in *Rumplestiltskin*.

Following maidens are their mothers. Mothers come in all shapes and sizes in fairy tales, but the two that are showcased most often are the kindly real mother — who is often absent from the main character's life altogether — and the evil stepmother. It is worth noting that real mothers in fairy tales are often dead, and either absent entirely or continuing on only as ghosts. Examples of kindly dead mothers can be found in *Vasilissa the Fair*, and — by implication — in *The Juniper Tree*. Living, kindly mothers can be seen in *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Sleeping Beauty*. Evil mothers and stepmothers, however, are far more common in fairy tales — and stepmothers more so than birth mothers. Among the wicked mothers and stepmothers are those found in *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Juniper Tree*, and *Tam and Cam*, a Vietnamese version of *Cinderella*. There are few exceptions to the rule that any motherly type that is not the actual mother must be evil. One such is the fairy godmother in *Cinderella*. The fairy godmother is clearly a stand-in for Cinderella's real — deceased — mother, just like the juniper tree is in the story of the same name, or the bones of the red calf in the Scottish version of *Cinderella*, a tale called *Rashin Coatie*.

Almost invariably, crones in fairy tales are found to be evil Fae, wicked enchantresses, or ogresses. While there are

a few elderly women in fairy tales who are not portrayed as evil, such as the grandmother in *Little Red Riding Hood*, the rule maintains that if a character is old, they are almost inevitably evil, as well. While crones symbolize wisdom within fairy and folk tales, usually this wisdom is the sort that has been gained through wicked means. Evil witches outnumber good fairy godmothers by a large margin. Among the wicked crones found in fairy tales are Baba Yaga in *Vasilisa the Fair*, the hag that the queen/stepmother in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* transformed herself into, the ancient fairy who was not invited to the christening of the infant princess in *Sleeping Beauty*, and the evil enchantress in *The Little Mermaid*, who helped the mermaid to get her legs, but at a terrible price.

Female changelings in the modern world tend to fall into these categories whether they are aware of it or not. Maria Thorne, in Miami, is a classic example of the maiden, and whether Rose Thorne is literally Maria's biological mother, by choosing never to deny Maria's claim that she is Rose's daughter, Rose has taken on that role. Mama Araña of the Autumn Court of San Antonio is another example of the mother, this one taken to extremes. Thousands of spiders have taken up residence in her hair, clothes, and skin, and like the cannibalistic arachnid this Venombite emulates, she occasionally devours them. Almost as terrifying is Baba Lyuda, the withered Gristlegrinder crone that rules the city of Volgograd in Russia with an iron claw. Emulating the legendary Baba Yaga, she has personally led the city's forces to turn back every Gentry incursion in the city, cutting down the Others' soldiers with ruthless brutality. Her success in keeping the city free from Fae invasion has led the other Lost of Volgograd to abolish all Courts but the Winter Court, making her the sole and unchallenged ruler there.

Mind Your Manners

It has always been common wisdom that being rude to the Others, or displaying greed, arrogance, malice, or laziness to them is a good way to draw their attention, which is never a good thing. Changelings know that this is, at best, only partly true. Sometimes their attention is drawn by love, innocence, kindness, or other positive emotions and actions. Sometimes it takes nothing at all to catch their eye. But it does seem to be true that the Fae notice the darker side of human nature more easily than they do the good. Why this might be so, no one is certain. However, there are plenty of examples of this recorded in fairy tales from cultures all around the world.

Examples can be found in tales such as *Diamonds and Toads*, *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow*, and *The Three Heads in the Well*. In *Diamonds and Toads*, for example, a widow has two daughters. The older is haughty and unpleasant, while the younger is gentle and kind. The younger girl goes to the well one day to fill her buckets and is asked for a drink of water by an old woman. She gladly helps the old woman, who turns out to be a fairy in disguise, and rewards her by using her magic to have either a jewel or a flower fall from her mouth with every word she speaks. When she returns home, her mother angrily sends her older daughter to be blessed in the same way. The fairy is disguised this time as a wealthy matron, and the older daughter is rude to her. The fairy rewards her by cursing her so that a toad or snake falls from her mouth with every word.

The story of *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow*, from Japan, is similar. An older man is married to a lazy woman, who has chosen never to have children because she doesn't want to work to raise a child. Neither will she allow her husband to adopt a son to aid him in his old age. For companionship, he takes a sparrow into his house, enjoying its cheerful disposition and beautiful singing. His wife hates the bird, and secretly schemes to be rid of it. One day, while the old man is out, the sparrow flies out of his cage to nibble at some rice the woman had cooked, and she flies into a rage. Seizing it, she cuts its tongue out, and then throws it from the window. When the man comes home and finds his friend gone, he searches for the little bird, but is unable to find him, and mourns for his loss. Not long after, while out gathering firewood, he meets the sparrow and rejoices. The sparrow invites him back to his home, feasts him, and offers the man a choice of parting gifts: a light sack, or a heavy sack. The old man feels that finding out the sparrow was still alive and well was gift enough, and not being greedy, he chooses the light sack. When he gets home to his wife and opens it, he finds it full of gold and jewels. So his wife storms out into the night to get a sack of treasure of her own. When she finds the sparrow's house, she invites herself in, is given only a cup of tea, and demands a parting gift. The magical sparrow offers her the choice of a heavy basket or a light one, and being greedy, she takes the heavy one, leaving without even offering him thanks. When she gets home and opens the basket, a swarm of monsters leap out of its depths and devour her.

In *The Fisherman and His Wife*, the magical fish consents to grant a wish to the fisherman who has caught him and given him his freedom, but then grows enraged when the fisherman's wife is not content with the pretty little cottage the fisherman has asked for, and asks in turn for an immense stone castle, a day later to be made king, the day after that to be made Emperor, the day following that one to become Pope, and on the final day, to be made God Himself. The fish, furious with the woman's greed, takes back every gift and leaves the fisherman and his wife stranded in the broken-down hovel they had at the beginning.

There are dozens of other examples of how lethal the wrath of offended Gentry can be. The thirteenth fairy in *Sleeping Beauty* curses the infant princess to die at the age of 16 by pricking her finger on a spinning wheel spindle, because she had not been invited to the child's christening. In the English tale *The Three Heads in the Well*, the daughter of the king who has been displaced by her new stepmother and her stepmother's daughter runs away from the

palace and shares her food and drink with a little man she meets along the way, who advises her how to pass through a sharp-thorned hedge, and to speak kindly to three disembodied heads she finds in a well, and treat them well. This she does, and receives blessings beyond compare, including being wed to the most handsome prince in the land. When she returns to her father's palace with her new husband, her jealous stepsister vows to be equally blessed, but insults the little man on the forest road, and strikes the three heads at the well, and is cursed with hideous ugliness, a shrill voice, and ends up married to a poor cobbler's son. When her mother discovers how her daughter has fared, she hangs herself in despair.

The Lost who have escaped from their Keepers and returned from the lands beyond the Hedge know that, should they encounter another of the Others, it is almost impossible to keep from being dragged back if a member of the Gentry decides to add them to their menagerie or toybox. This is all the more true when the Fae in question turns out to be their original Keeper. However, there have been times in the past when an unlucky changeling ran into one of the Others, out in the mortal world on private business. Canny changelings who understand the lessons in fairy tales like those above have averted an unwilling return to Faerie by treating the Lady or Lord they encountered with respect and civility and showing no fear.

Encountering the Gentry is dangerous at any time. Deliberately insulting them is little short of suicidal madness. Changelings in Honolulu can attest to this, having recently lost almost a third of their number to a furious assault by one of the Others after an insolent and arrogant Fairest boasted she was a better dancer than he was. The only survivor in the Fairest's freehold was a quiet Wizened artist, who wisely apologized for his friend's insult, and vowed in recompense never to dance again. Mollified, the Fae Lord let him live. Members of the Courts of the Lost in Berlin tell a similar story, of a daring Mirrorskin thief who journeyed beyond the Hedge three times to break into the castle of one of the Gentry and steal her jewels. The first two times, he escaped without injury, but on the third attempt, the thief found that the jewels he had stolen were the Other herself, temporarily transformed into bright diamonds and emeralds to trick him. He stands in the Fae Lady's castle to this day, changed into a statue of purest ruby as a warning to other would-be thieves. And the Lost in Boston still cringe when they tell the story of Peggy Parchment, an antiquarian who was tracked down by her former Keeper, whom she had served as librarian. The Gentry was unable to drag her back to her realm, thanks to a desperate deal Peggy had made with a Cabal of Mages in that city, but when Peggy recklessly told her Keeper that she'd rather die than mend another tattered volume for the woman, the

Keeper acted on the changeling's ill-chosen words. Before the mages who had guarded Peggy with their magics could react, the Fae woman transformed Peggy into a book — her skin the binding and pages and her bones the book's spine. Peggy's life was written onto the pages with her blood. The woman vanished, and the mages found that, not only could they not reverse the transformation, but that the book that Peggy had become was still alive.

The Hedge, the Fae, and Stolen Children

Although not every fairy tale actually includes the Gentry within its pages, a number of classic stories not only make mention of the Fae, but specifically refer to the Hedge and the stolen children, as well. Such tales are most often found in Europe, where the Brothers Grimm and other storytellers spent decades collecting the stories told by peasants to their children and writing them down, so they would not be lost.

In *Rapunzel*, a man climbs into the garden of a fairy enchantress to steal rampion, a vegetable with a root like a turnip, for his pregnant wife, who craves that food above all others. The fairy discovers him and threatens to kill them both, and only when the man agrees to deliver the baby his wife is carrying when it is born does she agree to let them live.

The baby, a girl, grows up in the enchantress' high tower, surrounded by a tall hedge of thorns, separated from the outside world. She is discovered one day by a prince who hears her singing, and watches the fairy woman come and go from the tower by climbing up and down Rapunzel's hair. The next day, once the fairy has gone, he calls out to Rapunzel in the same way that the fairy did: "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair," then climbs up to her. They fall in love, and he each day he brings her a skein of silk to weave into a ladder.

Their love is discovered by the fairy woman when Rapunzel unwisely asks why her fairy stepmother is so much heavier to pull up than the prince. Enraged, the fairy cuts her hair and casts her out, then lays in wait for the prince with Rapunzel's braids fastened firmly to the tower wall. When the prince climbs up the next day, he finds the fairy waiting for him. She tells him he will never see Rapunzel again, and throws him from the highest window. He lands in the hedge, and the thorns tear out his eyes, leaving him blind. He wanders through the forest, barely able to survive on nuts and berries, until one day he hears Rapunzel singing. The two are reunited, and when she weeps over his ruined eyes, her tears fall upon the scarred sockets and heal him.

Even the dimmest of changelings can recognize an account similar to their own in this old tale. The original abduction through the Hedge by a member of the Gentry, many years spent in captivity, and a final escape back through the Hedge that leaves its scars on the traveler. Furthermore, the reference to Rapunzel's tears regenerating the prince's eyes is a clear reference to the healing power of the Contract of Eternal Spring, and the rampion and strange flowers and herbs of all kinds in the fairy's garden calls to mind the goblin fruits that are found in the Hedge and beyond.

Another fairy tale that makes literal reference to the Fae and the Hedge is *Sleeping Beauty*. The story begins with a king and queen wishing for a child. When the queen does finally give birth, after a long time, the entire kingdom rejoices. Invitations are sent out for the child's christening, and included among the recipients of these invitations are a number of fairies who live within the realm. The number varies according to which version of the tale is being told. In one version, there are three, and in others, there are seven or twelve. However, common to each version of the story is that the king and queen always fail to send an invitation to one particular fairy. In some variants of the tale, it is because the fairy has not been seen in over 50 years and is thought to be dead. In others, it is because no one even knows she exists. However the tale is told, the jilted fairy always shows up at the christening banquet and, when the christening gifts are being handed out to the newborn princess, jumps in just before the last and youngest fairy offers her gift. The insulted and ignored guest then offers her gift: she curses the child to prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel on her sixteenth birthday and die.

Screams of grief and terror immediately ring out through the palace's halls as the wicked fairy disappears, but they are assuaged when the youngest fairy steps forward with her gift. The child will not die, but fall into a sleep of one hundred years, to be woken at the end of that sleep by the kiss of a prince.

True to the uninvited guest's word, on her sixteenth birthday, the princess does indeed prick her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel, up in the highest tower of the castle, although her father the king had commanded that all spinning wheels in the kingdom be destroyed, immediately after the christening banquet ended. As the princess falls into her sleep, so too do her parents, the Knights that guard the palace, the servants tending their tasks, and every man and animal within the walls of the castle. Outside the palace walls, a huge thorn wall grows up around the castle, preventing anyone from entering.

In precisely one hundred years, a prince does indeed spot the castle's tallest towers above the branches of the immense thorn hedge, and in curiosity, approaches it. Although the Disney version of the tale shows the prince fighting his way through the thorns, in the original versions of the tale, the thorn-boughs part for him, closing up behind him. He makes his way into the castle, noting everyone sleeping in their tracks, and eventually finds his way to the topmost tower, where he wakes the princess with the fated kiss.

In an older version of the story, the tale does not end happily ever after the awakening of the princess, but continues on after their marriage. In this time, she has borne him two children, a daughter named Morning and a son named Day. The prince returns home to his own parents, leaving the princess behind at her parents' castle. When the prince returns to his parents, he tells them he has been lost in the woods for years. His father accepts the story, but his mother, who is an ogress, does not. The prince does not tell his parents of his marriage and children, fearing that his mother will want to devour his children, as ogres do. Only after his father dies several years later and the prince becomes king does he announce his marriage and bring his family back to his home.

Shortly after that, he is called away to war, and leaves his wife and children in the care of his mother. He is gone no more than a few days when the queen-mother orders the head chef of the palace kitchens to cook up her granddaughter for her meal. Afraid of the ogress, he goes to do so, but just as the huntsman in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* takes pity on Snow White and tells her to flee into the forest, the chef cannot kill the king's beautiful daughter. He hides her with his own wife, and instead kills a lamb, cooking it with a sauce that disguises the taste. The ogress enjoys the meal, and orders the chef to kill her grandson and cook him the same way a week later. Again, he spirits the boy away, hiding him with his wife, and serves the queen-mother a baby goat. At last, the queen-mother demands the princess for dinner, and the chef reunites the princess with her children in hiding, and serves the queen-mother a hind for dinner, instead.

Eventually, the queen-mother discovers the chef's duplicity, and orders him and the princess and her two children to be thrown into a tub of vipers and snakes in the palace courtyard, but moments before the four are to be killed, the king returns from the war, and his mother is so enraged at being thwarted that she hurls herself into the tub of serpents instead.

Most Lost agree that the events depicted in this story seem to portray a war between two of the Gentry, with the princess and her family as the battleground. One curses the princess to die, and the other modifies the curse as much as possible. The first fairy weaves a section of the Hedge around the castle to keep intruders out, especially the prince who would break her curse, but when the prince arrives, the second fairy's magic parts the Hedge for him so that he can pass without injury. And there is more than a little speculation among the Lost that the ogress queen of the prince who wakens the princess is the original fairy that cursed the princess to die, trying yet again to win the war against her fellow member of the Gentry.

The Fae and the Hedge figure prominently in a number of other stories, although their depiction is sometimes at odds with the dangerous Others and the unpredictable landscape that changelings have come to know. The fairy godmother in *Cinderella* is a benevolent figure, as is the fairy godmother in the story *Donkeyskin*. The gifts these fairy godmothers grant to their charges seem out-of-place with the usual behavior of the Others, although there have been changelings who spoke of their Keepers treating them well. Similarly, in the Chinese tale *The Tortoise Prince*, the protagonist of the tale, Young Feng, is given the gift of seeing treasure under the ground by the fairy tortoise-prince whose life he saved. This gift allows him to amass enough wealth that he can take a princess as his wife.

In the tale *The Three Heads in the Well*, the princess who flees her father's palace due to the cruelty of her new stepmother and stepsister travels through a thick thorn hedge, aided by the magical advice of a little dwarf with whom she has shared her food. By following his advice, she encounters a trio of mysterious disembodied heads at the bottom of a well. The story does not state outright that these heads belong to the Fae, but it seems likely. By treating them kindly and with respect, she is granted loveliness, a beautiful singing voice, and becomes fated to be wed to the greatest prince alive. All these gifts are granted, while her rude stepsister, who sets out to gain the same fortune, receives nothing but misery at the hands of the three heads of the well.

One of the oldest truths about the Gentry is that they steal people away. In stories, the most notable victims are children, and this is amply represented in fairy tales. In the Swedish fairy tale *The Changeling*, trolls steal a baby and leave their own child behind, but the canny human mother realizes immediately that the child is not her own. Despite her husband's insistence that she beat the troll child to make it behave, she refuses to strike an innocent, and finally, he abandons her. In the forest, however, he comes upon his own missing son, who tells him that, every time his mother was told to beat the troll child, the troll mother was ready to beat him in return, and never did. When finally the mortal woman loses her own husband rather than hurt the troll child, the troll mother realizes she has no further power in the matter, and lets the boy go. Once reunited, the human mother returns the troll child to his mother, as well.

In Germany, the tale of the Pied Piper is one of the oldest stories referring to the Gentry in circulation, dating back 600 years before it appeared in the first edition of the *Household Tales* by the Brothers Grimm alongside other fairy tales. In 1284, the town of Hamelin in Germany was suffering under a terrible plague of rats, which not only ate up all the food and crops, but bit adults and children both, devouring babies in their cradles. A mysterious man in pied clothing appeared and offered to deliver the town from the rats for an appropriate payment in gold. The townsfolk instantly agreed, and the piper was as good as his word, striking up a tune on his pipe. Rats instantly poured out of every door, window, and crack in the wall, following him as he

led them down to the river, where they fell in and drowned. However, when the piper returned for his payment, the town's burghers refused to give him the money. In a rage, he swore then that he would receive his payment from their heirs. The next morning just before dawn, the piper set out on the streets again, his pipe sounding throughout the town. All the town's children rushed from their homes to follow him, up into the hills, until they came to the face of a great mountain, which opened for him. He led the children inside and the mountain closed again.

One hundred and thirty children had disappeared. The only two children who did not vanish, other than the tiniest babes in cradles who could not walk, were one who was lame and could not keep up with the other children, and one who was deaf and followed the others only to see what was going on. The lame child wept as he told the town's adults of what he had seen through the gap in the mountainside just before it closed up. The boy described a beautiful land where flowers bloomed in colors never seen on Earth, where dogs ran faster than deer and sparrows' feathers were brighter than those of peacocks, where horses had the wings of eagles, and where, the music of the pipes promised him, his lame foot would be healed.

There is a long tradition of the Fae living under hills and mountains, and the magic displayed by the piper, both in his music and in commanding the mountain to open for him, certainly suggests to the Lost that the piper was one of the Gentry. He was described as having a crooked nose, a long moustache like two rats' tails, and yellow eyes that surveyed the town's council mockingly.

In modern times, the story of stolen children has evolved and adapted into a form suited for the age, the urban legends that circulate freely both off- and online. There is little thematic difference, for example, between the legends that speak of the Gentry stealing children and several modern urban legends. In one of the modern versions, an abductor tries to steal a child from their mother or father while shopping in a department store. The kidnapper whisks the child away while the mother is looking elsewhere, spirits the girl or boy away to the restroom, and dyes their hair and changes their clothes. The mother alerts the store security as soon as she realizes her child is gone, and monitors the exits from the security cameras in the store's office. In some versions of the urban legend, the mother recognizes her child by her distinctive shoes, which the abductor didn't have time to change, but in other versions the child is never recovered, just as some changelings taken away to Arcadia are never able to return home.

The Lost are all too familiar with the Hedge, the Others, and abduction at the Gentry's hands. From the recent Gentry incursion through the Hedge in Sao Paolo and the decimation of the Courts there, to the wary détente made by the Courts in Nottingham with the amused and fickle Fae Lord known as Swift, changelings need not look to fairy tales for information about the Fae. They need look no further than their own past.

Marriage

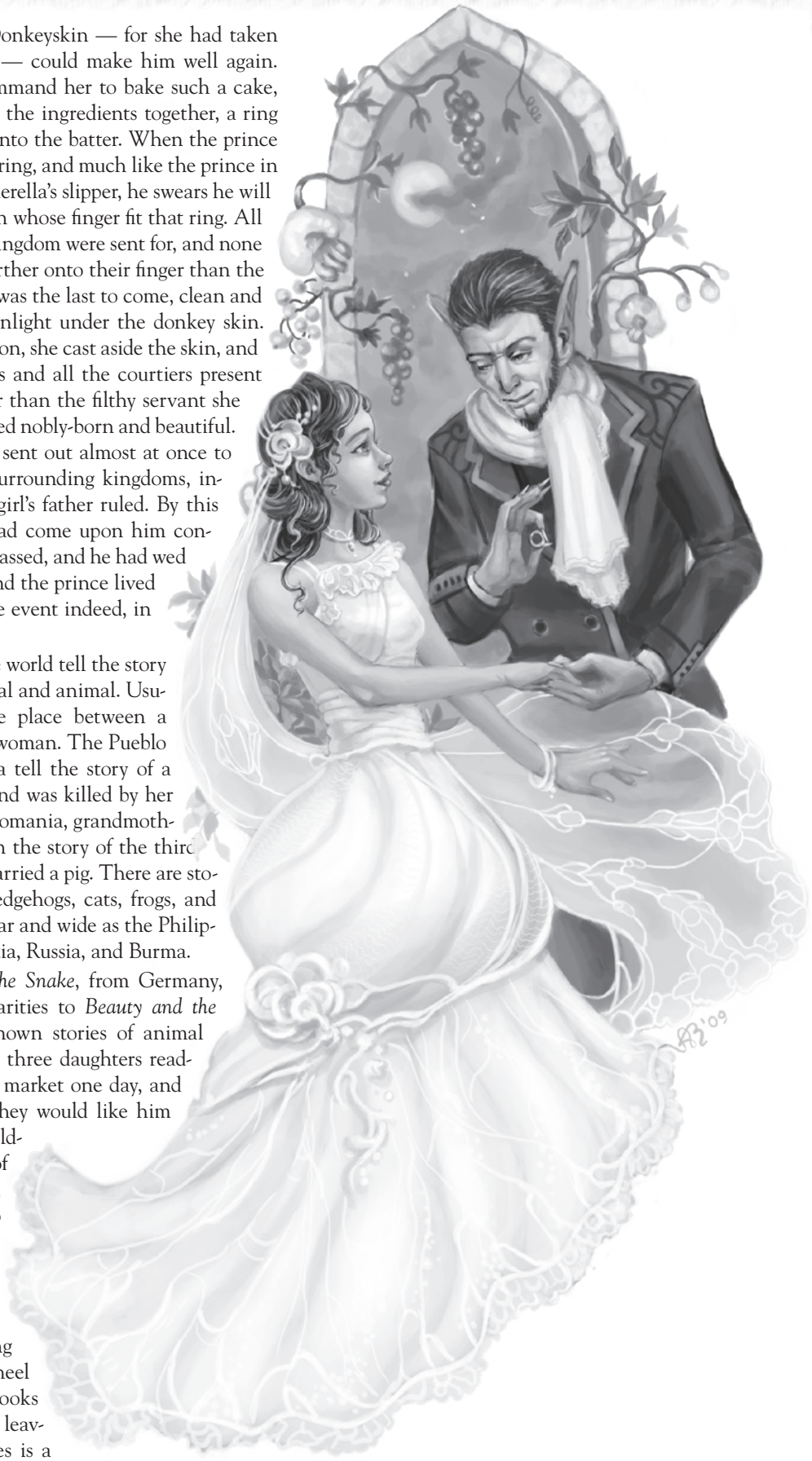
Many fairy tales revolve around marriage. A substantial number of the tales consist of a peasant girl or the downtrodden daughter from a noble's first marriage finally achieving happiness with a prince or a king, such as in *Cinderella*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. Another group recounts how a poor peasant man ends up married to a princess through his wits and bravery, like those in *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*, *Bearskin*, and *The Brave Little Tailor*. However, these two themes are by no means the only ones to deal with marital bliss in fairy tales, and it is in the other themes that the presence of the Others shows itself.

Less well-known than the tale of mistreated Cinderella is the tale of *Donkeyskin* and its many variants. *Allerleirauh*, *All-Kinds-of-Fur*, *Cap-'o-Rushes*, and *Rashin Coatie* are just a few of over 50 different variations of the story, which tells of a king who makes a promise to his beloved wife on her deathbed that he will never wed unless he can find a woman to marry who is as beautiful as she. This vow lasts until the day he realizes that the daughter his wife bore has grown up to be the spitting image of her mother, fully as beautiful as his late wife. He swears in front of his entire Court that he will wed her. Horrified, the girl goes to visit her fairy godmother, who gives her advice on how to try to avoid the wedding. The godmother first tells her to request that the king give her three dresses that should be impossible to make: a dress that exactly resembles the sky, a dress of sunbeams, and a dress of moonlight. The king's royal tailors manage to craft such gowns, and next, the godmother tells the girl to demand the skin of the pet donkey that has been the king's beloved companion since he was young, thinking the king would never comply. But, although reluctant, he has the donkey killed and presents the girl with its skin. Realizing that the king will never stop, the fairy godmother tells the girl to dress in the donkey skin, take her three fine dresses, and flee the palace. The girl does so, finally ending up as a servant on a royal farm in the next kingdom. On a holiday months later, tired of being covered in filth and grime and wearing the donkey skin, she bathes, changes from the rotting hide, and puts on one of the beautiful dresses, wearing it only in her quarters. What she does not realize is that the son of the king of the land has stopped at the farm to rest after being out hunting all day, and when he sees a glitter of light through the keyhole to her room, he peeps through the hole and sees the girl clad in her dress of sunbeams. When he returns to the palace, he is stricken with fever out of love for the girl. His mother the queen, terrified that her only child is going to die, asks him why he has become sick, promising to do whatever is necessary to make him well again. He confides that only a cake made by the hand of the

scullery maid known as Donkeyskin — for she had taken on the name of her garb — could make him well again. A servant was sent to command her to bake such a cake, and while she was mixing the ingredients together, a ring slipped off her finger and into the batter. When the prince ate the cake, he found the ring, and much like the prince in *Cinderella* who found Cinderella's slipper, he swears he will wed no one but the maiden whose finger fit that ring. All the young women in the kingdom were sent for, and none could slide the ring any further onto their finger than the first knuckle. Donkeyskin was the last to come, clean and wearing her gown of moonlight under the donkey skin. Once she had put the ring on, she cast aside the skin, and the prince and his parents and all the courtiers present rejoiced to see that, rather than the filthy servant she seemed to be, she was indeed nobly-born and beautiful. Wedding invitations were sent out almost at once to the monarchs of all the surrounding kingdoms, including the one that the girl's father ruled. By this time, the madness that had come upon him concerning his daughter had passed, and he had wed a young widow. The girl and the prince lived happily ever after — a rare event indeed, in these tales.

Fairy tales all over the world tell the story of weddings between mortal and animal. Usually, these marriages take place between a male animal and a young woman. The Pueblo Indians of North America tell the story of a girl who married a bear, and was killed by her brothers for the deed. In Romania, grandmothers tell their grandchildren the story of the third daughter of a king, who married a pig. There are stories of girls who marry hedgehogs, cats, frogs, and snakes, from countries as far and wide as the Philippines, Italy, Norway, Croatia, Russia, and Burma.

The story *Oda and the Snake*, from Germany, shares a number of similarities to *Beauty and the Beast*, one of the best known stories of animal bridegrooms. A man with three daughters readies himself to head to the market one day, and asks his daughters what they would like him to bring back. The two oldest girls ask for trinkets of gold, but the youngest, named Oda, asks him to bring back whatever he finds under his carriage when he is ready to come home. He fetches the older daughters the ring and golden spinning wheel they ask for, but when he looks under his carriage before leaving the market, all he sees is a



snake. Nonetheless, he captures it and brings it home to Oda, leaving it near the house's front door. As soon as the snake sees the girl, it speaks to her and asks to rest in front of her bedroom door. When she has set it in front of her bedroom door, it asks to come into her bedroom, and once she has consented and brought it into her bedroom, it asks to sleep in her bed with her. Although she is furious with the cold-skinned snake that wants to come into her warm bed and curl up against her, she does as it has asked. Before her eyes, the snake changes into a handsome prince, and he explains that he was under a spell. Delighted, they were wed at once.

The Lost are not unaware of the strange interest the Gentry have in mortal social rituals such as marriage. A lucky Flowering Fairest in Athens tells of escaping her Keeper just days before he would have wed her. The Fae Lord spoke of trying to understand love, and much like the caliph in the tale of *1001 Arabian Knights*, he had a long history of marrying his servants and then killing them the next morning. A wolven Hunterheart from Denver who swore the Heart's Oath to another changeling on a trinket he had found at a Goblin Market, a silver ring in the shape of a wolf's head, found that his bestial side faded away almost entirely afterward, very much like the frog prince who was restored to humanity by the kiss of the princess. And a Nightsinger Darkling in Budapest fought his way through the Hedge and slaughtered his fetch so he might return home to his beloved wife. Only too late did he learn that his wife had changed as much as he had during his nine-month absence, having been Embraced by one of the local Kindred. He barely escaped with his life after his first attempt at intimacy with her resulted in her almost draining him dry.

The symbolism of marriage is obvious: two things become one, or create something new out of pre-existing things (which may be a child, but may also be the relationship, an alliance, or the like). The Others have difficulty achieving this true purpose of marriage. They lack the empathy to truly share as mortals understand it; they are too consumed by their own brilliant individuality to subsume themselves into a new, joined entity. To one of the True Fae, a mortal bride or groom is not an equal, not a partner, not the other half that makes them whole — it is an accessory, a pet, a living experiment with a curiously romantic concept. The solipsism of the Gentry makes marriage something they cannot indulge in without twisting its intent.

Transformations

Nothing about Faerie or its inhabitants is fixed or static. When a hapless mortal is first dragged through the Hedge, she enters a world that changes from domain to domain, day to day, and sometimes even square foot by square foot. The Gentry that rule these realms are as fluid and mutable as their provinces, and so too are the changes that are inflicted upon the people they steal.

These transformations are mirrored in fairy tales. In such stories, the transformations are usually temporary and meant as a punishment for a transgression or crime of some kind. For example, the transformation visited upon Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*, or the prince who is cursed to live as a frog until freed by a princess in *The Frog King*, are both curses that can only be lifted by certain conditions being carried out. In *A Frog for a Husband*, a version of the *Frog Prince* tale from Korea, the husband in question is condemned by his father, the King of Stars, whom he has offended, to live life as a frog until he marries a beautiful, innocent, and virtuous girl of noble birth.

There are tales in which such transformations are partial rather than complete, reflecting the way some changelings are able to hold on to at least part of their mortality, rather than being completely altered. The six brothers who become swans in the tale of the same name can only be changed back to human if their sister succeeds in weaving them each a complete set of clothing out of nettles, which will take seven years, and in that time, she must not speak a single word. During her exile in the wilderness, her brothers bring her food, and while they are gone one day, a king and his retainers, who are out hunting, discover her. The king is struck by her beauty, and though he cannot make her speak, he vows to marry her, and he takes her back to his palace with him. His mother is displeased by his decision to wed the girl, and continually looks for ways to cast blame on her. After almost seven years, when she has almost finished weaving the clothes in secret, the girl gives birth to the king's son. His mother sees a way to be rid of the girl so the king will marry the girl she wishes him to, and she takes the child away while the girl is recovering from childbirth, hiding the baby. She then smears blood on the girl's hands while she sleeps, and calls her son in and claims the girl has murdered her own child. Though the king grieves to do so, he puts her on trial for the child's murder, and because she will not speak a word in her own defense, she is found guilty. She continues to weave the suits of clothing during the trial and while in jail, and at the end, she is taken to the stake and tied there to burn. The six swans swoop down just before the pyre is lit, and she throws the suits of clothing over them. The young men are transformed back to human – all except for the youngest brother, whose coat still lacks a sleeve, and who then forevermore has one arm permanently transformed into a swan's wing. The girl then tells the king of his mother's crime, and after bringing the king's baby back safe and whole, it is the king's mother who burns.

Sometimes the transformations that changelings endure while under their Keeper's thumb are not hated and feared, but embraced. Swans are an integral part of another fairy tale, in which the transformation is deliberate, rather than against the characters' will. In *The Swan Maidens*, a hunter out searching for game one night spots seven elegant swans land at the shore of a lake, remove their feathers, and become beautiful maidens who bathe

themselves in the lake. The hunter becomes enamored of the youngest and most beautiful of the maidens, and quietly steals her feather robe. Near dawn, the maidens go to take up their feathers again and fly away, and the youngest of them realizes her robe is missing. Her six sisters fly away, and the hunter emerges from his hiding place in the brush with her robe. Though she begs him to give it back, he instead demands to marry her, and she relents. Years later, after she has borne a son and daughter to him, her daughter is playing hide-and-seek and discovers her mother's feather robe in the walls, where the hunter has hidden it. The woman tells her children that, if her husband still wants to be with her, he must search for her East of the sun and West of the moon; she then dons the robe, turns back into a swan, and flies away. The hunter searches far and wide for her, aided by the King of the Beasts, the King of the Birds, and the King of the Fishes, and finally reaches his goal. He is able to pick out his wife from her six sisters even though they have been magically disguised to look identical, and having proved his love to her, the woman returns with him to their children.

The story *Brother and Sister* bears similarities both to *Hansel and Gretel*, in that the two children in the story are out wandering through the woods, and to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, in which the children have fled into the forest to escape their cruel stepmother. In the tale, the two children wander through the forest, hungry and thirsty. Although they can find no food to eat, they stumble across three streams, each of which is enchanted: the first will turn the drinker into a tiger, the second into a bear, and the third into a roebuck. The sister manages to convince her brother not to drink from the first two streams, afraid he will devour her, but before she can say anything to him when they reach the third stream, he has quenched his thirst there and become a deer. Only when the stepmother who drove them from home in the first place is eventually executed does the boy recover his true form.

The Lost encounter transformation from a myriad of sources. The first they usually face is the warping of their own bodies once they are taken through the Hedge, whether into forms more bestial and hideous, as Elementals, Beasts, Darklings, or Ogres, or forms that are more beautiful than their own, such as the Fairest. But these are seldom the only changes they face. Cruel Keepers may turn them into something wholly inhuman – a table or chair to rest upon, a vase to hold flowers, or a stag or boar to hunt through the forest. Nor are these transformations solely at the hands of a changeling's Keeper. There are more than a few tales of unlucky changelings eating the wrong goblin fruit and being twisted into something even more alien than the Lost they have become. Drinking from enchanted streams, daring to look upon the face of a passing lady, or stealing the ruby apples out of an Other's orchard are all examples of transgressions that are punished by form-changing curses.

Many of the members of the Winter Court in Johannesburg, South Africa, were hit by a curse from one of the Gentry after one of their number was discovered trying to rescue his twin brother from his Keeper's mine. Each of the changelings, no matter their original form, found themselves shriveling up into tiny gnomes. All but one were then whisked away to serve in the Fae mine alongside the two brothers. In San Francisco, a Wizened Chirurgeon hunting for Amaranthine among the goblin fruits in the Hedge instead picked something that looked identical to the small red fruit. Mistaking it for the fruit she wanted, she took as many as she could carry back through the Hedge. But when she fed it to her next patient, a Draconic Fairest wounded in a duel, instead of healing him, the fruit broke open in his mouth, and sent tendrils through his entire body, colonizing him. By the end of the day, he had rooted into the wooden floor of her office in the Tenderloin, new fruits beginning to grow from the branches that had been his arms. Lastly, there is a stone pillar in a back alley in New Delhi, India, that bears a striking resemblance to a man. A Stonebones Ogre who had promised to wed a Woodblood Elemental girl of low caste changed his mind when he fell in love with another woman. His grieving betrothed searched high and low through the Hedge until she came upon a ruined tower full of books. Months were spent searching through the books until she found a spell she could read, and no sooner had she breathed the words when the Ogre found his entire body turning to stone, starting with his heart.

Fate Merits

Between pledges and certain Contracts, the Lost interact with the vicissitudes of fate in unusual ways. Even some kith blessings, such as an Oracle's Panomancy ability, seem to play at the strands of fate. These powers all serve as reflections and extensions of the Wyrd, a changeling's connection to the mad magic of Faerie. As the power within a changeling grows, it interacts with the world around it in strange and new ways. While most changelings have some awareness (usually from terrifyingly direct experience) of the way extremely high Wyrd can twist the eldest Lost into creatures more akin to the Gentry than not, even savants among the Lost who have dedicated their entire lives to the study of fae magic fail to recognize every way in which the Wyrd tangles the weaves of fate, leaving it as twisted as the brambles of the Hedge itself.

The Fatebound

Some changelings find, as their Wyrd increases, that the pressure they place on the skein of fate pushes back against them, nudging them into certain paths that have been walked time and time again. These life-paths, noticed even by philosophers among the mortals (who call them archetypes), can make life significantly easier for a changeling

who embraces them. Each of these paths, however, places some unavoidable challenge before those who walk it.

Like kith and seeming, the Fatebound Merits represent certain archetypal strands from myth, legend, and literature (including, of course, fairy tales). Unlike those intractable aspects of the changeling's being, which tend to represent creatures or entities from the old stories, the Fatebound Merits represent *narrative* archetypes. These are ideas that drive stories. They suggest areas of life in which the Fatebound will enjoy particular success and others where she will meet obstacle after obstacle.

Storytellers and players who find archetypes that they'd like to use that are not presented here can create Fatebound Merits with little difficulty. Use the Merits presented here as a guide for appropriate power level. As a rule, Merits that benefit the character constantly also hinder the character constantly, and are slightly less powerful than those that provide a single bonus (and drawback) at a single time. All Fatebound Merits have a minimum Wyrd requirement of 3, and many have other requirements related to the specific archetype in question. A character may never possess more than one Fatebound Merit.

Players who purchase Fatebound Merits should only choose Merits appropriate to their characters. While some of the Merits have implied genders, the Storyteller and player shouldn't limit themselves by that. A character that develops the Fair Prince Fatebound Merit need not be male, but she *does* need to be somehow "princely" in the traditional sense.

Changeling characters rarely recognize the effects of these Merits. They may notice that a character's life tends to follow a specific trend, but these Merits and their effects are not common knowledge. In other words, the *player* chooses to develop such a Merit, not the character.

While some changelings never even notice that they have become ensnared by fate, some characters may find being Fatebound incredibly unpleasant, and fight it tooth and nail. While it is possible for a character to escape fate once it has set a course for her, it should be difficult and require her to change herself in a substantial way. Most changelings who fight against these bonds eventually give in to them, accepting them as a new aspect of their lives. Obviously, a player shouldn't purchase a Merit that she won't enjoy playing, but many players may prefer the conflict that such a Merit can engender. Similarly, a Storyteller may approach the player of a character that fits one of these Merits and suggest it as the genesis of a possible storyline. She can even offer her the chance to play with the Merit for some time at no experience charge with the understanding that if she decides to keep it, she'll have to pay the cost in experience later. She should never, however, force such a Merit on one of the characters, as it can significantly change a player's experience.

Given the fact that Fatebound Merits can often twist the narrative itself, a Storyteller should take caution and prepare herself before allowing these Merits into a chronicle. Many of them require a fair amount of effort or quick thinking on the part of the Storyteller. They also, however, take some of the burden off the Storyteller, placing a small bit of narrative control into the hands of the players.

Seeing Fate

The magic of the Fatebound Merits is subtle. Most of the Lost aren't actually aware of the existence of these Merits. Sure, certain people may have a tendency to have the same bad (and good) luck happen to them time and time again, but that's life, right?

Characters with the ability to see fate will notice something slightly unusual about the destiny of a character that possesses one of these Merits. The character's fate doesn't seem more *important*, exactly, but it doesn't seem entirely her own, either. Indeed, it seems like her fate is inextricably bound to some ineffable force that guides and shapes it.

Fatebound: Bean Buyer (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd •••, Streetwise •••

Effect: Like Jack the Giant Killer, your character has the tendency to purchase things that no other rational individual would pay for. And like Jack, whose magic beans sprouted into a magnificent beanstalk that ascended to the heavens, your purchases usually work out. Once per story, upon being tricked or swindled (not necessarily into buying something) you may spend one point of Glamour to tweak fate. The item or swindle becomes a blessing in disguise, granting the character a significant advantage.

Drawback: Unfortunately, just as Jack found that his incredible beanstalk led him to man-eating giants, your character's own luck has a tendency to sour quickly. Whenever the character uses an advantage he gained from this Merit, he invariably runs afoul of an enemy. The enemy always gains access to the character by way of the advantage.

Example: *Old Lady Mudfingers out in the Hedge offers to show Kayla, a Bean Buyer, a secret trod that leads to an opulent Hollow left abandoned by the former Autumn King… for a price. Kayla, thrilled at the opportunity, ponies up a rare oddment for the old Wizened, who takes her deep into the Hedge before promptly vanishing. Now alone, Kayla begins to despair. Her player evokes this Merit and spends one point of Glamour. The Storyteller takes a short break to do some quick thinking.*

As Kayla tries to find her way home she discovers a Thorncompass, a minor token that aids in navigating the Hedge. Unfortunately for her, it does so by directing her towards the nearest changeling. This time it just happens to be her old nemesis Cold John.

Fatebound: Cloistered Spinner (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd •••, Crafts •••

Effect: Unlike the spinner from Rumpelstiltskin, you actually have a knack for turning useless dross into something special or valuable. You may spend one point of Glamour to turn garbage or junk into something of value. This item must be something that could conceivably be created from the raw material, but it inevitably comes out more impressive than anyone would expect from what went into it. The player rolls Dexterity + Crafts as an Instant action. The finished product either provides an equipment bonus equal to the number of successes rolled or can be sold or traded as an item with a Resources value equal to the successes rolled. Note that a character that rolls no successes still creates an item, but that it is not of high enough quality to grant a bonus or be sold for significant profit.

Drawback: Unfortunately, every time a character uses this ability, fate ensures that she loses something important to her of equivalent value to the item constructed (though not necessarily in monetary terms). It may be a favored weapon or a family heirloom, but it can just as easily be a firstborn child or close friend.

Example: *Casper, a Cloistered Spinner, finds himself jailed in a moldering basement by the dominant Summer Court. Glancing around, he notices the space is filled with dust and cobwebs. Casper's player spends one point of Glamour and rolls Dexterity + Crafts, garnering 2 successes. Gathering the dross, Casper twines it together into a surprisingly strong rope (with an equipment bonus of 3). He uses the rope to escape through the nearby window. When the Summer Knights find that Casper has escaped, they become infuriated. They know he has a sister he cares for, so they hunt her down, throwing her into the same cell her brother lately inhabited. His sister's freedom has been traded for his.*

Fatebound: Cowherd and Weaver (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd •••, Resolve •••

Effect: The character has a lover from whom the world conspires to keep him separated. Only fate protects the union. Once per story, the character may spend a point of Glamour when forcibly separated from his love. Fate conspires with the character to reunite him with his lover, regardless of circumstance. He gains some bit of knowledge or insight into the whereabouts of his lover, and his lover finds some method to escape her own circumstances. This Merit does not automatically deliver the characters into one another's arms; it simply paves the way with a hint and a minor twist of good fortune.

Drawback: The world conspires against the lovers out of jealousy for their relationship. Both characters lose the 10-again rule on all social dice pools when together, partly due to their absorption with one another and partly due to the annoyance it inspires in others.

Fatebound: Evil Stepsister (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd •••, Manipulation •••

Effect: The character has authority over an individual (possibly but not necessarily represented by the Retainer Merit), and, like Cinderella's vicious stepsiblings, she abuses it. This abuse is not without purpose, however. Once per chapter, the character may spend one point of Glamour while being cruel to the individual she has authority over to ensure that he has some ability or item that will prove useful in overcoming the character's obstacles. This may be as simple as possessing a skill the character lacks or as esoteric as knowing an ancient nursery rhyme that provides the clue to opening an even older vault.

Drawback: Alas, the Evil Stepsister never prospers. Once per story (usually near the climax) the wrongs levied against the underling come back to harm the character. These abuses come back to haunt the character at the same time… usually the worst possible time. The wrongs may come in the form of an accident or may come at the hand of one of the character's enemies.

Fatebound: Fair Prince (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd •••, Court Mantle •••

Effect: The Fair Prince is beloved by his people. He is charming, gallant and brave (if a Spring Courtier), strong and courageous (Summer), brilliant and intense (Autumn) or quiet and manipulative (Winter). Thoroughly beloved, he gains a bonus of 2 dice on all social rolls with members of his Court and 1 die with changelings of other Courts. Furthermore, his charming personality affects his interactions with non-fae: Persuasion rolls against non-fae benefit from the 9-again rule.

Drawback: The Fair Prince is the very symbol of his Court. Unfortunately, that makes him the antithesis of another Court. Members of this other Court loathe the character, hinder him whenever possible, and may make plans to dispatch him (if they can do so without getting caught for murdering a popular figure). The character does not benefit from the above social bonuses with members of that Court, and may never gain the Court Goodwill Merit with that Court. Use of that Court's Contracts by the hated character may inspire members of the offended Court to violence.

The offended Court is determined by the character's Court. Spring opposes Autumn, Summer opposes Winter, and Dawn opposes Dusk (and vice versa in all cases).

Fatebound: Fisher King (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd •••, Court Mantle •••••, Possession of Court Crown (p. 97, **Changeling: The Lost**)

Effect: Like the wounded monarch of myth, the character has become closely tied to that which he rules. As the King prospers, so does his land. When the character holds power, the strength of his body determines the strength of his reign. So long as the character has not suffered a lethal or aggravated wound, his Social Merits function at twice their usual potency (if applicable). This doesn't mean that a Fisher King with Resources 2 has the equivalent of Resources 4, but rather that he has Resources 2 twice over (and thus can afford twice as much equipment). Similarly, a Retainer 3 does not become a superhuman Retainer 6, but rather can accomplish the work of 2 three-dot retainers. Allies are willing to do twice as much and Contacts uncover double the usual amount of information. If the character loses a single Health Level to damage worse than bashing, he loses these benefits until he heals the damage.

Drawback: As the land withers, so does the King. A Fisher King suffers one lethal Health Level of damage whenever a member of his Court dies. Furthermore, a Fisher King who fails to maintain a strong rule or whose rule is divided by insurrection finds his orders ineffectual and his own body wracked with pain. Not only does he lose the benefits listed above, but he suffers wound penalties based on the extent of the unrest under his rule. These penalties do not stack with usual wound penalties, and neither do they fade until the King has resolved whatever issues plague his rule. Iron Stamina does not reduce these penalties.

–1	General mild discontent or a small group of active and dedicated revolutionaries
–2	Widespread major discontent or a medium-sized group of active revolutionaries
–3	Full-blown civil war

Fatebound: Mobled Queen (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd (•••), Court Mantle (•••••), Possession of Court Crown

Effect: The Mobled Queen is wrapped in the magic of her Court, shrouded in its potent emotions as if they were vestments sewn from desire, anger, fear or sorrow. She knows those emotions like none other, her very blood inundated with their energy. The Mobled Queen gains a bonus of 4 dice to all activation rolls for Contracts that are affinity to her Court. Furthermore, she gains an additional +1 when harvesting Glamour that resonates with her Court's representative emotion.

Drawback: The Mobled Queen's pain drives her magic, but it also limits her, burning her mind with unearthly passions. She suffers a –1 penalty when rolling to resist garnering a Derangement after having lost Clarity. Furthermore, each time she benefits from this Merit in a given scene, she suffers a cumulative –1 penalty to all other actions (to a maximum of –5) from emotional distress. This penalty does not apply to Contract activation rolls or resistance rolls. The Mobled Queen may *not* choose not to benefit from this Merit, though she can certainly choose not to use her Court Contracts.

Fatebound: Monkey Heart (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd (•••), Wits •••

Effect: The clever monkey is no simple ass; while the donkey can be convinced to meet the lion a second time, the monkey refuses to walk knowingly back into danger. The character has a portion of the monkey's wiles. He gains a +5 bonus on rolls to notice traps or avoid being surprised by an adversary who has attempted (successfully or not) to trap or ambush him in the past.

Drawback: Of course, the monkey's cleverness comes from experience. The character suffers a –2 penalty on all rolls to notice traps or avoid being surprised the first time a given adversary attempts to trap or ambush him.

Fatebound: Mortal Enemy (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd (•••), Resolve •••

Effect: Sometimes the Wyrd ties two individuals together in a bond of enmity, driving them to strike at one another time and time again, until one or both are left broken and bloody on the cracked asphalt. Your character has established just such a bond with another changeling of similar power. Fate paves the way for you to clash with your hated opponent, and you gain three phantom dice each chapter that you can apply to any roll directly related to finding and confronting your enemy (though *not* to any roll against the enemy herself). These dice can be applied together on one roll, separately on three different rolls or split two and one. They can even be applied to combat if, for example, your character is fighting the enemy's guards.

When you actually face your enemy, fate guards you and empowers you. You barely duck fatal blows and your own swings strike with legendary precision. You gain +1 Defense from your enemy's attacks and +2 to all attack rolls against her.

Drawback: Just as you are bound to your enemy, so is he bound to you. He gains the exact same advantages as you do, but his are directed towards killing you, making him quite the enemy indeed. If you ever kill your enemy, you regain any spent Willpower. You lose the Merit, however.

Fatebound: Star-crossed Lover (•••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd (•••), Presence •••

Effect: The Wyrd also binds fates of lovers together, but tests that love constantly with every imaginable hardship. Your character has a true love — she need not be a changeling or love the character in return but must be something *capable* of sharing the love — and his need for her is so desperate that it has been imprinted on fate. When working to protect or save his love, the character gains a single automatic success when spending Willpower on a roll rather than the usual three dice bonus. Furthermore he regains one spent point of Willpower in any scene in which he directly protects her from danger.

Drawback: Unfortunately, the character's true love gets the bad end of the deal. She is often in danger, regularly targeted by the denizens of the World of Darkness, perhaps because the character cares about her, perhaps for some other ineffable reason. When the love is in trouble, the character suffers a –2 distraction penalty to all actions that don't directly relate to saving her. If the love ever dies, the character loses the Merit.

Other Merits of Fate

Disenchanting Kiss (••••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd •••••, Clarity 9+

Effect: Your character is a saint among the Lost. Her perceptive senses are otherworldly, easily sheering the false from the true. Furthermore, she has been chosen by fate for her kindness and sanity in an insane world to act as a balm for the orphaned survivors of Faerie. With but a kiss, an expenditure of a point of Willpower and four points of Glamour, and a successful Wyrd roll, she may immediately end any lingering effects from a power that controlled the character's emotions or mind. This is an instant action.

Drawback: The character must maintain a high Clarity to benefit from this Merit. If her Clarity ever falls below 9, she *permanently* loses the Merit. She may buy it again later if she raises her Clarity again above 9.

Glamour Thief (••••)

Prerequisite: Wyrd •••, Empathy ••, Occult ••

Effect: Sometimes the Wyrd blesses (or curses) a changeling with a little additional power above and beyond what is possible for other changelings. Such creatures can siphon Glamour from other Lost, stealing it for their own use. This works precisely as harvesting Glamour from the emotions of mortals, save that the roll is contested by the subject changeling with a Wyrd roll. If the character overcomes the subject's roll, he takes from the subject a number of Glamour equal to the successes rolled; if he rolls fewer or an equivalent number of successes, he garners no Glamour at all. Stolen Glamour comes out of the subject's Glamour pool. The sensation of having Glamour stolen is similar to the pain of being beaten with cold iron.

Drawback: Glamour taken from a changeling seems more concentrated with wild magic than that stolen from a human. A character that drains Glamour from another Lost suffers from an active derangement (either one of his own, one of the subject's or one of the Storyteller's choice) for a number of scenes equal to the number of Glamour points stolen. Furthermore, such an act of vampirism is a breaking point for changelings with Clarity 6 or higher (three dice).

Mobile Hollow (• to •••••; Special)

Prerequisite: Hollow (Size) •+, Wyrd 3

Effect: Some Lost are not contented with a secret hiding place tucked deep into the Hedge; they require that their Hollow be able to move, whether because they are nomads, as a security measure, or merely as insurance that

it remains hidden. These changelings put great effort into constructing Hollows with wheels (a bizarre carnival carriage of briarwood planks and hedgespun curtains), sails (a decaying pirate vessel that slowly grinds through the earth as a ship plies the sea), or even legs (a small hut with a thatch roof crested by four arches that split at the center to twist down into thorn-crusted spider legs). Some Hollows don't have any apparent mode of travel. By some quirk of fate they are one place at one moment, and another the next. The mobility of the Hollow depends on the number of dots purchased in this Merit.

- The Hollow moves a set distance chosen by the changeling when purchasing this Merit (no more than the changeling's Wyrd in hours of Hedge travel) in a random direction at a regular interval of no less than a month and no greater than a season. The Speed of this travel depends on the mode of locomotion chosen, but can be as fast as instantaneous. Changelings with such Hollows may find this mobility more a nuisance than an advantage, and most take extreme pains to ensure that they are within the Hollow's walls at its scheduled time of migration. If not, their own Hollow may be lost to them until such time as they hunt it down again via the usual rules for navigating the Hedge. Once the Hollow has been located again, any doors to the mortal world can be re-established at the changeling's wont.

•• The Hollow can move a set distance chosen by the changeling (no more than the changeling's Wyrd in hours of Hedge travel) when the Merit is purchased in a random direction at the changeling's whim. This relocation can only be performed once per month and only when the changeling is within the Hollow. The Speed of this travel depends on the mode of locomotion chosen, but can be as fast as instantaneous.

••• The Hollow can move at up to Speed 10 in a direction chosen by the changeling for a distance chosen by the changeling (no more than twice the changeling's Wyrd in hours of Hedge travel) once per month.

•••• The Hollow moves constantly at Speed 10. Doors into the Hedge tend to leave the character stranded in unfamiliar locations… and passing back through them only leads back into the Hollow if done within 10 seconds. (Navigating the Hedge towards the Hollow suffers a –3 penalty to the usual roll.) Doors into the world do not similarly move, instead remaining fixed. Such doors are typically the preferred manner of entering and exiting the Hollow.

••••• The Hollow can move at up to Speed 10 for an unlimited distance and does so at the changeling's whim. The changeling chooses the direction and can alter it at her discretion.

Hollows moving through the Hedge ignore trods or other established paths; the walls of the Hedge part before the Hollow and close behind it. Furthermore, Hollows avoid other entities in the Hedge, instantly leaving pursuers behind (often by slipping through a Hedge wall that seals behind it) and circumventing any other individuals or obstacles along the way. A Hollow cannot be used as a weapon to ram other entities, nor can it be crashed into other Hollows. Space within the Hedge is subjective enough that even if another Hollow exists precisely where the character's Hollow is traveling, it can set up a comfortable distance away.

Special: Like other aspects of the Hollow Merit, the cost for Mobile Hollow can be split amongst different characters as described on p. 96 of **Changeling: The Lost**. If the Hollow is shared, the Wyrd prerequisite changes. Instead of being a flat Wyrd 3, the sum of the characters' Wyrd ratings must equal 6 or more.

I honestly didn't expect it to be a sword.

Yeah, I know. I was taken out there, same as all the rest. I saw the castles made out of things you shouldn't build castles out of. I was kept in a foundry, and we were making spears, not rifles. I know the drill. Out there, where the Others are from — time is fucked. There isn't a 20th or a 13th century, there's no B.C. or A.D. or C.E. or whatever they call it now. If one of those things wants, he's gonna have cavemen soldiers wearing gladiator armor and carrying AKs.

I just, I don't know... I figured since I was coming to a junkyard here, that maybe I'd be finding some sort of true-iron crowbar or something.

But it's a sword. I've never handled one of the damn things in my life, but it looks so familiar. I've dreamed about it, maybe.

Or maybe we've all dreamed about it.

Now I honestly don't know if I can take it. It's a sword — it's not for me, right? I beat my way out of that foundry with a long metal bar. I trained at the gun range ever since getting back, in the off-chance that I'd get the right bullet to put one of them down someday. I don't know how to use this thing. I'm not some medieval king. I'm from this world, this time.

But I swear I've seen it before. And even with those thorns — I don't know.

It could be for me. It probably is what I was looking for.

Am I good enough for it?

Chapter 3
Things of Legend

"Now, I have suffered enough for the red shoes," she said;
"I will go to church, so that people can see me."
And she went quickly up to the church-door; but when she came there,
the red shoes were dancing before her, and she was frightened, and turned back.
—Hans Christian Andersen, "The Red Shoes"

Many changelings return to the mortal world with tokens pilfered during their escape, items imbued with strange power by intent or coincidence. In the lands of the Fae, thought and desire can stain the environment. The sword used for murder can develop its own thirst for blood. A mirror might reflect a perfected image of the viewer for fear of its owner's violent rages. These items may have storied histories, along with curses and blessings all their own.

Some say that the very things we treasure own us. It is certainly true of some particularly powerful tokens that the item's destiny can overwhelm a changeling's, reworking the story of their lives to serve the item's legend for good and, more often, ill. There are, of course, ways to avoid the fates prescribed by these tokens, but even that ends up a worthy story.

Storytelling and Legendary Tokens

Items are the true stars of any number of folk tales and myths. The iconic sword, Excalibur, is at least as important to the legend of Arthur as Merlin, the Knights of the Round Table, or even Arthur himself. The Holy Grail, and more recently, Tolkien's One Ring or Lovecraft's Necronomicon, hold central roles in their stories. Characters are caught in the gravity of the item itself, pulled into its orbit and their lives are secondary to the item's story. If one bearer falls, or grows old, another takes up the item and acts as its agent, fulfilling its promise or acting as the harbinger of its doom.

There is a certain resonance to be found in basing your chronicle around a powerful token — or a collection of them. Characters can make their entrances and exits, but the overall arc of the story remains largely undamaged. If one character dies, another can be drawn in. The focus may waver, but Storytellers can inexorably draw the story back around to the item's eventual goal. As a wise man once said, the destination doesn't really matter, for the journey is the worthier part.

Using a token as the focus of the chronicle may even help certain players to develop their character more thoroughly. Constraints, after all, can prove to be the spark of creativity. The token can become a starting place for enterprising players. How are they drawn to the legendary item? What do they know about it? How do they feel about that item, and what do they think should be done with it? How has it affected their lives, directly or indirectly?

Fate can be an interesting concept to explore, the idea of predestination versus free will, and what happens when a character's destiny is derailed as they are pulled into the latest echo of a story that may be older than time. Avoiding a fated end through cunning and trickery has its own powerful allure.

But one must be careful. If the item looms too large in the spotlight and overshadows the players' characters, things could get ugly fast. It's a rare player who is willing to completely abdicate their autonomy in favor of becoming supporting cast for an inanimate object. Players are, after all, the stars of the story. The Storyteller must be careful to balance the destiny of the token and the participation and contributions of the characters. Tokens should be chosen

that amplify the themes of the game and the features of the player characters. Destiny can all too easily become an excuse for forcing characters into a mold their players don't intend.

The Lord of the Rings is, at its core, the characters' story. The ring is the impetus, and it remains the driving force of the plot, but Frodo and the rest of the Fellowship are still free to act, create and destroy, grow and change and die within the framework of the quest. They are people responding to the item, but it is *their* struggles that make the story interesting. The characters' responses to the One Ring have the effect of defining the ring. They make it real. Likewise, an epic token has no power without the players having the freedom to let their characters make it real.

Legendary Tokens

These tokens fall beyond the reach of five-dot tokens, and may not be acquired using Merit points. They must be delivered by the story. Legendary tokens are powerful, yes, but their effect on a chronicle is more insidious than that. Each token bears its own destiny that affects all those with whom it comes into contact. Their owners do not necessarily know the stories of these tokens. Learning their histories may be the only chance a changeling has of avoiding the fate of the token. Those who treat them like any other item are doomed to fulfill their roles.

The Apples of War

There was once a failing kingdom, governed by a just king. The king watched helplessly as his people's crops land ran fallow, and his subjects starved. He sent word to all the corners of the world that he would give any reward if only the cause could be found. Not long after, a shepherd arrived and volunteered to watch over the fields, to discover the culprit.

Late in the night, the shepherd spied a strange, Hirsute Man stealing across one of the fields, stripping the freshly planted seeds from the plowed land and devouring them. The shepherd boy and his dogs ran the seed-thief down and captured him. Proudly, the shepherd presented his prisoner to the king, who promptly ordered the odd man's execution. But the king's son was sensitive and frightened of death. He took pity on the Hirsute Man and released him. In gratitude, the man dropped three seeds in his hand and there, before the prince's eyes, three apples grew forth, each a different color. All he asked in return was that an orchard of apples be grown and set aside for his use.

The three apples were gold, silver and copper. Each apple provided its master with a different gift. The golden apple split and a horse burst forth, saddled and ready for the prince to ride. The silver apple spawned a trio of cavalry, prepared to follow the prince into battle. And the copper apple contained a troop of soldiers, who awaited the prince's orders.

The prince rose to power and became king, protected by his hussars and soldiers, and he set farmers to work nurturing and maintaining an orchard of apples for the Hirsute Man. The orchard was placed off-limits, its fruit sacred. Each year, the farmers watched wistfully as the beautiful harvest was allowed to rot, left in the field for the Hirsute Man. After a time, the king went to war with his three precious apples, calling upon his warhorse, his cavalry and his soldiers, who were unmatched in any of the neighboring nations.

As the war was nearing its end, the queen walked among the bountiful apple trees in the forbidden orchard, and came across a hairy peasant preparing to eat an apple pie. Horrified at the sight of the Hirsute Man, she shouted for the guards, and told him that he would be punished for trespassing in the orchard. He bowed and apologized. But, he told her, it was *she* who was trespassing.

The queen laughed, and had the Hirsute Man clapped in irons and taken to the dungeons. After he was led away, she smelled the apple pie. It *did* smell delicious, and surely the king wouldn't begrudge her one small piece of pie made from the orchard's apples. They usually went to rot anyway.

Across the world, as the king and his soldiers were flanked by their enemies, backed against a wall, the king's soldiers collapsed into piles of copper leaves. The brave hussars burst into clouds of silver leaves. The king's warhorse likewise exploded in a spray of gold leaves, and the king collapsed on the ground. His enemies executed him on the spot.

When word reached the queen, she knew what had happened, and she went to beg forgiveness from the Hirsute Man, but he was already gone, released by a guard who took pity on him, in return for three apples.

The Apples of War are not actual apples. Rather, they are sculptures, their colored paint flaking and peeling off the rusted metal underneath. Each apple provides the user with the ability to summon a specific creature or creatures. The creatures themselves have a slight goblinesque cast to their features, and their skin has a hint of a wooden tone.

The Golden Apple — Warhorse

This apple bears the Mantle of royalty. It provides its bearer with a warhorse resplendent in banners and tack bearing the heraldry of the summoner's Court. If the summoner has no Court, the banners instead have an apple in a circle. The apple itself becomes a rod, topped with a small apple that gives the summoner authority over the warhorse and obliges it to follow his commands.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Survival 2

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 19 (species factor 12)
Size: 8
Health: 13
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	*Damage*	*Dice Pool*
Bite	1 (L)	8
Hoof	3 (B)*	10

* Special: Knockdown (see **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 168)

The Silver Apple — Cavalry

The second apple provides an elite guard. Three mounted cavalrymen appear, ready to lay down their lives for their master. They are, like the warhorse, clad in the colors and raiment of the summoner's Court. Each rides a warhorse identical to the one summoned by the gold apple. Any Contracts the changeling knows that generally affect only himself may instead affect one of the cavalrymen.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Skills: Animal Ken (Horses) 3, Athletics (Ride Horses) 4, Brawl 3, Weaponry (Mounted Combat) 3
Willpower: 7
Initiative: 8
Defense: 4 (2 with chainmail)
Speed: 12 (10 with chainmail)
Health: 8
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	*Damage*	*Dice Pool*
Sword	3 (L)	9

Armor:

Type	*Rating*	*Defense Penalty*
Chainmail	2/1	–2

The Copper Apple — Infantry

The third apple spawns a compliment of eight foot soldiers, prepared to assault the very gates of Arcadia at their master's command. As with the creatures summoned by the other apples, they wear uniforms emblazoned with the insignia of their summoner's Court. Any Contracts the changeling knows that generally affect only himself may instead affect one of the foot soldiers.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Intimidation 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Sword) 2
Willpower: 7
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3 (1 with chainmail)
Speed: 11 (9 with chainmail)
Health: 8
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	**Damage**	**Dice Pool**
Sword	3 (L)	8

Armor:

Type	*Rating*	*Defense Penalty*
Chainmail	2/1	–2

Each apple's summoned creatures remain for one scene, or until they are dead, whichever comes first. If one of the creatures is killed, it explodes in a burst of leaves the same color as the apple from whence it came. The apples take one week to regenerate their compliment of creatures, regardless of how many are killed.

Action: instant

Mien: The chosen apple sloughs off its paint and takes on an organic form, its flesh new and shiny. It splits, its flesh

tearing along a seam and the summoned creature (or creatures) issue forth from within, growing from a thick puddle of molten metal on the ground.

Drawback: The character's skin grows rough and stiff, like the bark of an apple tree. The user suffers a –1 penalty to all Dexterity related rolls for the rest of the scene. This drawback is cumulative per apple. If the character activates all three apples at once, he suffers a –3 penalty.

Catch: The character swallows a handful of apple seeds, which begin to burst and grow inside her stomach before they are digested, causing the character to suffer from a –2 penalty to all Stamina related rolls for the next six hours.

Fate: The apples are never found. They are always given in return for some pledge or sacrifice, such as the orchard reserved for the Hirsute Man. Each keeper of the apples has, whether intentionally or not, broken the pledge. Sometimes it's hubris, sometimes it's simply a force beyond their control, but when the pledge is broken, the countdown begins. The next time the apples are sorely needed, they lose their power and become inert metal sculptures. It is not always clear that the pledge has been broken, or when the apples will fail, but it *is* inevitable.

The Lovers Entwined

Some say that the Fae are incapable of love. It is true that their fluid natures make them seem capricious, even cruel to mortals under their care, but these puzzle rings bear mute witness to the depths of the Fae heart.

So the story goes, two Fae fell madly in love and, as Fae are wont to do, threw themselves into it with a passion that ran far afield into obsession. The two lovers gave each other everything. The rings are forged from the very flesh of their hearts. Each ring is made up of parts of both hearts, wound and braided into an elaborate puzzle. Their love was a powerful thing, a force of nature that battered everything around them, inspiring jealousy and hatred in friends and enemies alike. Together, the two lovers were nearly unstoppable, strengthened and emboldened by their union.

They began to play games with one another, conquering kingdoms to present to each other as tokens of their affection; killing or maiming favored servants out of jealousy. At first, the lovers were so lost in each other that they were entirely ignorant of their growing cadre of enemies. Then, as such things often go, one of them tired of the game.

One lover faltered, their attention wandering and settling on another of the Fae. Their tryst was short-lived, but explosive. When the other lover discovered it through the rings, it tore their entire domain apart as a bitter war broke out. The lovers died at each other's hands, and the rings were tainted by their deaths.

The rings are completely dependent on one another. Both must be worn to have any effect. When both rings are worn, the wearers may benefit in a number of ways.

First, the lovers may feel one another's presence. As a reflexive action, the wearers may concentrate and know the location and status of their beloved. Second, they may draw strength from their union. When the token is activated, one wearer can, as an instant action, draw upon the other's Willpower to bolster their own. This is a two-way exchange, and either wearer can use the other's Willpower in such a fashion. Third, and most powerful, the lovers may call upon one another's abilities. Upon activation, any Contracts possessed by the lovers are considered to extend to both parties for as long as the wearers can bear to keep the conduit open (see drawbacks, below).

Action: special

Mien: When active, both rings gleam with an inner light. The golden bands take on a crimson tone and, as powers are channeled through them, they even begin to bleed.

Drawback: Echoes of the original lovers' jealousy affect the wearers. When one of the wearers activates the token, she must make a Wits + Composure roll. If the roll fails, she suffers from intense jealousy for the rest of the scene. (Treat as a specialized form of the Suspicion derangement. See page 98 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for more information.) When the Contract sharing aspect of the token is used, both wearers suffer 1 Health Level of bashing damage each round that the conduit is kept open.

Catch: By holding the ring close to his heart and pledging his love to the bearer of the other ring, the wearer falls completely into the role of the Entwined Lover. For the rest of the day, he is subject to the Suspicion derangement or, if he already suffers from the mild form, it blooms into Paranoia for the duration.

Fate: Though the rings appear to be an expression of the love between two people, the cycle must be repeated. Love gives way to temptation and tragedy. The wearers of the rings are destined to repeat the lovers' actions; each pair of wearers has died at one another's hands.

Shears of Atropos

Three sisters are said to weave the tapestry of fate. The maiden, mother and crone are, according to some changelings, a trio of strange, thoroughly unpredictable Fae. Whether the trio took on the role of the fates or inspired their legends is unknown, but Wizened who have escaped them truly believe their Keepers were the fabled weird sisters themselves.

A few of them returned with tokens stolen from the fates, tapestries that give hints to the future, thread spun on the loom of destiny and scissors alleged to be the very blades used to cut a thread free and end some poor soul. While all of these tokens undeniably have their power, the true shears of Atropos have dominion over life and death.

The scissors snip a life short by any number of expedient, coincidental means: freak accidents, sudden illness, murder by an unconnected party, the only thing that can

be sure is that the death will not be traced back to the user. The victim may be hit by a speeding delivery van, or caught in the crossfire of a convenience store robbery. He may decide to take a trip and take the passengers and crew of a commercial airliner with him to his grave. More than one user of the shears has lost loved ones due to the sorts of perverse coincidences that cause their victim's demise.

The victim's death is not the true final expression of fate upon his life. By using the power of the shears, the character is twisting fate, breaking the pattern that has already been woven.

When the scissors are activated, the character must cut a photograph or other likeness of the target in two. The character then rolls a chance die. If the chance roll is successful (a 10), the target dies within 24 hours. The scissors' effect only works on mortals; other supernatural creatures answer to other fates. The method of death cannot be determined, only that they will die.

Action: Instant

Mien: The rust falls away from glittering silver blades that reflect a starlit sky even if the shears are used underground. Sometimes, the eyes of Atropos can be seen, staring from the depths of the shears. When the scissors are used to cut, they singe the edges of the portrait, which drips viscous black pitch as the magic takes hold.

Drawback: Each time the shears successfully alters a mortal's lifespan, the user must test against Clarity as for any other slaying. Even the most addled souls are shaken by such a cavalier method of killing mortals.

Catch: After stabbing himself in the hand, the character takes one point of lethal damage and spends one Willpower point. The wound itches wildly and he suffers a 2-dice penalty on any roll requiring concentration for the rest of the day.

Fate: It is not for humans — or those who used to be human — to decide when the thread of fate should be cut. Those who take up the responsibility to choose the final destinies of their fellow humans find themselves slowly but utterly erased from the tapestry. The fate of one soul does not end with their death. Every person touches the lives and destinies of those around them. When one thread is cut short by the shears, every other thread it should have been woven through is left without its support, causing a sort of ripple effect. Everyone whose life would have been affected by the mortal that no longer exists forgets the culprit entirely. Eventually they fade from the world of mortals as if they never existed. Only the sisters remember the creature thus forgotten, and they will follow her to the ends of the earth to regain the shears.

Lachesis' Bones

Where Atropos' role is to determine where the journey ends, Lachesis is the sister who determines the twists and turns the path will take along the way. It is comforting to think that every life has been planned, that each step we take has a purpose. The Lost who served the sisters shrug and say it isn't so.

They say that everything comes down to a roll of the dice.

These dice, worn and yellow with age, seem to bear that out. Whether they belonged to Lachesis or not is unknown. Certainly no changeling has volunteered to ask her, but it doesn't matter. The truth is that they are Lachesis' bones regardless of fact. The story has been repeated so often that it has *become* true.

According to the legends, one of Lachesis' servants, tired of his durance, challenged his mistress to a game of chance, gambling for his freedom. But, he told her, he

would provide the dice for the game. She agreed, for her own inscrutable reasons, and the game commenced. He handed her a pair of dice he had carved himself, from the bones of another servant. Lachesis told her servant that she was impressed by how well he had captured her own favorite dice, made from the bones of dragons, in his carving. She rolled well, but he knew that she would. When his turn came, he subtly switched his handmade dice with the ones that belonged to Lachesis, quietly stolen before the game.

He rolled the dice, his head full of dreams of freedom and home, and the dice obliged. His Keeper recognized the switched dice immediately, but fate had already been written. He was free, and there was nothing to be done. In her rage, she screamed for him to give back the dice and flee, and neither of them noticed that the dice he handed over were carved from human bone, rather than dragon.

Unfortunately, the story goes on to describe how the escaped changeling used the dice to nudge things in his favor constantly, pushing here and there at the expense of… well, everyone else. Finally, he gathered a number of enemies within Lost society and without, and they came for him. He rolled the dice, but nothing happened. Either their power was not strong enough to rewrite a fate with such weight behind it, or they simply chose to leave well enough alone.

Every once in a while the dice resurface, just often enough that they aren't forgotten. Once per session, the character can activate the bones, and call for any single roll to be re-rolled. Any roll is fair game, even those of the Storyteller or other players. The dice do not allow a character to determine the exact details of what will happen. They simply allow things to be nudged in another direction. In the case of rolls with long-term effects, a successful Wits + Occult roll a character can get a general idea of what *will* happen in the patterns on the dice and their arrangement, like a seer throwing the bones.

Action: Instant

Mien: The bones themselves do not change. They become no less worn, but everyone in the vicinity experiences a sense of déjà vu, as the fabric of destiny is rewoven. Anyone in view of the bones instinctively knows that they are the source of the shift.

Drawback: Even fate attempts to reach a certain level of equilibrium. After successfully using the bones in a scene, the character's next action suffers a –3 penalty.

Catch: Using the bones to help a stranger.

Fate: The bones' destiny is manifold, and tied to the intentions of the roller. Those who use the bones for charitable acts, to help strangers and make the world a better place find themselves beneficiaries of the kindness of others. Those who choose greed are destined to lose everything, as the dice fail when they are needed most.

The Bell of Veritas

Truth is a rare commodity in the lands of Arcadia. Deception and intrigue are the backbone of Fae society. Many of the True Fae are so capricious, so alien, their minds shifting so quickly, that they could not tell the truth if they tried. One might say something she believes utterly, only to contradict herself mere moments later or even within the same sentence, because she *also* utterly believes the exact opposite.

The Bell of Veritas was created as a measure to discover the truth, the final and absolute truth. As long as we live, what is true is mutable, even in creatures as relatively static as humans. It is a small mind that can only hold one truth at a time. Even when one is being "honest," small things are held back, lies of omission and shame.

Only those beyond consequence can be believed, or so thought the creator of the Bell. So long as the arm of justice or vengeance could reach her, a person could not be relied upon, even in the sanctity of the confessional or strapped into the torturer's chair. So the Bell was created to call back those who have gone beyond the pale, if only for a short time. The dead may be bound in ways that cannot affect a mortal, though they are beyond most legal remedies and, indeed, the worst has already happened to them… at least so far as they know. Where a living murderer might dissemble, his ghost brags of the accomplishment. Where an old miser might hoard and protect his savings, his ghost might even be willing to lead a canny changeling to it, if only to look upon it one more time or keep it from going to the filthy, greed-stricken relatives who killed him.

The Bell is dirty and cracked, stained with the muck and ruin of centuries. Oxidation stains and tarnish cover the metal, leaving it almost indistinguishable from the mud, dirt and fungus in which it was found. The punky wood of the handle is black, spongy and leaves some of itself on the hands of all who touch it. The clapper has long since rotted and fallen away. Shaking the Bell makes no sound at all.

When the Bell is rung near a corpse, regardless of age, the ghost of that person is summoned, as long as it has not moved on to whatever afterlife awaits it. If the Bell is activated when there are no corpses present, it summons a random nearby ghost.

Regardless, the ghost becomes visible to those present for the token activation, but remains in its Twilight state (i.e. she cannot be touched or touch others, without the use of additional Numina). If another person arrives after the token is activated, he cannot see the ghost. The ghost can hear and be heard, and stays present for the remainder of the scene. In addition, the ghost is bound to speak the truth, but only as far as she knows it. A ghost who never saw her killer cannot confirm his guilt. A ghost may resist the binding with a successful Resistance roll, but the Bell also provides a +2 bonus to Empathy rolls to detect when the ghost is lying. See the

World of Darkness Rulebook, p. 208 for more information on ghosts, their statistics and Numina.

However, ghosts are witness to many things. Conspirators meeting in a dilapidated, condemned house might be overheard by the resident ghost discussing secret plans. A ghost might know what *really* happened to cause Jessica to stop speaking after she went into that mineshaft.

Action: Instant

Mien: The Bell retains its mottled, aged appearance, but a clear, tinkling chime issues forth from the ghostly clapper within. The temperature in the room drops 10–20 degrees, and the breath of all those present becomes visible, even those who don't breathe.

Drawback: Ghosts can hear the Bell even after it fades from the changeling's ears. Each time the Bell is activated, the Storyteller should roll a chance die. If the roll succeeds, the Changeling attracts a ghost who haunts and distracts him for the rest of the day. The Changeling suffers a –2 penalty to all rolls requiring concentration until the ghost departs.

Catch: The changeling is related to the ghost being summoned.

Fate: The Bell of Veritas allows characters to deal with the dead even if they are not prepared. Calling ghosts to your side is risky at the best of times, especially if one has no control over *which* ghost they call. While some ghosts are lonely and happy to be in the company of the living, others are bitter and angry about their fate. Either one can be dangerous in its own way. Every user of the Bell has died by violence or accident, killed by the very ghosts he interrogated over the years.

Plague Flute

"It is 10 years since our children left," reads the only entry in the town's ledger that mentions the incident. The townsfolk never speak of the lost generation. Their parents were not told by *their* parents, who never learned the story from their grandparents and on through the ages to the time when the Plague Man came. Mortal history did not record the horrors that the small village witnessed, and even the stories passed down from one changeling to the next are told in hushed whispers in the safety of a sunny day.

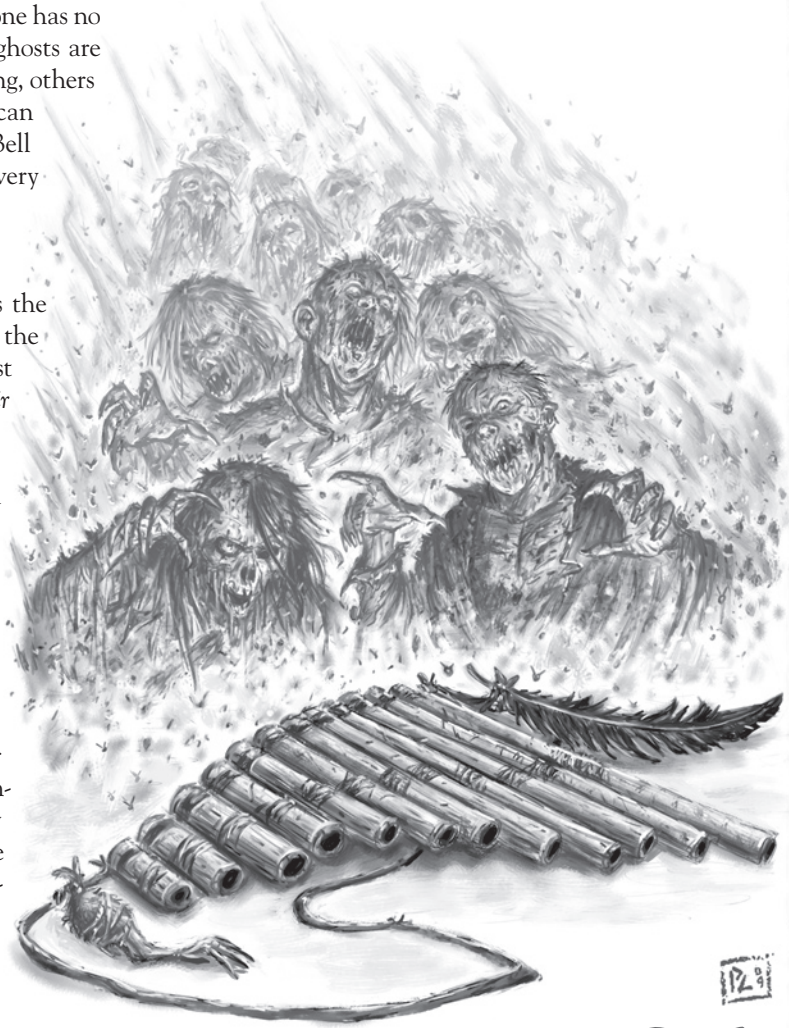
When the Plague Man came, he unleashed a horde of rats upon the village and went before the Bürgermeister. "Give me your half of your winter stores to feed my children and we will leave your village peacefully," he said. The Bürgermeister conferred with the village elders, but they knew they would not survive the barren season if they gave over so much of their harvest. At the elders prodding, the Bürgermeister gathered the village's strongest young men and sent them to drive the strange man away.

The next day, the man returned to the Bürgermeister's chambers and told him, "Thank you for providing my children with such a generous feast. I'm afraid they are still hungry, however. We still require half your winter stores to ensure that my children will be able to survive our journey after we leave your village."

The Bürgermeister refused. He bade the Plague Man leave their village and move on, for they had no food to spare. The Plague Man shook his head and smiled his yellow, pitted smile. "If your harvest was so sparse that you cannot feed my children, I will help you. You will have all the food you need this winter, for you will not have to feed your own children, either."

Through the night, each family heard the piping of a pan flute, and each of the village's children began to fall ill. Within the week, all of them had succumbed to the black plague. Over one hundred children had fallen, buried and gone. The villagers sought out the Plague Man, determined to take their vengeance upon him.

"Have you come to share your winter harvest with me?" he smiled. They raised their torches, gathered their meager weapons close and prepared to get their vengeance when the Plague Man produced his pan flute from within the folds



of his ragged clothes. He played a mournful tune, and the ground around him burst open. The villagers wailed in shock as their children crawled forth from the earth and stood with their new master.

As the rats streamed out of the village, the Plague Man marched at the front of a parade line of the dead, playing his song on the pan flute.

The Plague Flute is no longer in the hands of its original owner, said by some to be a True Fae and by others to be a particularly nasty hobgoblin. Either way, the Plague Man wandered Europe in the middle ages, slipping in and out of the Hedge, bringing death on the wind. Other legends suggest that he lost the pan flute to a savvy changeling who failed to destroy it, no matter how many times he tried. The stories suggest that he buried it deep within the thorns of the Hedge.

The pan flute is a fairly simple design, made of a pale, bleached wood with beeswax stuffed into the ends for tuning, wrapped around with a leather thong. A rat's leg and a black feather hang from the leather.

When played, the flute has two different effects, depending on the health of the target. If the target is a living mortal, the player must roll Manipulation + Expression – the target's Stamina. If successful, the target contracts a horrible disease that causes them to slowly waste away. Once contracted, the victim suffers one point of lethal damage each day unless she succeeds on a Stamina + Resolve roll. Eventually, she is all but certain to succumb to the plague and die. The only way to cure the plague is for the flautist to eat a meal made by the hands of someone who loves the victim.

Once the target is dead, the flute has the ability to raise the corpse as a zombie distinctly under the flute player's control. Zombie servants are not very capable, socially, but they make for reasonable foot soldiers.

Action: Instant

Mien: The sounds coming from the flute become hollow and sepulchral and it becomes apparent that the flute is made of bone rather than wood. As the song is played, the rat's leg begins to twitch, answering the call of the song. A distinct miasma accompanies the flute's song, and everyone who hears the song feels a high, cold void in the pit of his or her stomach.

Drawback: Such close proximity to the sickness within the pan flute has its risks. The character becomes feverish for the rest of the night, suffering a –2 penalty to all Stamina rolls.

Catch: The character must anoint the flute in rat's blood.

Fate: Eventually, the cycle spins 'round and those on the bottom find themselves on top. Controlling the undead requires your full attention. The pan flute's players are destined to inevitably let their guard down and lay the flute aside in the presence of their enemies. Once the flute is out of their masters' hands, the character's rotten servants are slaves to his will no longer.

Zombie Servants

The servants raised by the Plague Flute are relatively weak as zombies go. If the Storyteller chooses, they can be customized using the rules from **Antagonists**, p. 26. Otherwise, they use the following rules:

Power: 3

Finesse: 1

Resilience: 4

Health: 7

Initiative: 1

Physical Integrity: 10*

Size: 5

Speed: 1

*Physical Integrity is a special trait describing the state of the zombie's undead body. A zombie created from a corpse with all of its limbs and no missing parts starts with an Integrity of 10. Missing both legs or both arms would indicate a starting trait of 5. Physical Integrity limits the maximum number of dice in the zombie's dice pool. This trait also describes the overall functionality of the zombie, meaning that the reduction of integrity is not necessarily decomposition or losing limbs. Zombies raised by the pan flute simply lose their animating force after a time.

Every (Resilience) day, zombies lose one point of Physical Integrity. Under most circumstances, Physical Integrity cannot be replenished once it is lost. Once all of a zombie's Health points are depleted, subtract any damage done from the remaining points of Physical Integrity. Once this trait reaches zero the zombie is neutralized. A zombie with one point of Physical Integrity left usually represents the classic decapitated, but still dangerous, zombie head.

The Kingmaker Blade

The Kingmaker blade has been called by many names throughout history. Each bearer named the mystical sword as if, by doing so, they could tame its power and subjugate it to their will. One lord was feared while Wisprazor swung at his side. Another held Justice aloft as a symbol of his might when he made pronouncements. The sword has endured while dynasties rose and fell, empires crumbled and faded into history.

According to legend, a mermaid loaned a diamond sword to a young prince to aid in his quest to save his beloved from a hideous fairy. He swore to return the sword as soon as the princess was saved. The sword was so sharp that no armor could withstand it, and it transformed its wielder into a master swordsman. He fought his way to the fairy's castle, rescued the princess and returned to his kingdom with his new wife to find that his father had fallen ill while he was away. The king passed, and the prince was crowned. The years passed, and the king never fulfilled his promise to return the borrowed sword. The queen gave birth to a daughter who was unsurpassed in both beauty and purity. One night, she went to her father, the king. She begged her father to show her the beautiful crystal blade, and he did, for he had ever been unable to deny his sweet daughter. She asked to hold the sword, and he permitted it. Then, the king's daughter, radiant in the coruscating light of the sword, drove the blade into her father's heart. As his blood spilled on the marble floor, she leaned in and whispered the name of the hideous fairy in the king's ear. The child the king and his wife had raised was not their daughter, but a terrible double, a fetch sent by the hideous fairy to gain vengeance on the brave king who had once bested him.

The sword was taken to the fetch's Fae master, where it was kept as a trophy until it again appeared in the mortal world, in the hands of the liege of a small domain. Summer reigned in that domain for nearly a century thanks to the Kingmaker blade, passed from one member of the Court to another. As years passed, eternal summer gave way to a perilous drought, and the people rose up and ended the dynasty, restarting the cycle of seasons.

The sword itself appears to be made of frosted, pitted glass. Its hilt and pommel are the dull grey of a storm-tossed sea. When the Kingmaker is activated, the wielder gains a +2 to all Expression and Persuasion rolls intended to inspire or rally the troops. The wielder also gains +3 dice to all Weaponry rolls using the sword, turning an average swordsman into a master. The sword is so sharp that it ignores armor up to rating 3.

Type	Damage	Size	Durability
The Kingmaker	4 (L)	3	3

When using the Kingmaker, the changeling's arm moves as if operating independently of her body. She is, quite literally, pulled along at the whim of the sword. While she directs the sword, it can be said to do most of the actual fighting itself.

Action: Instant

Mien: The blade takes on an unearthly clarity as light spills forth from the heart of the sword. Blood and gore boils off the blade, leaving it pristine even in the heat of battle. When the Kingmaker Blade strikes, it is accompanied by the crash of waves on rocks.

Drawback: The Kingmaker Blade is a beacon for those who would wrest power from the bearer's hand. If the blade is used in melee, it acts as a magnet for attackers. Enemy combatants must make a successful Willpower roll (or spend a Willpower point) to attack a target other than the sword's wielder.

Catch: When used to inspire or lead the downtrodden.

Fate: The bearer of Kingmaker is destined to rule. The sword itself is merely a means to that end, but none who have possessed the sword for any length of time have failed to become king of their domain. They may rule for years. Their reign may be brutish and short. They may be a good king, renowned and celebrated by their people, or a tyrant, reviled and spit upon. All are cursed to be brought low by their own child. The sterile lost are no exception. Too often, people read prophecies literally. The child may be a favored protégé, or adopted heir, but more than once, it has been even more symbolic than that: the very domain that he has nurtured and shaped. Even good kings are blamed for their people's bad fortune.

The Cauldron of Rebirth

A giant once ruled Britain. Before Arthur, Bran the Blessed, also called the Blessed Raven, held the throne of the island nation. The king of Ireland, Matholwch, came to Bran, and asked for his sister Branwen in marriage. Bran approved, and the wedding was set. Unfortunately, Efnisien, brother of Bran and Branwen, became angry that he wasn't consulted on the decision. He raged and raged, slaughtering the king of Ireland's horses, which angered the visiting king.

Bran, to assuage King Matholwch, gifted him with a great cauldron, telling him to boil the horses in it, one after another. Each dead horse that was placed in the Cauldron was resurrected, as strong and hale as they ever were. Matholwch was appeased, and the wedding went on as planned. After he and his bride returned to Ireland with the Cauldron, though, Branwen found herself quite unhappy. She was made to work in the kitchen and live like a servant, rather than as Queen. Over time, she tamed a starling and sent it to her brother, who promptly set out to rescue her.

Bran's journey ended in the spark of war. The two nations began to battle, but the Welsh were extraordinarily outmatched, for Matholwch still had the Cauldron of Rebirth. When Irish soldiers died, they were placed in the Cauldron and rejoined the fight as strong and capable as before, but unable to speak. In the end, the stories say, Efnisien sacrificed himself in the Cauldron to drain its power, crack it and end the war.

But the stories are not true. The Cauldron was not destroyed when Efnisien was thrown into it. It disappeared for a time, into the Hedge or Arcadia, well away from mortals and their wars. Many cauldrons have appeared over the years, sold by con men and charlatans as the authentic Cauldron of Rebirth. Each of them sworn to bring the dead

back to life, and some of them even did. Zombies or worse, ghosts trapped in the wracked and boiled wreckage of their former bodies, unable to do anything but scream.

The true Cauldron has only reappeared a handful of times since it became known as the Celtic grail. Most recently, it was in the hands of a Darkling Bokor in New Orleans, who used it to resurrect more capable servants than his more traditional methods allowed. The Bokor disappeared, and local Lost whisper that he was killed by a strange group of loyalist changelings serving a Fae known only as the Cuckoo.

The Cauldron is made of pitted, roughly shaped iron, blackened by countless fires and covered in a patina of rust. It is large enough to fit an average-sized man, if he sits. Corpses placed into the Cauldron must have been dead for less than 72 hours, or it has no effect. The boiling water causes the dermis to loosen and separate from the body, like a snake shedding its skin. As the skin sloughs off, it reveals new, living flesh. The magic of the Cauldron protects the subject within from being cooked alive once they are resurrected. The act of rebirth leeches much of the water's heat away.

If a living person is placed in the Cauldron when it is activated, the subject placed within takes 10 points of lethal damage, and the Cauldron is rendered for 13 months. Most owners assume that it has lost its power, and abandon it or die.

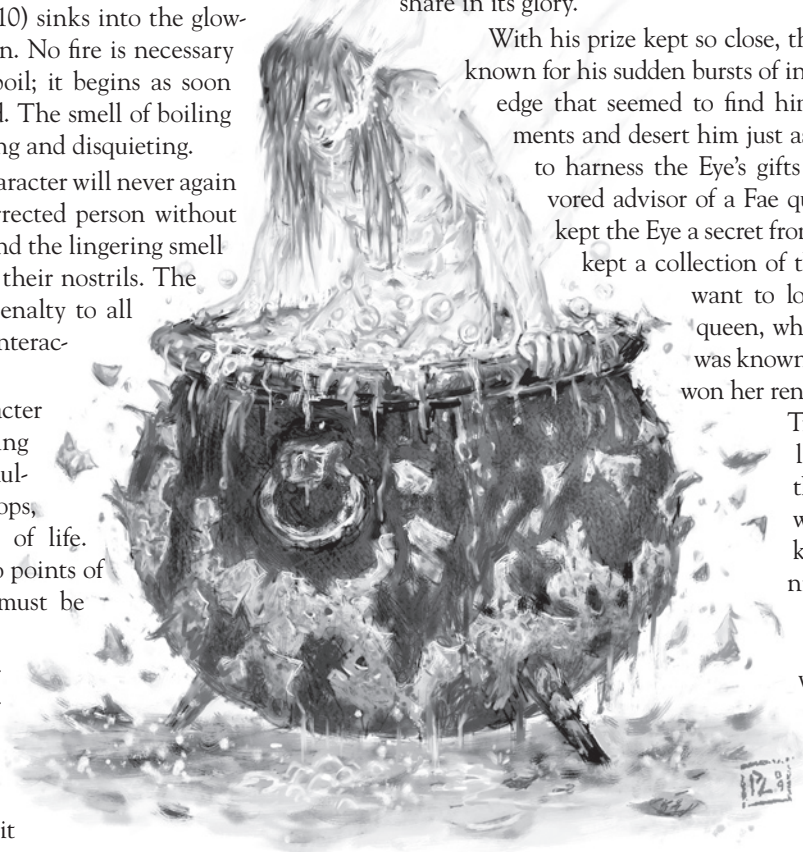
Action: Instant

Mien: Rust blisters and peels away from the Cauldron, leaving it as black as pitch. Any corpse up to twice the size of a man (Size 10) sinks into the glowing, boiling broth within. No fire is necessary to cause the water to boil; it begins as soon as the token is activated. The smell of boiling meat is at once appetizing and disquieting.

Drawback: The character will never again be able to see the resurrected person without visions of their corpse and the lingering smell of their boiling flesh in their nostrils. The character suffers a –2 penalty to all rolls involving social interaction with the reborn.

Catch: The character must cut himself, dripping his blood into the Cauldron, which sizzles and pops, devouring the sacrifice of life. The character takes two points of lethal damage, which must be healed normally.

Fate: The Cauldron has its own destiny. It is foretold that someday, someone will find the body of Bran the Blessed and reunite it with his head, which is said to be buried under White Tower in London. The Cauldron will make the Giant King's return possible. Servants and believers in the Blessed Raven hunt tirelessly for the Cauldron, following leads and reports, whispers and rumors, hoping to find the first piece of the puzzle that will culminate in their liege's return and the ultimate salvation of Great Britain. When the pieces of Bran are reunited and placed in the Cauldron to boil, it will shatter once and for all, and the King of Britain will return to his duties and bring a new golden age to the isles.



The Eye of Knowledge

Once there was a god of magic and wisdom, victory and intellect. Odin, the king of the Æsir, was willing to sacrifice everything in his pursuit of wisdom. His search for wisdom led him to the very base of the tree that held the heavens aloft. There, he came across the Well of Wisdom, and he knew that he must pay a price for the wisdom he would receive. The king tore his own eye from its socket and tendered it forth, sacrificing it into the well so that he and the other Æsir might gain wisdom.

The Eye is said to remain at the bottom of the well to this day, as payment. But others say it is no longer there, stolen ages ago by a crafty hobgoblin who replaced it with another eye, taken from another god. The hobgoblin, it is said, carried the Eye away from the mortal world and into the Hedge. Obsessed with the beauty of the glittering grotesquerie, he fashioned it into a necklace, so that all might share in its glory.

With his prize kept so close, the hobgoblin became known for his sudden bursts of insight, strange knowledge that seemed to find him at the oddest moments and desert him just as quickly. He learned to harness the Eye's gifts and became the favored advisor of a Fae queen. The hobgoblin kept the Eye a secret from his mistress, for she kept a collection of them, and he did not want to lose his treasure. The queen, whose name was Zilasa, was known for cruelty so great it won her renown even among the True Fae. The changelings who suffered as the queen's servants were desperate, broken things, but cunning. One of her servants realized the secret the hobgoblin was keeping, and after a particularly bad beating administered by the hobgoblin— who was showing a profound

knowledge of torture that evening — he shouted to his queen that the hobgoblin was hiding an eye from her, a beautiful eye that would be the crown jewel of her collection.

The risky move paid off, and the changeling snatched the necklace and his freedom in the ensuing chaos, bringing the Eye to the mortal world.

The lands of Arcadia exist under different Contracts, each domain's negotiated separately. Water drips only because it has agreed with the Fae lord of the realm that it should do so. As long as the Eye was kept in Zilasa's domain, the creatures and spirits, the very elements had no obligation to sound the alarm. But the moment it was returned to the mortal world, the Eye cried out like a babe, lost and wondering where its mother could be. The world knew that the bargain of the Æsir had been breached. The servants of the Æsir set forth immediately to recover the Eye, though they had no way of knowing where to find it, only that it was once more at large. As the Eye slips back and forth between the Hedge and reality, it skips and skitters across their consciousness, the sense of it by turns attenuated and amplified.

The Eye is a slightly ovoid white glass marble shot through with whorls of scarlet and crimson, secured in a simple leather necklace. When the wearer activates the Eye, new horizons blossom and the way seems clear. Knowledge that, only moments before, seemed out of reach is suddenly well within the wearer's grasp. The player may trade one Mental Skill for another, for the rest of the scene. For example, if a character has Academics 4 and Medicine 1, he could use the Eye of Knowledge to temporarily gain the benefits of Medicine 4 and make do with Academics 1, instead.

Action: Instant

Mien: The glass marble that adorns the necklace softens and becomes an eye, still wet and full of vitreous humor. The optic nerves are withered and knotted around the leather strap that makes up the rest of the necklace. Clear but pearlescent fluid seeps from the Eye, wetting the wearer's chest and shirt. The wearer's eyes become a clear and crystal blue for the duration of the scene.

Drawback: Though the character gains knowledge that he would not otherwise have, it is a draining experience. For a number of hours equal to the number of dots the character gained, all Mental skills suffer the –3 Unskilled penalty. In the example above, the character gained 3 dots in Medicine, so they would suffer the drawback for three hours.

Catch: Burning a raven's feather.

Fate: The Eye of Knowledge is a stolen thing. Though it was replaced by the hobgoblin, the two eyes were not equal in value. Servants of the Æsir, scattered though they are, still haunt the forgotten places of the world searching for the pilfered organ. They fear that the bargain will not hold, and that when Ragnarok comes, the gods will not have the cunning and wisdom to emerge victorious. Looking around, many think Ragnarok must be near, and the Eye is fated to return to the Well of Wisdom before the end, one way or the other.

The Vajra Shakti

Once there was a majordomo who served his master so faithfully that he was given more freedom than any of his brethren. He did not see his Keeper as cruel or capricious, but rather as his savior, for the life he left behind was no life at all. The changeling carried out his master's will, completing every task set before him, accepting every burden without question. He was allowed to visit the Goblin Markets in the Hedge with no chaperone, and he never once thought of escape, until his master returned from one of his outings with a new prize.

She was the most beautiful woman the changeling had ever seen. Her beauty dwarfed even that of the other Fae who visited his Keeper's domain. For a year, the majordomo's tasks suffered as he was distracted by thoughts of the pure and breathtaking young woman. He watched his master, so kind to him, beat her and mistreat her for her disobedience. Finally — *thankfully*, he thought — she escaped. She disappeared one night into the wild shifting forests of the Hedge, and the majordomo watched her go from his window. He did not raise the alarm. He did nothing. It was the first time he had defied his Keeper, and it was so alien to him that he spent the rest of the night examining the way it made him feel.

The skies darkened when his master awoke without his favored but willful concubine by his side. Clouds roiled and rain battered the estate in razor sheets. Hail shattered windows and lightning rent the sky in twain. But there was no thunder. The majordomo's Keeper stalked the halls of the estate, hunting for his missing servant, though he knew she was gone. After some time, he summoned his majordomo.

"You will find her," he said. "And when you find her, you will deliver wrath in my name." He presented his most faithful servant with his own chosen weapon, a protean thing like its owner, capable of serving as mace, sword or spear.

"This weapon is *vajra*, it is the thunder of my rage," the Keeper said, and as he gripped it, the majordomo could feel the thing tremble each time lightning struck, feel his bones shake with the suppressed anger of it. And so the majordomo set out with the thunderous wrath of his Keeper, set to hunt the woman he had allowed to escape. He knew the Hedge well, and it knew him and liked him as much as it liked anyone, so it did what it could to ease his journey. Too soon, he caught the girl.

The vajra, so steeped in its owner's rage, was infectious. Throughout his journey, the majordomo felt more and more like the tempest he had left behind. His blood burned and he began to feel a need to do violence to the girl that he somehow knew did not belong to him.

Cornered, the girl begged for her life, pleading with the majordomo to return with her to the world he had never missed. But the rage within him was strong, and he drew the vajra. It immediately shifted from mace to sword, and arched a bolt of lightning into the heavens, and the majordomo felt his master's eyes watching over them. Shaking with echoed rage, he raised the sword and smiled sadly at the girl.

"I have never failed my master," he said. The escaped woman closed her eyes and thought of home as thunder rolled. But the blade did not touch her. The majordomo dropped to one knee, the sword buried to its hilt in his chest. He smiled again, and died, his essence wound into the weapon.

The woman took the thunder and added her own, turning the anger in the blade into the fury of a summer storm. She vowed to return the blade to its owner one day. She ran, unaware that the majordomo still watched over her, as he always had.

The vajra takes the basic form of its Indian equivalent — a short rod with elaborate, scepter-like projections on each end. The entire object is carved from what appears to be one solid piece of bone. The columns are covered in a relief of tiny, delicate-looking figures. The sculptures appear to be traditional Hindi figures at first glance, but close examination reveals them to be surreal, fantastic creatures. Men with dog's heads, skeletons melded with architecture and other, stranger sights. In its basic form, the vajra acts as a mace. Against all the odds, the tiny figures are sturdier than they appear. They do not chip, crack or fall off, despite the violent treatment they are subjected to each time the weapon is used in combat.

When activated, the wielder may transform the vajra from mace to sword or spear. It remains in the new form until the wielder wills it back to its default form.

Type	Damage	Size	Special
Vajra (Mace)	3 (B)	2	—
Vajra (Spear)	4 (L)	4	+2 Defense
Vajra (Sword)	3 (L)	2	Armor Piercing 2

Action: Reflexive

Mien: The figures begin to writhe on the weapon, reworking and rebuilding at astonishing speed. Entire structures are built up or torn down in the blink of an eye, as they reconstruct the weapon into its new form. Each form is functional but fantastic, looking like a dream of Hieronymus Bosch and working like a masterwork. Despite its ossified appearance, the vajra is as durable as steel. When the vajra strikes, it cracks like thunder.

Drawback: The wielder of the vajra feels the thunder within. They are subject to stormy extremes. For the rest of the day, the character falls into a tempestuous rage at the slightest provocation, suffering a –3 penalty to all Composure checks.

Catch: When used to defend another.

Fate: The vow of the escaped woman is as ingrained into the vajra as the relief on its surface. The majordomo's protective urge has turned, and become poisonous. The only way he knows to protect the woman he loves is to destroy his former Keeper. The vajra seethes with hatred for its original owner, and has a mind of its own when he, or any of his servants, are near. It rattles with it, vibrating with the tension of its abhorrence. The vajra yearns to be buried in its master's chest. When the time comes, it will have its day.

In Dreams

The dreams of changelings aren't like the dreams of mortal men, and neither are they like the dreams of the things that go bump in the night. Touched by the Wyrd, the dreams of changelings are vivid, emotional experiences that can serve as warnings to the approach of the True Fae, cure the mind of illness and grant ephemeral paradises that vanish with the dawn. Dreams are created whole cloth from possibility in much the same way the tides of magic flow in Arcadia. With effort, changelings can even step into the dreams of humans and shift the possibilities they find there. With time they can create dreams from nothing and place them in a bottle to let loose on unwitting, and sometimes unwilling, people. Oneiromancy commonly serves as needle and thread to the tapestry of dreams and, unsurprisingly, there exist other more magical ways of meddling in dreams. The Contracts of Dream are one method with which changelings use their fae powers to control dreaming minds, but they are far from the only method. Goblin Contracts, tokens and baubles — artifacts of dream that only exist in the lands of sleep — can all be used to influence the shape and tide of Morpheus' kingdom.

Shared Dreams

Oftentimes, the motley pledge taken by a group of changelings contains a secondary pledge that allows the motley to share and monitor each other's dreams. Sometimes motleys become so close in thought, their Wyrd becomes so intertwined, that the result is the same, even without the dreaming pledge. The motley share dreams and can easily enter and exit those dreams, moving through a kaleidoscope of shifting desires and mental landscapes. For most motleys this is as far as it goes. The sharing of dreams further reinforces the oath of loyalty that was formalized with the motley pledge. A few motleys take it a step further. When every member of a motley is a capable oneiropomp the sharing of dreams becomes more than just a bonding experience. Working in concert, the motley can create shifts in dreams far more radical than they could accomplish alone, just like members of the motley protect and aid each other in their waking hours. By working together, a motley approaches the power the Gentry hold over dreams, but it requires dedication and practice. The following rules are available only to motleys in which every member has the Empathy Specialty Oneiromancy.

Many Hands Make Light Work

The bonds of motley pledge are more than just words. They are backed by the power of the Wyrd and it's the shared Wyrd of a motley that gives it strength in dreams. Whenever a motley works in unison to influence dreams each character may use the highest Wyrd rating found within the motley for any rolls that call on Wyrd. Further, a practiced motley can move in and out of the dreams of other members as easily as they can their own. The motley can also make changes to each other's dreams with less fear of disrupting the dream. While dream riding (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 194) the sleeping minds of their fellows, motleys only disrupt a dream with a dramatic failure. Motley members can also scour shared dreams more easily in preparation for dreamscaping. Any roll made to scour the dream of another member of the motley gains a +3 bonus. Finally, the combined Wyrd of a motley is a fair substitute for the raw magic of the Hedge. If the motley sleeps in one place they needn't slumber in the Hedge or a Hollow to enter the dreams of another. Instead, each member may spend two points of Glamour, but the entire motley must enter the same dream. While the above generally makes life easier for changelings, it's oneiromachy where the power of shared dreams truly shines.

Oneiromachy and Dream Bastions

Oneiromachy usually pits the will and skill of one oneiropomp against another. Not so with motleys that share dreams. To attack one changeling is to attack them all, which gives experienced motleys a fairly large advantage when it comes to dream battle. Not only can the motley use the highest Wyrd of the group as outlined above, they can also bolster the defense and attacks of other members of the motley. During each turn of oneiromachy, in place of taking an action, a changeling can instead augment the attack or defense of another member of the motley. This is considered an instant action and uses the normal action for that character during the turn. Characters can perform an augment action at any point during the turn, even out of initiative order. The target of the augmentation gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls or a +1 to armor for each other character that concentrates on him. The visual component of these augmentations takes whatever form the oneiropomp decides upon to help their companion. A dream-sword might burst into flames dealing extra damage or a gauntleted fist bearing a shield might appear to protect their friend from harm. By focusing their attention in this manner on one member of the motley, changelings have an even chance to at least drive off even the most dangerous oneirovores that come to haunt them in their sleep.

Not even the most skilled motley of oneiropomps has much of a hope of defeating the true masters of dreams: the Gentry. The best that most changelings can hope for when they encounter one of the True Fae in dreams is to escape and sometimes even that doesn't work. Combating creatures of possibility in the shifting landscape of dreams is like attacking a dragon with a teaspoon. But when attack fails, defense can win. A number of skilled oneiromancer motleys have discovered they have the capabilities to construct permanent defensive structures in their shared dreams that are strong enough to turn aside the wrath of the True Fae. Changelings call these dream havens Bastions.

A Bastion can take whatever form the shared consciousness of the motley decides upon, but the most common form is that of a castle. From inside stout walls of imagination, changelings attempt to drive off marauding True Fae with dream slings and arrows or sandbagged machinegun nests. A Bastion represents a solidified dream that doesn't respond to outside attempts to reshape it and protects the sleeping minds of the changelings within from outside influences. Only by battering her way through the walls can a True Fae reach her quarry.

Merit: Bastion (• to •••••; special)

Prerequisites: Must belong to a motley, Wits Specialty in Oneiromancy.

Effect: A motley must have at least three members to construct a Bastion. Like a shared Hollow, a Bastion is created through experience point expenditure by the troupe as a whole rather than a single individual. The general shape and look of the Bastion can be decided by the motley as a whole, but the details depend on the changeling with the highest Wyrd rating. A Bastion is psychoactive in the same way as the Hedge and adapts itself to the highest Wyrd present. A changeling of the Autumn Court might cause the Bastion to decorate itself in gold, red and brown of fallen leaves, and the walls take on the look of burnt wood. Bastions are created by dreamscaping the shared dream of the motley (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 195). This creation process is an extended action instead of a contested action and is performed as a Teamwork action with a target number of 20. Each roll of the extended action represents one full night of work. Once constructed, the Bastion is a permanent addition to the dreams of the motley, even dreams they don't share with each other. No matter what the dream is about, the Bastion will always appear in some way, either as a prominent feature or just a misty image in the distance.

Mechanically, a Bastion is built in basically the same way as a Hollow and the maximum rating of any single feature is 5 dots. Bastion Size and Amenities both follow the same rules as those presented for Hollows (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 94). Unlike a Hollow, Bastions only have one external door, which acts more as a useful point of reference than an actual

portal in and out of the Bastion. Only members of the motley that created the Bastion may enter it (peacefully anyways) and they may do so simply by picturing themselves inside as an instant action. Once inside, a changeling may not leave the Bastion until the dream has ended.

In place of Wards, Bastions have Battlements. Each dot of Battlements is worth 10 points of damage that a besieger must overcome to win entrance. Only environmental attacks (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 198) have any effect on Battlements. Once a single dot of Battlements is reduced to zero, the dot rating of the Bastion Battlements is reduced by one. Repairs can be made to the Battlements either instantly with experience point expenditure (new dots x2), which represents the changeling putting a bit of herself into the Bastion or through the same sort of extended action Teamwork roll that created the Bastion in the first place. Repairing a single dot of Battlements requires 10 successes and each roll is equal to one night.

In addition to increased protection, each dot in Battlements past the first allows more changelings the opportunity to strike back at their attacker from arrow slits or other similar defensive positions. Only Personal Attacks that take the form of ranged weapons may be used from the Battlements.

- • No attacks are allowed
- •• Allows one changeling to attack
- ••• Allows three changelings to attack
- •••• Allows five changelings to attack
- ••••• Allows the entire motley to attack

Goblin Contracts

How badly do you want it? That's the question Goblin Contracts pose to changelings. Is the object of your desire or your quest for power more important than the consequences? Goblin Contracts that deal with dreams are no less treacherous than those that directly impact the waking realm. These Contracts might deal with the ephemeral, but the consequences remain quite real.

Dream Rendering (••)

In Faerie, the True Fae can take a passing fancy and shape it into reality through the power of the Wyrd. A changeling that learns the Contracts of Dreams gains some of this ability thanks to Cobblethought (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 126) but most of the items she snatches from dreams soon fade away in the lands of waking. This Contract allows the changeling to break down the objects gained from Cobblethought into the pure stuff of possibility and use the dream-stuff to modify tokens so they can be used while slumbering.

In order to use Dream Rendering, the character must first have successfully pulled an object out of her own unconsciousness using Cobblethought.

Cost: 1 Glamour
Dice Pool: Wits + Wyrd
Action: Instant
Catch: The changeling is naked.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling pays the Contract's price but gains no benefit. The object gained from Cobblethought vanishes, even if the character managed an exceptional success on the roll.

Failure: The Contract fails to work and the character pays no price.

Success: The character succeeds in breaking down the object gained from Cobblethought into the dream-

stuff of possibility. In this form, the dream-stuff resembles brown cotton candy and is equally tacky to the touch. The character can then augment an existing token by weaving, wrapping and hammering the dream-stuff into place until it merges with the token. This requires a Dexterity + Crafts roll. Assuming everything goes to plan, the token can then be used by the changeling that owns it even while asleep. Dream-stuff persists for one scene before vanishing.

Such close contact with the magic of possibility infests the changeling, reminding her of her durance. The next time she sleeps, the changeling has intense flashback nightmares about her time in Arcadia that she can't snap out of, even through the use of oneiromancy. These dreams are powerful enough to make the changeling wonder whether she really ever escaped at all and require a roll for degeneration on 5 dice (regardless of current Clarity rating).

Exceptional Success: The character manages to extract enough dream-stuff to augment two tokens, though each still requires a successful Dexterity + Crafts roll to complete.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The object pulled from dreams is Size 3 or larger.
+2	The object pulled from dreams came from a target that is currently asleep.
–1	The object pulled from dreams is Size 1.
–2	The object pulled from dreams comes from a source not wholly human.

Sandman's Bargain (••)

One of the problems with altering dreams is the tightrope act that changelings must walk between changing a dream to suit his purposes and maintaining enough dream integrity so that the entire thing doesn't collapse. This Contract can be used while in dreams to ensure stability at the possible cost of real damage to the oneiropomp.

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Resolve + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling stayed awake for at least 24 hours prior to activating this Contract.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling pays the Contract's price but gains no benefit. The dream the changeling was attempting to modify immediately ends and he suffers one point of lethal damage from the trauma of the dream's collapse.

Failure: The Contract fails to work and the character pays no price.

Success: For the duration of the current dream, the oneiropomp can make any changes he likes to a dream with no chance of disrupting it. No matter how abrupt, unusual or drastic the changes are, the dream remains stable. This will also keep a scoured dream from ending if the Intensity is reduced below 0.

A dream touched with this Contract not only seems more real to the dreamer, but also to the changeling that invades it. Any damage taken by the user during a dream that has been stabilized with this Contract becomes actual, lethal damage.

Exceptional Success: As above, but any damage suffered during the dream is considered bashing rather than lethal damage.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The dreamer is personally known to the changeling
+2	The dreamer shares a dream pledge or task with the changeling
–1	The dreamer is a complete stranger to the changeling
–2	The Contract is used on the same dreamer for successive nights

Mad Trespass (•••••)

Changelings are paranoid. Everywhere they look they see signs that their Keepers are coming to retrieve their missing property. Nearly every pledge they take is intended to make the job of finding them more difficult. More than a few changelings have wished they could turn the tables on the Gentry and spy on them. This Contract fulfills that wish.

Cost: 1 Glamour + 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Composure + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling was freely given some gift or boon by the target or one of its loyal servants.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling pays the Contract's price but gains no benefit.

Failure: Contract fails to work and the character pays no price.

Success: This Contract only works while the changeling is dreaming. To proceed, the changeling must first scour his dream (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 195), reducing the Intensity to 0. While his sleeping minds lies in a fallow state, the changeling speaks the name or a Title of the True Fae he intends to spy on and activates the Contract.

Upon activation, the changeling's dream begins to rebuild itself to show the named Gentry and her immediate vicinity. The oneiromancer's point of view follows the True Fae no matter where she travels for the duration of the dream. Everything the True Fae sees and hears is clearly distinct and audible to the changeling. For all intents, the changeling exists as an undetectable shade that can neither

influence his surroundings nor be influenced by them.

The price for this Goblin Contract is particularly steep. When the character awakes from his dream, his Keeper knows exactly where to find him until the following dawn.

Exceptional Success: With an exceptional success, instead of following the Gentry, the dreaming changeling can shift his point of view and explore the Domain or area of the Hedge the Gentry is currently in. If the True Fae leaves that Domain or the Hedge, the dream shifts its focus back to the True Fae.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The changeling uses both the name and a Title of the targeted True Fae
+2	The changeling uses the Contract to target his Keeper
–1	The targeted Gentry isn't in Arcadia or the Hedge
–2	The changeling is currently sharing his dream with other changelings

Sleepwalker (•••••)

The realms of sleep operate under a different set of rules than reality, if any rules exist at all. In dreams, even humans are capable of performing the impossible. In dreams, flight, mighty feats of strength and other such incredible acts are considered normal. This Contract draws on the Wyrd-fueled dreams of changelings to allow the Lost to impose some of the rules of dreams over reality.

Cost: 1 Glamour + 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The dream to be devoured is that of a child.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling pays the Contract's price but gains no benefit. The prepared dream is wasted.

Failure: The Contract fails to work and the character pays no price. The prepared dream is wasted.

Success: Not just any old dream will work for the purposes of this Contract. A changeling must prepare the dream to be used through dreamweaving (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 196) with a specific effect in mind. When the changeling activates this Contract, she must devour the prepared dream as part of the cost. Each use of this Contract requires the creation of a new dream. Dreams may be prepared to produce one of the following effects.

• **Dreams of Might:** Any one Attribute chosen by the changeling at the time the dream was created is boosted to superhuman levels. Increase a single Attribute by 5 (ignoring the usual restrictions) for the remainder of the scene.

• **Dreams of Glory:** Any one Skill chosen by the changeling at the time the dream was created is enhanced by the Wyrd. Increase a single Skill by 5 (ignoring the usual restrictions) for the remainder of the scene.

• **Dreams of Flight:** The changeling gains the power to fly for the remainder of the scene. Flight speed is double the usual Speed of the changeling. An interesting side-effect of this particular dream is that normal humans don't tend to notice the changeling while she's flying or if they do, the Mask extends to cover this unnatural act by providing some visual explanation of flight (such as a parachute or a hang glider).

• **Dreams of Vanity:** The changeling becomes almost irresistible to members of the opposite sex (or preferred sex). For the remainder of the scene the character gains the Striking Looks Merit at four dots, has her Persuasion and Socialize Skills increased by three (ignoring usual restrictions) and exudes an intoxicating scent that is different for each person who smells it. Oddly, this particular dream has no effect on individuals that already truly love the changeling.

• **Dreams of Dominance:** Everyone within line-of-sight of the changeling considers her the absolute final authority on all matters. Short of suggesting suicidal courses of action, or actions that violate the moral code of an individual (i.e. would require a Morality or Clarity roll), any command given by the changeling will be followed immediately. Even people that are unable to communicate with the changeling because of language differences or deafness will follow her lead. Unlike the other dreams, this particular usage of the Contract persists until either the next dawn or until the changeling gives the same person contradictory orders.

While under the influence of this Contract, the changeling exists in a sort of waking-slumber in which the sharp edges of reality are dulled and blurred by the overlap of dreams. All Perception rolls suffer a –3 penalty.

After the effects of this Contract have ended, the changeling will be unable to sleep (by any means, including magical effects or unconsciousness due to injury), or to dream, for 36 hours. All traits are halved (round down) during this period until the changeling is able to sleep.

Exceptional Success: As above and the prepared dream may be reused.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The changeling hasn't slept for over 12 hours
+2	The changeling has ingested a moderate amount of psychotropic drugs
–1	The changeling has slept within the last eight hours
–2	The prepared dream wasn't created by the changeling

A Little Knowledge Can Be Dangerous

Much of the information in this section assumes a character knows what she is looking for already. Information on dreams can be gathered from books of lore obtained at Goblin Markets, discussion with other changelings well-practiced in the arts and lore of oneiromachy, and, if all else fails, from an Intelligence + Occult roll. This last option will present only the most basic of information about what goes on in dreams and should serve as an impetus to seek out more knowledge in-game rather than replacing the research process.

Tokens

Tokens that touch on dreams have a certain insubstantial feel about them, as though they were somehow more delicate or fragile than other tokens. Their miens inspire passing fantasies in the form of pleasant daydreams or not-so-pleasant waking terrors.

Tenebrous Mirror (•)

To changeling eyes in the waking realm, the Tenebrous Mirror is a circle of darkness bound by a thin band of silver. In dreams, the token shimmers with colors, constantly reminding the sleeping changeling of its presence.

This token can be used in one of two ways:

Changelings that activate the Mirror while awake can peek into the dreams of others, similar to the manner in which they might ride dreams. The user can't make any changes to the dream, but they may still analyze the dream, learn about the dreamer and search for Dream-Poison by observation (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 194). The point of view is always that of the dreamer. Using the Tenebrous Mirror in this way requires close physical proximity to the dreamer.

The token can also be used from inside dreams. When a changeling practices oneiromancy, the Mirror translates into dream-stuff and travels along with its owner. The changeling can use the Mirror to look into the waking world and see what is happening near a dreamer. The Mirror shows anything within 20 feet of the sleeper and the point of view can be shifted by panning the Mirror as though the changeling were moving a video camera. A changeling can even use this power to monitor his own sleeping body, which can be particularly handy if he had to sleep in the Hedge

Action: Instant

Mien: Humans see a tarnished hand-held mirror that's lost its reflective backing and is little more than an oval of glass with a cheap, wooden handle. Those who've never felt or witnessed the glories of Arcadia are put off by the reflection, which seems hazy and indistinct, giving the impression that the person the viewer sees within the glass isn't real and never has been.

Drawback: The Tenebrous Mirror always appears in the dreams of its owner in the most obvious way, even when he might wish it wouldn't. A dream of a pleasant romp through the countryside might feature the token as the sun, shining with all the colors of the rainbow. These effects are always out of place for the dream and could mark the changeling as unusual like other beings able to look into dreams.

Catch: After using the Mirror, regular sleeping patterns can be disrupted, causing the user to feel fatigued regardless of how long he slept. This produces a mild lapse of concentration that imposes a –3 penalty on all Perception checks made the following day.

Chimaeric Armor (special)

Hedgespun Rainment in the form of various types of armor is a fairly common type of token owned by militaristic changelings, who quickly come to rely on the protection their armor provides. These same changelings are often dismayed to find their valued token is of no use whatsoever in dreams, the armor having been left behind in the waking realm along with their body. The solution to this problem is Chimaeric Armor.

Chimaeric Armor is usually created by using the Goblin Contract: Dream Rendering (see above), though some stories insist that changelings have found entire sets of armor while asleep that returned with them once they awoke. Origins aside, the fact remains that Chimaeric Armor makes the transition from waking to dreaming and continues to provide protection for its owner. A token that benefits from Chimaeric Armor provides the same Armor Rating in dreams as it does in everyday life.

The cost of augmenting standard Hedgespun Rainment with the Chimaeric Armor quality increases the total Merit cost of a token by one dot. So, for example, a token of fine, silver mail that is also Chimaeric Armor would become a three-dot Merit (two dots for the Hedgespun Rainment plus one dot for the Chimaeric Armor). The Chimaeric Armor quality of a token must be activated before sleeping to have any effect.

Action: Instant

Mien: Tokens that have been augmented with Chimaeric Armor continue to look like whatever they did before the augmentation, with one subtle difference. The apparent condition of the object changes upon the expectations of those humans that view it. A suit of leather armor made from the skins of hobgoblins that appears as a bomber jacket to human eyes still looks like a bomber jacket. The condition of the jacket can range from pristine to near-rags, depending on the preconceptions of whoever is looking at it.

Drawback: The intrusion of bulky armor into the fluid landscape of dreams does come with a price. The Armor imposes a –2 penalty on all rolls made while dreaming.

Catch: Sleeping in the Armor isn't exactly comfortable. This discovery comes quickly when the owner wakes to find himself covered in bruises to the tune of two points of bashing damage.

Drowsing Coil (•••)

This token is a ring made from the thorny vines of the Hedge in the form of a spiral that winds around the finger. While wearing the token, a changeling needn't enter the Hedge or bind herself to a pledge in order to enter the dreams of a human. Instead, the changeling must have direct line-of-sight to her target (a live-feed camera will do) before entering into sleep to enter his dreams (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 193).

Action: Instant

Mien: The ring appears to be a well-crafted golden band with an onyx setting. Viewed out of the corner of the eye, the onyx seems to glow with a faint, greenish light, but as soon as full attention is paid to the gem, the glow is revealed as an odd reflection of light.

Drawback: The skin on the finger where the Drowsing Coil was worn becomes irritated and a rosy rash forms. Any contact with the rash is extremely painful and even moving the finger too much causes discomfort. All Dexterity rolls made for the next six hours that require the use of that hand suffer a –2 penalty.

Catch: The thorns of the Hedge vine dig into flesh as though seeking the soul within. The wearer takes one point of lethal damage.

Oneiroi Quill (•••)

The ancient Greeks believed that dreams were delivered from the god Hypnos by winged messengers called the Oneiroi. Two in number, the Oneiroi were brothers with the visage of demons and black wings that lived in a cave that leads to Hades. Dreams passed from the gods to be carried to mortals from one of two gates. One gate was made of horn and issued true dreams and prophecies. The other gate was made of ivory and issued false dreams and nightmares. Accordingly, Oneiroi Quills come in two varieties.

All Oneiroi Quills are made from black feathers; the difference in the two types can be identified by the shaft. Quills with ivory shafts are used to create nightmares and other unpleasant dream imagery that turn the sleeping hours of the night into a sort of personalized hell. Quills with horn shafts are used to inspire dreams of prophesy or uplifting dreams of personal triumph that serve as a sort of positive impetus for the sleeper.

In either case, the token is used in the same way. The user creates a dream for a specific target by scribing the details of the dream in ink created from the ashes of a burnt piece of goblin fruit on an object. The object in question must then be ingested by the target within 24 hours for the dream to take effect. For this reason, most changelings that own an Oneiroi Quill choose to write their dreams on something edible and easy to write on, like an apple or even a few words at a time on a bag of chips. The ink is absorbed in a few minutes by whatever material it is written on and is impossible to detect. Dreams created by a Quill are similar to those manufactured by Dreamweaving (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 196), but always automatically override the Intensity of other dreams.

Dreams written with an ivory-shafted Quill always become nightmares, regardless of the intentions of the user. The nightmares created are so intense that the sleeper gains no benefit from a full night's rest and also negatively impacts the dreamer's personality the following day, imposing a –3 penalty on all Social Skill rolls.

Dreams written with a horn-shafted Quill are always pleasant and peaceful, granting the sleeper the benefits of a dreamscaped healing dream (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 195). The owner of the Quill may attempt to provoke a prophetic dream by investing an additional point of Glamour into the token while scribing the dream. This requires a successful Intelligence + Occult roll and risks disrupting the dream. If the number of successes rolled are greater than the Intensity of the natural dreams of the sleeper for that night, the dreamscape collapses and the sleeper gains no benefits from the crafted dream.

Action: Instant

Mien: An Oneiroi Quill appears to be an ordinary fountain pen and can even be used as such by changelings. Humans that attempt to use the token find that it behaves erratically, randomly spewing forth gushes of ink that create a sort of Rorschach ink blot pattern.

Drawback: Although the token never actually wears down, it does become blunt after use, which requires the owner to sharpen it. Inevitably, the owner jabs himself with the sharp point the next time he uses it, which causes one point of lethal damage.

Catch: The ash of burnt goblin fruit can cause deliria in the user if breathed in, resulting in unpleasant mental

side-effects. For the next 12 hours, the user suffers from the phobia derangement (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 97). The particulars of the phobia are left for the Storyteller to determine, but are different each time.

Thief of Dreams (•••)

This token is a chunk of clear crystal about the size of an apple, weighing next to nothing. Outside of dreams the token is useless for anything other than a fairly impressive (though not terribly effective) paperweight. It's only in dreams that the true value of the Thief of Dreams becomes apparent. A changeling that uses the token while asleep can siphon off the energies of emotion that run rampant in dreams and convert that energy into Glamour.

To properly use the token, a changeling must first enter the dreams of a human. The color of the crystal changes in the land of Nod, symbolizing the type of emotion most prevalent. Dreams of anger cause the token to turn red, dreams of lust a warm pink and dreams of sorrow a cold, bluish-black color. To utilize the Thief of Dreams, the character rolls Wits + Empathy. Each success allows him to add one point of Glamour to his pool, but each roll reduces the Intensity of the dream by one. Changelings that belong to a Court that is sympathetic to the prevalent emotion gain an additional point of Glamour each roll as usual.

The loss of energies harvested by the Thief of Dreams doesn't directly harm a human, but it does cause an uneasy rest. Humans whose dreams are harvested by the token gain no benefits for a full night's sleep and repeated use of the Thief of Dreams on the same target has the potential to eventually cause mental damage in the form of derangements. If the same human is targeted by the token for a number of nights running greater than her Composure rating, she gains a temporary mild derangement (Storyteller's choice) that persists until she is allowed to sleep for a full week without her dreams being tampered with.

Action: Instant

Mien: In the light of day, this token appears to be a large refracting crystal that throws displays of colored light on the walls if set in the sun. Oddly, this particular crystal seems to display a visible spectrum of nine distinct bands, though this always turns out to be observer error when a recount is performed.

Drawback: Bloated by the glut of Glamour harvested from dreams, the changeling has difficulty drawing Glamour from emotion while awake. For the next eight hours the changeling may not gain Glamour from any source except by using the token in dreams.

Catch: Upon awaking, the color of the dreams harvested tinges the vision of the character, as though the character were staring out at the world through tinted lenses. This imposes a –3 penalty on any sight-based Perception rolls until the following dawn.

Baubles

There exist a few, rare tokens that can travel into dreams with their owners and changelings that are willing to pay the price of a Goblin Contract that can attune tokens to the dreaming state. But these creations are intruders in the sleeping realms, even more so than changelings, who are partially children of the Wyrd. True dreaming artifacts are something else completely. They are items born of dreams that only exist in the misty realms of sleep. Changelings call these artifacts baubles, and experienced oneriomancers both long for and dread the appearance of one in dreams. Possession of a bauble gives an oneiromancer power over dreams that outstrips even the dominance displayed by the True Fae, but that power is both fleeting and dangerous.

Baubles cannot be made, bought or stolen: only found. They float along on the tide of dreams and no one can predict where one might show up. Worse, a changeling might encounter a bauble and not recognize the treasure for what it is. Baubles aren't flashy objects of power that call attention to themselves with obvious displays. They are subtle items that fade into the background, are easily overlooked and only appear in the dreams of humans. Discovery of a bauble requires an oneiromancer to dissect the dream in which it hides. Most often, baubles are discovered when a changeling is analyzing a dream for any prophetic qualities and discovers an anomaly that piques her interest. Characters that are actively searching for a bauble roll Wits + Occult + Wyrd with a *penalty* equal to the Intensity of the dream. Stronger dreams make it easier for a bauble to hide among the sleeping imagery. Even with a success, a bauble can only be found if one exists to find.

Luck of the Draw

The odds of randomly stumbling across a bauble in the midst of an average night's dream riding are extremely low. Changelings have better odds of winning the lottery or finding a specific grain of sand on a beach. These odds can be improved, however. Baubles are drawn to specific dreams that resonate with their nature. A bauble born from the nightmares of war, for example, is drawn to similar nightmares, but a single dream about war doesn't suffice. A changeling that wishes to attempt to draw a bauble must spread her nets wider. She must inspire dreams in a broad base of dreamers to create the right kind of current to attract a bauble, and she must repeat this feat time and time again. A single night's worth of dreams only creates the faintest of stirrings in the dreaming streams. The process must be repeated night after night before the changeling can have any hope of success.

Each bauble has a draw rating that indicates the breadth and length of a specific type of dream a changeling must create to attempt to draw a bauble to her. The most powerful baubles have the greatest mass appeal to their na-

ture and are, correspondingly, the hardest to draw as the changeling works against the flow. Motleys may work in concert to create dreams appropriate to the nature of the bauble, but only one member can claim the prize. Storytellers are encouraged to make the process of drawing a bauble more than just a dry exercise in numbers. Anything can happen in dreams.

Draw	# of Dreamers	Nights
1	10	7
2	20	14
3	30	21
4	40	28
5	50	35

The Prize

Once a changeling has managed to find or (more likely) draw a bauble to her, she can claim it as hers. For a time. Dreams defy ownership and a changeling can only hope to hold onto a dream — even a dream as solid as a bauble — for so long. A changeling may lay claim to a bauble by touching it and spending a point of Glamour. The bauble remains with the changeling for a number of weeks equal to her Wyrd. Once time runs out, the bauble vanishes back into the sea of dreams. Each time the changeling returns to sleep, the bauble will appear in her possession and it cannot be lost, stolen, sold, traded or destroyed. For all practical purposes, the bauble is temporarily part of the changeling. This merging isn't always easy on the changeling owner. The influence of a bauble can disrupt the delicate sense of reality changelings work so hard to maintain. All Clarity rolls made by a changeling that owns a bauble suffer a –2 penalty. Finally, characters may only claim ownership of one bauble at a time.

With bauble in hand, a changeling will turn her thoughts on how to use the precious item she worked so hard to find. Ownership alone comes with its perks. While in possession of a bauble the changeling gains a +5 bonus to all oneiromancy and oneiromachy rolls. She can increase or decrease the Intensity of a dream by one, once per dream, as a reflexive action and she doubles her dreaming Armor and Defense. Along with these bonuses, each bauble has one or more effects particular to it that can affect the dreaming landscape or the dreamers in that dream. These effects require no expenditure to activate and are considered instant actions. Any rolls required to generate an effect are not considered oneiromancy or oneiromachy rolls and so don't benefit from the +5 bonus conferred by ownership of a bauble. Each bauble also has a catch, usually in the form of an activity, which must be paid along with a successful roll to activate the bauble's effect. Unlike a regular token's catch, which allows a non-fae entity to use the token, a bauble's catch is a price exacted on any fae user.

Dragons in the Mists

The Gentry don't like baubles, not one little bit. For some reason they can't use them and are highly affronted by the fact that changelings can. The True Fae are also put off by the power owning a bauble gives changelings over dreams; power the True Fae believe only *they* should wield. Since the Gentry can't claim a bauble and can't steal or coerce one from a changeling, they keep a weather eye out for the sort of mass dream disturbances — eddies in the tides of dreams — caused by changelings attempting to draw a bauble. The True Fae can follow dream eddies back to the source, which makes drawing a bauble something of a race. Will the changelings manage to draw the bauble before the Gentry find them? Only time can tell. Of course, not every effort is noticed by the True Fae, but enough are to make changelings wary of the possibility.

Catalogue of Dreams

Below is a list of sample baubles for use in your chronicles or to provide inspiration for the creation of new baubles. Each listing includes a description of the bauble, the nature of the bauble (what draws it), the draw rating, the effects, a catch and any required rolls to activate it.

Bloom of Health

Physicians always advise the sick or wounded to get plenty of rest to assist the body in the healing process. The doctors might not be referring to actual sleep, but resting the mind as well as the body is rarely a bad idea. People with friends or family members that are seriously injured or ill many times have hopeful dreams while they sleep that their loved one has miraculously recovered from their malady. The sick share these dreams, enjoying slumbering visions of their cancer suddenly going into remission or their sight returning to them while they slept. These dreams produce powerful emotions of hope that stir the sea of dreams, and it is from these stirrings that the Bloom of Health was born.

Description: This bauble always appears as some kind of flower, most frequently as a bouquet of peonies or a single blossom of yarrow.

Nature: The Bloom of Health is drawn by dreams of recovery from sickness or injury, especially the dreams of those with life-threatening conditions.

Draw: 3

Roll: Resolve + Wyrd

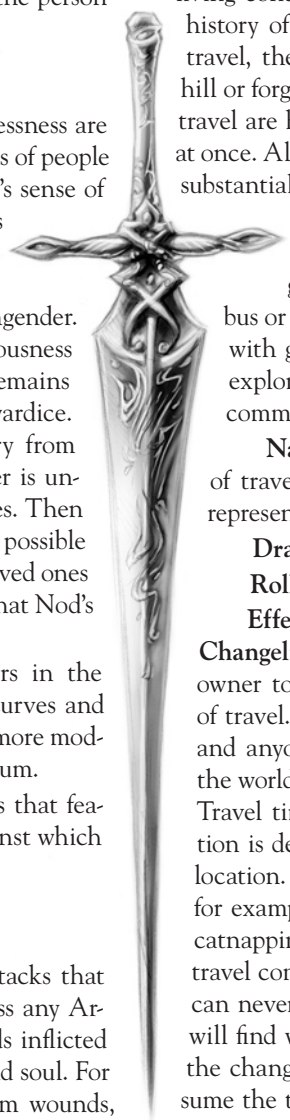
Effect: The oneiromancer can cure a sleeper of a single disease or heal an injury. This requires the owner to pluck the petals of the Bloom of Health and feed them to their target. No physical disease or injury is beyond the scope of this bauble to heal, though some effects might require considerably more explanation than others. A patient that has somehow regrown a leg during the night hours might

lead doctors and other humans to ponder exactly how the trick was done. These sorts of miracles can lead to the sort of attention that changelings are usually eager to avoid, lest their Keepers hear of it and come to fetch them. Unlike other baubles, the Bloom of Health can only be used once before it escapes the claim of a changeling. Once plucked clean of its petals, the bauble vanishes from the dreamscape. Although it's been tried, the Bloom of Health cannot resurrect the dead. The dead have no dreams.

Catch: The character ages five years upon activating the bauble, donating his own life energies to the person he heals.

Nod's Sword

Next to dreams of death, dreams of helplessness are among the most common to the sleeping minds of people everywhere. These dreams play up the psyche's sense of inadequacy or feed on perceived vulnerabilities of body, mind or character. Not all dreams of helplessness feature violence, but the ones that do are strong and pure in the fear they engender. A man might be forced by his sleeping consciousness to witness the torture of his family while he remains shackled by nothing more than his own cowardice. Another dream might feature personal injury from faceless persecutors against whom the dreamer is unable to lift a finger, no matter how hard he tries. Then there are the dreams in which no defense is possible and every attempt to defend either oneself or loved ones ends in dismal failure. It's from these dreams that Nod's Sword was born.



Description: This bauble usually appears in the form of a short, stabbing blade with wicked curves and jagged edges, though it might also appear as a more modern weapon like a Desert Eagle or a .357 Magnum.

Nature: Nod's Sword is drawn by dreams that feature a fear of violence, especially violence against which the dreamer has no defense.

Draw: 5

Roll: Strength + Wyrd

Effect: During oneiromachy, personal attacks that use the bauble as their focus completely bypass any Armor or Defense of the owner's targets. Wounds inflicted by Nod's Sword cause damage to both body and soul. For each two points of Willpower lost from dream wounds, the target suffers one point of lethal damage. The locations of these real world wounds mirror the injuries suffered during dream combat. An oneiromancer that is ejected from a dreamscape other than his own as a result of wounds caused by Nod's Sword is unable to enter that same dreamscape for a month and a day. Used against the True Fae, this last effect is magnified. If one of the Gentry is defeated by the bauble, she is barred for all time and may never enter that sleeper's dreams again.

Catch: While using the Sword, the owner must always attack with all his might, giving no thought to defense. Correspondingly, the user is allowed no Defense against attacks that target him directly.

Pilgrim's Ticket

Recent vacationers have happy dreams about the places they've visited and whole towns of people in Third World countries dream of moving to a better place. Going to a new place conjures images of sandy beaches, an improvement in living conditions or just the pleasure of travel itself. The history of mankind can be viewed through the lens of travel, the desire of people to see what's over the next hill or forge a homestead out of the wilderness. Dreams of travel are hopeful, wistful and sometimes melancholy, all at once. All of that emotion tied to a single concept causes substantial waves in the sea of dreams. It is from these dreams that the Pilgrim's Ticket was born.

Description: In recent times, this bauble generally takes the form of an actual airplane, bus or train ticket. Other versions can appear as maps with great blank spaces representing areas yet to be explored or miniatures of horses, carriages and other common means of conveyance.

Nature: The Pilgrim's Ticket is drawn by dreams of travel, especially dreams in which the destination represents the fulfillment of a cherished wish.

Draw: 1

Roll: Wits + Wyrd

Effect: Much like the Contract, "Dreamsteps" (see **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 127) this bauble allows the owner to physically move through dreams as a means of travel. The Pilgrim's Ticket will transport the owner and anyone riding the dream with her to anyplace in the world of which the owner has at least seen a picture. Travel time is near instantaneous. The actual destination is determined by the nearest sleeper to the chosen location. Changelings couldn't appear on a deserted isle, for example, unless there just happened to be someone catnapping within sight of it. Obviously, this mode of travel comes with some inherent risks as the changeling can never be exactly sure about the circumstances they will find when they leave dreams. Any human that sees the changelings suddenly appear out of thin air will assume the travelers just walked into view rather than suspect anything more unusual is at work.

Catch: The character must intentionally remain awake before using the bauble for one hour for every 100 miles they will travel through dreams and they must calculate the culmination of that time to correspond with the next dawn.

Scepter of Hypnos

Any number of songs or poems has described the joy of being lost in a dream, likening it to the perfect state of

being. Realistically, though, not every dream is so pleasant that the sleeper would want to be lost in it. The mind forms dreaming mazes that turn in upon themselves, always returning the sleeper to a place or tableau that she might rather have avoided. No matter how the dreamer twists and turns, she is always brought back to the same place, only to turn away and begin the process again. A feeling of being trapped or lost accompanies the sleeper on her fruitless quest to escape her dream and, when she wakes, the dreamer often feels less rested than she did before falling asleep. Dreams of being lost, of being trapped or harried with no escape gave birth to the Scepter of Hypnos.

Description: This bauble always takes the form of a foot-long silver rod that is etched with complex geometric designs that seem to have no beginning or end.

Nature: The Scepter of Hypnos is drawn by dreams of being lost or trapped.

Draw: 2

Roll: Composure + Wyrd

Effect: The owner of this bauble can target a fellow oneiromancer or just a regular dreamer and trap her in a twisting maze of dreams. This can either be a literal maze with walls formed from the details of the dreamscape or it can be an illusion of the dreaming senses, trapping the target in a repeating loop of images from which the target can't escape. Neither oneiromancy nor an effort of will to wake from the dream allows the target to escape. Even being reduced to zero Willpower as a result of oneiromachy provides no relief. Only when the owner of the bauble awakens or if the target takes lethal damage from a real world source, is she released. While trapped in the dream, the target only sees what her captor allows her to see and the owner of the Scepter can change the details of her prison at any time. The sole exception to this rule is oneiromachy. If the target is assaulted in any way, she is able to pick out her attacker among the shifting paths of dreams and respond to defend herself. It is even possible to trap the Gentry in a single dream through use of this bauble, but be warned that the Keeper in question is not likely to be amused when he finally escapes.

The Scepter can only target one dreamer at a time and any other dreamers that are currently sharing the same dream remain unaffected by the maze. They may enter the maze, if they wish, but it seems flimsy and insubstantial, and they can easily navigate their way through or out of it.

Catch: The owner of the bauble must plant himself in one place in the dreamscape and may not move an inch, even to defend himself from attack. If he does move, the maze shimmers away to nothing and the target is released.

Somnambulant Reaper

Everyone dreams of their own deaths sooner or later. These dreams nearly always end with an abrupt return to consciousness just before that train runs over your car or you hit to bottom of a cliff. You awake bolt upright in bed, body flush with adrenaline and awash in cold sweat. Of course, everyone knows you can't actually die in your dreams. That's just an old wives tale. Or is it? People are commonly heard wishing they might die peacefully in their sleep, but who says a slumbering death is peaceful? Time has no sway in the realm of sleep and that minute between your heart stopping and your dream ending can go on and on. The Somnambulant Reaper was born from these kinds of dreams and strengthened by those who have *actually* died in their dreams.

Description: The Somnambulant Reaper generally appears as an old, rusty scythe, but has also been known to show up as the steering wheel that punched through your chest in your dream accident or other similar items that are a common cause of personal death in dreams.

Nature: This bauble is drawn by dreams of death, especially dreams that involve the death of the dreamer.

Draw: 4

Roll: Manipulation + Wyrd

Effect: The changeling can instantaneously change the current dream of his target to a nightmare. The details of the nightmare are created by the sleeping mind of the target, but the changeling can alter them to result in his target's death. After witnessing her own death, the target does not wake up but instead spends the rest of the dream trapped in her dead body. She slowly loses all sensation until her consciousness finally fades, at which point she enters a coma. The victim of the attack may spend a point of Willpower each day at dawn to fight the coma (coma victims don't regain Willpower) and after three days, she will return to consciousness. If the target can't pay the Willpower cost, she still awakes after three days but is near catatonic (–5 penalty to all rolls) until someone can convince her she is alive. This traumatic experience results in the hysteria (severe) derangement (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 97) with the focus on death that slowly fades away after a week.

Use (not ownership) of this bauble requires a roll for degeneration on two dice.

Catch: The changeling must slash his wrists in the dream, allowing his blood to wash over the bauble. This results in two points of lethal damage to his actual body and a pair of scars on his wrists that persist for a week.

Dream Locales

Oneiromancy lore suggests the land of dreams isn't actually a real place at all. It is the shared unconsciousness of every man, woman and child that sleeps and dreams. Each dreamscape has its own geography, landscape and style, and passing from one dream to the next is less like travel than it is like a shift in reality. All the same, there are a few places that can only be visited in dreams. These dream locales are at once a part of the shared dreamland of humanity

and outside of it. Humans sometimes visit the locales while they sleep, but never recognize the locales for what they are. Changelings and other accomplished oneiromancers can purposefully seek out the locales and attempt to learn from them.

The process of traveling to a dream locale isn't as easy as twisting a fallow dream into a facsimile of the desired destination. Oneiromancers must search through dreams for signposts that lead to the locales and follow those signs like a hunter might follow the spoor of his prey. For starters, most changelings never actually attempt to travel through dreams at all. They simply ride out a single dream or drift through the dreams of their motley. Intentionally moving from dream to dream is more taxing. In order to tread the paths of dreams, a changeling must spend a point of Glamour to travel from one to the next. Navigating dream travel requires a successful Wits + Empathy + Wyrd roll with a penalty equal to the Intensity of the dream they are currently riding.

Once the process of moving through dreams has been mastered, a changeling must discover the signposts that will lead him to a dream locale. This requires a roll to analyze the dream. With success, the character can pick up the subtle variations of dreams that are brought on by proximity to a dream locale. If no such variations appear, he must move from dream to dream until they pick up the trail. Following the signposts once the beginning of the trail has been found is an extended Wits + Wyrd roll with a target number of 15. Each roll is equal to a different dream that must be traveled to, which requires further Glamour expenditure and a separate dream navigation roll. If any roll results in a dramatic failure, the trail has been lost and the character must start over from scratch. Returning from a locale is much simpler. The oneiromancer can just will himself to wake.

Below are descriptions of two dream locales and what changelings that manage to find them might learn while there.

The Door

Dream-seekers that manage to find the Door always find it in the midst of natural surroundings like a forest or a field of daisies where it's completely out of place. The Door has no obvious means of support and looks the same from both sides: plain, boring, solid wood. The doorknob is made from copper and when a character touches it, they receive a mild electric shock. The shock isn't enough to cause damage, but does become uncomfortable if the doorknob is held onto for too long. The Door opens easy when the knob is turned,

to reveal a landscape of the elements in turmoil. Lava boils down the sides of a volcano, the wind sweeps ash and debris through the doorway and lightning illuminates the spectacle with constant crackles through the darkened skies.

The Door leads to the dreams of elements, to a place where they are supreme and the meddling influence of humans on their passions is unknown. Beyond the Door, changelings can converse with the elements through the hiss of steam, the patter of rain and the keening of wind through the trees. In this place, learning the Contracts of Elements is easy for any changeling, regardless of Court or seeming. Characters that make their way through the Door and commune with the elements may roll Resolve + Composure. With a success they manage to translate the experience into practical knowledge and may learn the first dot of any specific Contract of Elements for free. Characters that already know the Contracts can still profit from the experience, and, while witness to the majestic fury of the elements, may buy new dots of the Contract for half the normal price (meaning one-fourth in some cases).

The Well of Dreams

The Well of Dreams stands in the middle of a gloomy courtyard that seems to stretch on forever in all directions. The Well itself appears differently to different people. One oneiromancer might see the Well as a natural spring, another as a classic above-ground well, complete with wooden bucket, and the next as a pump-action drinking fountain of the kind you might expect to find in campgrounds or parks. The water within the Well of Dreams is cool and liquid black. The Well isn't really the source of all dreams; rather it's the place that dreams go when the dreamer wakes up. The water is the collective dreams of humanity and contains a dream from every human ever to walk to face of the Earth.

Those willing to partake of the water experience no sensation of drinking, but are instead inundated with a mish-mash of images drawn from a thousand different dreams. Oneiromancers can attempt to draw the dreams of a specific person from the Well. This requires the changeling to spend a point of Glamour, roll Wits + Empathy + Wyrd and speak aloud the *true name* of their target. With success, the changeling drinks from the Well and experiences one dream of the named person. Each visitor to the Well can only every experience any given dream one time. It's important to remember that the Well contains the dreams of the dead as well as the living. If a character wants to experience a dream of a historical figure, as long as they can recite the true name of that person, they will receive the dream.

The details of these dreams are left for the Storyteller to determine, but the dream should always have come at an important time in the life of the person named. Treat the dreams as though the changeling were riding a dream to which he can't make any changes, though he may analyze it, learn about the dreamer or search for dream-poison as usual (as detailed in **Changeling: the Lost**, p. 194).

t the end, the two of them met on a pier that faced east. They hadn't arranged it — it simply seemed the right place to be. A faint smell of blood lingered about him, even though he'd cleaned up after that last, brutal fight. Or perhaps it was just the salt in the ocean air.

They stood there a time, not talking, watching the sky turn. There was plenty to think about. Swords and oaths broken, gunpowder burnt, traitors revealed, hunters thwarted, friends lost and friends won.

"I wonder what comes next," he said at last.

"Of course you do." Her smile was characteristically wry. "It's always 'what's next?' with you. 'What are my next orders?' 'Where am I dispatched now?' 'Who is the enemy?' Always the soldier. Always the Knight."

He shrugged, a little. It seemed the thing to do.

She sighed a bit. "Honestly? I've been thinking the same thing myself. Everything's different now. It seems as if… well, as if the story should have *ended* here, and yet here we are, watching the sun come up. I don't know."

"Don't think of it in terms of stories," he said, his voice dipping deeper toward iron. "*They* always did, and they didn't see anything larger. They didn't know what to do when the princess was rescued… or devoured. They just wiped the slate clean and started a new story."

She watched a gull wheel overhead. "Do you think we could do that?"

"We could." He shrugged again. "Or we could write an appendix, or we could just admit that stories are only half of it. We're only part like the Others. The rest of us can keep going without a script."

She smiled, and leaned her head against his upper arm. "I'm glad you made it through all this with me," she said.

"I'm grateful too," he said, his voice warming like copper. "Whatever comes next, I want to see."

The wind came at their backs from the city, carrying the emotions of the newly awake, the fragments of dreams still remembered, the musty smell of life, bearing all its charges into the rising sun.

Chapter 4
The Coming Dawn

All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy;
for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves;
we must die to one life before we can enter another.
—Anatole France, *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*

Storytelling On The Edge of Dawn

Dawn is a time of transition. As the seemingly endless night draws to a close and the rosy light of morning spreads across the horizon, anything seems possible. Black and grey are replaced by countless shades and hues, and shadows melt away fear and darkness to reveal reality once more. Dawn is change.

And change can be dangerous.

Lost seek the comfort of safety and stability — their Clarity is bolstered by predictable situations with predictable outcomes, regular patterns and the reassurances of the known quantity. They carve out niches for themselves, hidey-holes and Hollows where they feel safe and protected. When they travel through the Hedge, they are apt to use well-known and presumed-safe trods, rarely venturing a foot off the proscribed path. As individuals and as groups, after their escape changelings tend to surround themselves with the known and familiar. Perhaps, in doing so, they hope that in predictability it would be easier to avoid being taken by surprise should the Gentry come for them again. Perhaps they seek to build stability to attempt to ward off memories of the alien and unknowable world of the Others. Regardless of the reason, much of the changeling community's sense of safety is rooted in lack of change, or at least in change coming in very predictable fashions.

However, predictability can bring as much danger to the Lost as chaos can. Any hunter will tell you that well-used paths make the best spots to set traps or spring ambushes on prey. Predictable habits make for easy targets. Lost who are predictable are also vulnerable. Using the same door to enter the Hedge at the same time every day is just asking for someone to be waiting for you there. So is living in the same apartment night after night. Well-worn trods are commonly used by more than just the Lost; hobgoblins and Gentry may also haunt such pathways, laying in wait for those who think to take the "safe" road while in the Hedge. Rituals repeated over and over may fade into ineffective monotony. Their impact, and thus their usefulness, can become diluted over time through thoughtless repetition. And, perhaps most importantly, by clinging too tightly to tradition or the status quo, the Lost become even more vulnerable to and unprepared to deal with change when it does happen.

On a larger scale, no change means no improvement over the current situation. As the general state of the universe tends to be one of decline and entropy, a situation with no significant change is doomed. Any culture that does not change and improve its lot will, over years, decades or centuries, fall in upon itself, spiraling downward into despair,

depression and desperation. If no change is introduced and no hope of improvement is possible, eventually the slow decline can take its toll on even the most stalwart of changelings, turning motleys and freeholds into nests of apathy and melancholy. While these are themes that are very appropriate for a **Lost** game, so is the glimmer of hope and the willingness to take the risk to make change in hopes of bettering one's lot. Each Lost, by virtue of having escaped Arcadia once, has already shown that he has the wherewithal to bring about change to better his own lot in the world, or at least to take advantage of the opportunity to do so when it arose. Within each changeling is the potential to do what must be done to improve not only his condition, but that of the Lost as a whole — to take a step towards a brighter future, no matter how dark the current situation may be. **Changeling** is a game of survivors, but also of beings that are capable of creating something more than ***just*** survival, no matter how dire their situation may be.

Hope and change are just as important to players as they are to their characters. A chronicle where players feel their characters are locked into predictable cycles and are unable to affect the world around them can quickly become monotonous and boring, losing all tension or excitement. While some changeling *characters* may feel the need to do everything in their power to protect themselves from the unknown, it is the unknown and unexpected that provides much of the impetus behind a storyline and the enjoyment for *players*. Fortunately, many situations exist in which potentially-risky change is either offered to or forced upon the Lost, giving Storytellers ample opportunity to build the dynamic tension that drives a game forward and makes it interesting and challenging for players. Below are some examples of how different scenarios can be used to implement the theme of impending or sudden change into a chronicle. Storytellers are welcome to use any of these suggestions individually, to blend and merge them into a symphony of impending change on the horizon, or to utilize them as inspiration for creating their own change-laden situations.

Changing Communities

Freeholds are the epitome of safety and protection for most Lost. They are representative of the type of change that doesn't threaten changelings' Clarity or desire for safety — predictable and methodical. While the tendency is often toward monarchs using some sort of rotating system, the changes in leadership tend to be slow and pre-meditated. Spring follows Winter, Summer follows Spring and the rulers progress through the year in the same fashion season after season. These organizations provide protection and support and tend to be the backbone of Lost tradition and stability. After all, it's the concepts of regulated change and voluntary transmission of power that befuddle the Gentry, acting as a form of armor for a changeling society. But too much adherence to regulation can reduce a society to a tar pit of stagnation and status quo. When change does come on a freehold level, it tends to affect the lives of freehold members in ways beyond the direct ramifications of the change. Modifications to traditions, upsets in hierarchies, shifting borders, swiftly growing or declining populations — all can have dramatic and far-reaching effects on a freehold — and a **Lost** chronicle — whether the changes are instigated by the players' characters or forced upon them by the outside world.

Too Much of a Good Thing

Freeholds tend to spring up wherever supernatural conditions funnel a higher population of Lost out of the Hedge and back into the mortal world. Most changelings emerge with little in the way of resources, and can't get far from the point at which they exit the Hedge without assistance, so freeholds tend to be built near frequently used escape routes or gateways off of trods with a slightly lower death rate than most Hedge passages. This serves as a boon to both the escaping Lost and the established freehold. Newly escaped individuals are more likely to be found and assisted than if there was no freehold nearby, and the established Lost community receives a regular influx of new members, expanding their population, which in turn brings in more potential for resources and lends more hands to their security.

What happens, however, when a freehold becomes too big? When the location of a freehold (and the conditions that funnel Lost towards it) is *too* good and its numbers swell to inconvenient or dangerous levels? Huge freeholds are a relative rarity in Lost society. This is, in part, a safety issue. While an occasional large festival held between allied freeholds may not last long enough to call the Other's attention, a massive permanent population of Lost acts as a virtual beacon to the Gentry. As well, the larger a population of changelings exist in a given area, the more likely it is that someone among those numbers might draw the attention of hunters, predators or mobs of humanity upon the entire group.

Freeholds also tend to stay relatively small for social and political reasons. While Lost may differ from humans in many ways, many of their instincts, habits and flaws remain the same. The larger the group, the more likely it is to have internal strife, emotional drama and divisive political machinations. Schisms develop in any group that is capable of differentiating between "us" and "them." Those chasms only deepen when intensified by a feeling of being forced together with "them" as might be found in a freehold with a broad variety of seemings, kiths, Courts and entitlements. Eventually, with a large enough population, "us" and "them" will coalesce sufficiently for one group to decide that it would be better off without the other. This can manifest in a variety of ways, but all of them are likely to result in

significant change for those involved, either directly or peripherally.

A Place of Our Own

The most peaceful means for a freehold to deal with a seemingly irreparable schism within its swollen population is for one group to split off from the rest and forge its own freehold. In locations where the local resources (both within the mortal world and Hedge bounty) are abundant and there is a perception of relative safety, it is not unheard of for one group of lost within a freehold to either lay claim to a neighboring city or area and begin setting up their own freehold there, or to request an amiable annexation of a certain part of the existing freehold's territory as their own. If there are plenty of (relatively) safe opportunities nearby for Lost to obtain the necessities (food, shelter, money and Glamour), the situation may resolve itself fairly easily.

If, however, quarters are close or resources scarce, the issue may not be so easily resolved. If a freehold is located in a geographically isolated area (such as on an island, mountain pass, desert oasis or even a single town with none other near by) a new freehold might have to either leave the area entirely or try to negotiate, bribe or bully the existing freehold into ceding some of its territory over to them. Depending on how this is handled (and how truly in demand resources and land are) this could well become the sticking point that turns an otherwise amiable parting of ways into a border war.

Within an already existing **Changeling** chronicle, this sort of evolutionary process within a freehold might be instigated by the players' characters as a peaceful solution to problems with a powerful and oppressive monarch or hierarchy. If the power structure is heavily weighed against them, breaking off from the current freehold and losing its protection for the sake of gaining more freedoms might be a way for players to better their own situations and those of their allies. If the parting isn't an amiable one, it might well bring the two freeholds into conflict anyway, resulting in a dispute over territory or resources (see Civil War for more information on how conflicts like this can bring change to a chronicle.)

Alternatively, the rift could be started by other freehold members. Such plans rarely spring up overnight, and Storytellers could provide an intriguing mystery plot for the player's characters as they begin to pick up clues that all is not as well in the freehold as it once had been. Characters might choose to follow up on the clues and eventually discover the root of the dissention movement. At that point, they would be faced with many choices. Do they join forces with the rebels or tell the existing monarchy? Do they try to heal the growing rift, or accept the division as inevitable? Do they try to keep the parting friendly and diplomatic, or push the situation in a more hostile and potentially war-like direction?

Alternatively, they may choose to ignore the growing signs. When the announcement that the freehold will be dividing is finally made, their available choices may be reduced to two — to stay or to go. Either way, the split will undoubtedly affect their future, and the choices they make will direct the path of the chronicle from there on out.

Storytellers might also use a freehold dividing into two smaller communities as the starting point for a chronicle.

The characters emerge from the Hedge to find themselves with two options: stay within the existing, traditional (and potentially tyrannical) freehold; or throw their lot in with the rebellious adventurers who are setting out to create a new freehold. The former offers more safety, but also greater restrictions and a more difficult path to creating a niche for themselves. The latter may be more dangerous, but is also ripe with opportunities for helping to forge a freehold that suits their own needs and desires. And whatever side they choose, if the situation turns ugly, they may find themselves with more change than they'd bargained for.

The Bright Side

What can splitting a freehold add to a Lost storyline? Whether the players' characters are part of the new freehold or the old one, the situation offers great opportunity. In many freeholds, the same experienced Lost tend to take the seasonal thrones and hold other positions of power, season after season, year after year. Splitting a freehold into two means twice as many monarchs and other officers, which in turn means there is a good chance that new Lost will have a chance to fill those roles.

Alternatively, it could mean the opportunity for changelings to deviate from the traditional offices and create new infrastructure for either freehold. This could mean a shift from seasonal monarchies to another form of government, a chance to restructure freehold hierarchies or rethink the wording of the freehold pledge. New social structures also mean the potential for new allies (and, of course, new enemies.)

Civil War

Whether because of a freehold division gone wrong, politicking between the Courts, or interpersonal squabbles and ideological power plays, sometimes the Lost population in a given area will polarize to the point where conflict escalates into full-scale war. While it is not unheard of (or even uncommon) for changelings to engage in figurative or literal backstabbing against each other, when the situation devolves into out-and-out war, it brings an entirely different set of concerns and opportunities to the game.

Freeholds are more than just gatherings of Lost. With Arcadia at their back and lives they can likely never reclaim before them, freeholds are an emotional sanctuary for their members. Between candid confessions and freehold gossip, it's likely that any two freehold members know more about one another than any outsider knows about them. This knowledge and closeness protects them in many ways. Fellow courtiers can watch out for one another's weak spots, provide protection and bolster each other's defenses. However, it also means that, when war breaks out, one's enemies are more likely to know those same weaknesses. When members of the same Court, entitlement or even motley find themselves at arms against one another, the damage is often devastating. Not only may a changeling be directly attacked, injured or killed, but his allies (Lost or mortal) may be targeted, his fetch might be tipped off to his location, or his Hollow sabotaged by those who know just where to strike for the greatest impact.

It is traditional for members of a freehold to swear oaths to the freehold (as represented by the reigning monarch). While wording and details vary, the most traditional of these is the Commendation (p. 189, **Changeling: the Lost**), which pledges a tithe and loyalty to the freehold in exchange for sharing in the freehold's protection and blessing. While small vendettas between individuals within the freehold may not break the oath (as they are personal matters, not involving the health or safety of the freehold as a whole) taking up arms or actively plotting against the monarch or the freehold at large (as might be the case with a civil war) will almost certainly do so. Thus, a civil war in a freehold means that most of the changelings in an area could become oath-breakers in a very short period of time. This looming threat makes the possibility of civil war an extremely dire one, for those pledged to the freehold. Not only does the reputation of oath-breaker taint Lost with stains that few other changelings will forgive, but it also may well cripple the freehold at large, as member after member is impacted by the activation of poisoning of the boon when his oath is sundered.

Like a more amicable parting of a freehold, a civil war might be something that players' characters are faced with in the form of actions begun by other characters. Whether they attempt to calm the stormy environment or react in warlike kind, the situation may escalate out of hand, leaving them little choice but to defend themselves and the rest of their motley. Or, it may be something that the characters themselves instigate in response to perceived tyranny or otherwise irreconcilable differences with the existing structure of the freehold.

Another option is to utilize the "freehold at war with itself" environment as a starting point for a chronicle. Upon emerging from the Hedge, the characters are taken in by one side or the other, and are faced with immediate choices. Do they try to diplomatically heal the rift? Do they throw their lots in wholly with those who rescued them? And if so, what happens when, after becoming more familiar with the local history and politics, they find that they are on the wrong side of the battle? Do they change sides, or try to bring their erstwhile protectors over to the "right" way of thinking by working from within? This can be an interesting and challenging scenario, especially for players who enjoy political machinations. It may seem a bit convoluted (and thus frustrating) for players who are brand new to roleplaying in general, as it relies more on subtle shades of right and wrong rather than obvious choices. However, if the characters are completely new to the Lost world as well, the Storyteller can use their situation to teach the players about the game world as their characters are learning at the same time.

The Bright Side

With such large risks at stake, what good might come from a civil war within a freehold? Some Lost will find the chance to prove themselves as diplomats and negotiators, others as warriors and strategists. Members of some Entitlements (the Satrapy of Pearls and Tolltaker Knights, among others) may find that war means big business as Lost scramble to purchase both the tangible (weapons, armor and supplies) and the intangible (favors, protection and secrets).

And, of course, to the victor go the spoils. Characters on the winning side of the war (assuming either side can be called a victor, considering all of the prices to be paid) may profit from the experience in many ways. Ransoms might be collected for captured prisoners, and Hollows and tokens ceded to new owners. Positions of power within the freehold might be won through might of arms or political savvy, or new secrets and information looted from "enemy" libraries as spoils of war.

Like any other political upset, civil war brings with it the opportunity for political changes to be implemented and new allies and allegiances to be made. It also is a unique chance for Lost to examine what is truly important to them. In a situation where they stand to lose everything (again), what is worth fighting for? Like many war veterans, changelings who survive a civil war may well come out the other side with a unique perspective on their own priorities, both as individuals and as a freehold.

Impending Attack

While some of the most direct and farthest-spanning changes that might affect a **Changeling** chronicle are rooted in changes to the freehold itself, not all are internal in origin. Since the motivation to remain whole and intact is a strong one, freeholds are more often attacked by outside forces than those within. As well, anything which might assault a freehold is more than likely to be an even greater danger to a targeted motley or individual Lost who have fewer numbers and resources to deal with such attacks.

Minor skirmishes or conflicts may not be sufficient to spawn much in the way of change. If, however, the attack is large or threatening enough, or involves the Gentry, martial confrontations may act as a catalyst for change and open opportunities beyond what might be apparent at first glance.

A Call to Arms

While outsiders exposed to the Lost might think them paranoid, most changelings consider it simply a healthy dose of awareness of the risks. After all, as the credo goes, it's not really paranoia if they are out to get you. And, for

the Lost, a veritable legion of "They" exist: Hedgecreatures; hobgoblins; hunters; fetches; the Lost's own family members who no longer see the changeling as their kin; other supernatural creatures, many stronger, faster, older and more powerful and predatory than the average freehold member; even other Lost — freeholds seeking to take over resources, loyalists still devoted to their True Fae Keepers or privateers seeking to trade escaped "possessions" back across the Hedge for a profit. The world is a dangerous place, and it's only a matter of time before that inherent potential danger comes knocking loudly on the door.

In some cases, attacks from outside will come swiftly and unannounced. One minute all is well, the next the world is at war, with no time to prepare and only a moment to react. A freehold member is slain. A motley-mate is kidnapped. An ambush is sprung, turning a once safe haven into a modern Alamo. Characters are forced to make quick reactions and near instant decisions, or else risk being bowled under wholly unprepared for the coming battle. Fast attacks ramp up tension instantly, but the price paid is sustainability. It's difficult for a Storyteller to keep dramatic pressure high for an extended period when the apex of the scene is sprung right away. Players (and characters) may become numb to threats thrown at them too quickly, or it may be hard to build energy higher than that which was created during the initial attack.

Other times there are portents and warnings, threats and bravado that slowly ramp up towards impending hostilities. Minor attacks may lead to the gathering of forces on both sides, and increased tensions and conflict that lead up to a climactic battle. While the initial impact may be lesser than a surprise frontal attack might bring, such building techniques can be very effective for encouraging players to do research, make plans and build tactics rather than simply respond with a knee-jerk reaction. It also gives characters the chance to attempt something other than a martial reaction to the impending onslaught. Diplomacy, blackmail, even sneaky tactics like poisoning the opposing army or turning two factions of enemies against one another are alternative solutions that the Lost may come up with if given the opportunity to scheme.

In most cases, of course, this type of scenario will be happening to the players' characters, rather than something they're intentionally instigating. But there may be times when the characters' actions bring this change upon themselves and their allies. A broken pledge with an outsider might leave the changeling (and their allies) defenseless against a now-enemy. A poorly handled deal in a goblin market could send a troop of revenge-seeking hobs against the freehold (or even worse, encourage the hob-merchants to sell the secrets of the Losts' defenses to other, nastier foes looking for an easy way in.) While being an agent of change is sometimes a good thing for the changelings, there's also times when they may well regret bringing it upon themselves – especially if their allies find out who's really behind the current onslaught.

The Bright Side

Assault from outside forces shares many of the same opportunities for positive advancement that civil war does, without the messy complications of having to share a freehold with the enemy when you're done. Creatures that the Lost can call monsters allow the martially minded to flex their might without as much in the way of moral ambiguity. Especially if the enemy is the obvious aggressor, retaliation in full force can also be an opportunity for tightly-wound changelings to take out some of their pent up aggressions on a justified target. After being abused by their Keepers, abandoned by their former families and friends, and replaced by fetches, it's not just the Summer Courtiers who could benefit from the opportunity to burn off some hostility on a well-deserving foe.

As well, while direct confrontation with the enemy always carries the potential for loss, you can't win a war that you don't fight. Every triumph against the myriad forces lined up against the Lost is one to be reveled in, and a reminder that it is possible, through great effort and sacrifice, to sometimes win. Although it may only be one battle in an ongoing war, a victory is another small tip in the scales in the Lost's favor, and every slain foe is one that is unlikely to rise against them again in the future.

Seeking the Lost

Another situation where Lost are likely to have their worlds shaken up comes when the ever-present threat of a Keeper returning to claim an escaped Lost becomes a hard, cruel reality. For most changelings, a showdown with the True Fae that held them prisoner in Arcadia is one of the most terrifying things imaginable. Even in the mortal world, where the Gentry's powers are far weaker than on their home turf, coming face-to-face with the being in whose care they lost their humanity is enough to strike a changeling near senseless. To make matters worse, many Keepers would not be content to simply abduct their former "property" and take it back home across the Hedge. Many, put out at their chattel's insolent escape, might seek to toy with the Lost like a cat with a crippled mouse, tormenting it in any way imaginable before the final blow falls.

Most Lost loathe the Gentry more than any other single type of creature in existence. While many hold a special place (filled with hatred and fear) in their hearts for their own Keeper, few would hesitate to spring into action when faced with the possibility of one of the Others attacking. The question is, however, what action that entails. For some, a military reaction would be the course of the day, with the heavy-hitters rallying all manner of assault and defense, sorcerers and witches prepping magical resources and medics preparing for the inevitable wounded and dead

that will arise from facing one of Them. Others might go into full stealth mode, attempting to hide themselves and those they care for from the Gentry's perceptions. Whether that entails weaving illusions to help hide them from the Other's sight or sequestering those they would protect as far away from the True Fae as possible, to simply not be found is a valid tactic when facing a foe that you fear is vastly more powerful than you could ever be.

Regardless of the tactics used, a direct confrontation with one of the Others is the epitome in climactic change for the Lost. While most live in daily fear that their Keepers will one day find them, the actual confrontation is rarely what they anticipated. Between the indistinct memories that most Lost carry away with them from the durance and the alien and unknowable natures of the Gentry, few changelings are really prepared to deal with the reality if and when it ever happens.

The Bright Side

For many Lost, facing one's Keeper is, quite literally, looking one's greatest fear in the face. After that, assuming one survives the encounter, nothing else is likely to hold the same terror. Regardless of the end result of the encounter, the world will never be the same again. The most terrifying nightmare in existence for that changeling has been brought into the light, and even if the end results are not permanent or another encounter is destined down the road, the first step towards long-term freedom from that monster has been made. And, should the Keeper be killed? What greater victory could any Lost truly have? Until, of course, he eventually learns that for the Others, "death" is not as permanent as for other beings.

Of course, not all encounters with the Gentry end well for the Lost — in fact, few do. Most end in pain and suffering, death or destruction, and with the targeted changeling (and frequently some of his allies) being dragged back through the Thorns. This threat is why the Others are the most highly feared enemy of the Lost, and to allow players to run rough-shod over the Gentry would be to dilute one of the greatest sources of drama and tension in the game.

Striking a balance between a terrifying threat and an overwhelming enemy is a difficult one, but necessary to allow the True Fae to fulfill the role they are intended to in a **Lost** chronicle. Some Storytellers may wish to keep the Others in a behind-the-curtain background role in their story, avoiding direct conflict, especially if the Lost have time and resources to build a force capable of defeating Them. After all, one does not survive in land populated by amoral and nigh-omnipotent godlings by charging in head first, particularly against an alert and well-equipped enemy on his home territory after having given plenty of warning. Far more in keeping with the Fae mindset would be to allow the Lost to build their defenses against a well-anticipated (but false) warning of attack, and then slip in through chinks in their defenses to mock the puny changelings from a secure and defensible position. This not only allows the tension to build as the Lost come to realize that even their best defenses are of little use against their nightmarish foes, but it also presents them with the opportunity to learn from their mistaken assumptions and over time, perhaps truly prepare themselves for the final showdown.

New Days, New Ways

Protecting themselves, remaining hidden from their enemies and, above all, avoiding the attention of the Gentry are the highest priorities of Lost society, and their Courts and freeholds are based almost entirely upon promoting those goals. From pledge wording to power structures, much of Lost society is based on tradition and, to some extent, superstition tied to that tradition. Many changelings believe very firmly that the traditional methods of doing things are all that keep them on this side of the Hedge. Considering the abject terror of being forced to return to Arcadia that most Lost bear, if a certain Court structure or ritual seems to keep the True Fae away, then it is unlikely to be deviated from, even if the Gentry's absence is wholly circumstantial.

All things change over time, however, whether through intention or accident. Certain rituals become abandoned when those to whom they were important die or move away. Wordings of pledges or ceremonies shift over time, changing the intrinsic meaning as the vocabulary changes. Emphasis is put on one aspect of tradition over another, based on the priorities, personal beliefs and motivations of those in power within a freehold. Whether rooted in faulty memory, imperfect translation or rebellion, new traditions come about and old ones fall by the wayside. This may have disastrous results — superstitions tend to become superstitions for a reason, and when dealing with creatures of fae, the ramifications of breaking them may be direct and immediate. However, with a little luck, it also may bring unforeseen change for the better along with the dangers.

The Broken Wheel

One of the core areas where tradition impacts the lives of any established population of Lost is how they are governed. In many freeholds, the long-standing tradition is for the monarchy throughout the year to be shared, divided up according to the quarters of the year. As the seasons pass, so do the crowns. This rotation is believed to act to keep the freehold in balance and thwart detection by the True Fae — believed, that is, by those who follow it. Other freeholds, however, may disagree.

If, they say, the seasonal system is supposed to protect those who are ruled by it, then why are humans and Lost still taken in those demesnes? If the protection is spotty at best, then why tie oneself to an imperfect system?

Those who doubt the validity of the seasonal monarchy often create their own systems of government. Some do so hoping to develop what the seasonal reigns has not achieved: complete protection from the Others for their populations. Others claim to seek a more efficient, just and stable form of government for the benefit of their members, regardless of what supernatural effects it may or may not have.

Other freeholds may have never developed the seasonal governmental form at all. Areas where the seasonal paradigm is thematically invalid are unlikely to change monarchs based on a turning of seasons that is meaningless to them. Tropical climes, for example, where the ideas of winter and fall are all but non-existent, or high mountainous or arctic regions where summer's warmth is practically unheard of, are unlikely to identify strongly with the four-seasons ruling model. As well, some cultures may simply have other priorities, not identifying as strongly with the seasons as they might with the elements or directions.

While there has not been a universal agreement about what governmental form best suits Lost society, each form has its own advocates. And, like any political group, fanatics exist in every group. Rabble-rousers who are dedicated to one system might attempt to convert freeholds using other forms to "see the light," sharing their pet project with others regardless of their audience's interest in the topic. Dissidents might attempt to force a freehold to implement their preferred form of rule, by sabotaging the existing government or even attempting a hostile take-over.

Political change can add both tension and depth to a **Changeling** chronicle. For traditional characters, it can serve to force them to examine and justify their beliefs in the current systems, perhaps even defending them in debate or by force of arms. For characters with other views, similar examinations will almost certainly be necessary. Convincing traditionalists to try something new can be challenging and frustrating, especially if they feel the safety and stability of their freehold is at stake.

The Bright Side

Changes in the traditional political system allow for the opportunity for a population of Lost to define and create the structure and government that may well suit them better than the traditional seasonal monarchies do. It also provides the chance for a truly charismatic or powerful individual to establish him or herself in a seat of power that is not inherently upset by the change of monarchs every three months.

On a larger scale, it carries with it the hope of something more than the status quo for the Lost as a whole. Among other goals, the seasonal transition system of monarchy is designed to help protect the Lost from the Others' predation. It is, however, not entirely successful in doing so. Should a group of adept changelings discover a system that improved upon the traditional form's effectiveness, it is likely that they would win not only the kudos of their own freehold, but a name in history as other freeholds adopt their teachings to protect their own populations from the Gentry. Is such a thing even possible? The final answer is, of course, up to the Storyteller, but the quest for a perfect form of government to provide a perfect defense (fruitless or not) could certainly serve as the basis for an entire storyline within a **Changeling** chronicle.

The Mortal World

Not all opportunity for implementing the theme of change into a **Lost** game deal specifically with changelings' internal structures or the foes they may face. Massive and dramatic change in the mortal world can affect the lives of the Lost as well, both as individuals and as a group. While changelings may feel themselves alienated and ostracized from the world of humans, they still dwell within it. Any significant change there will affect Lost as well, sometimes far more than it would "normal" humans.

The changes offered in this section are, by virtue of being focused outside of Lost society, greater in scope than those in the previous sections. Changes within a freehold of a few dozen Lost are easier to justify without changing the basics of the World of Darkness setting. Those that affect cities, countries or global human society are, of course, of a larger scale and thus may require more work on the part of the Storyteller to establish — especially if they're being worked into an already existing chronicle. It is possible to introduce changes of this sort into a storyline midway through, and doing so has the potential for increased impact as the very familiar world of humanity gradually gives way to something drastically darker and more oppressive. Or, should the Storyteller desire, the setting can be established at the beginning of the chronicle, and these changes can be more "meta" in nature, with the characters (if not the players) already being accustomed to them.

Threat Alert Red

Exponentially faster, cheaper and more prolific technology, coupled with heightened terrorist threats and increased potential for identity fraud has led to a tightening of security across the globe. Over the last few decades, it has become increasingly difficult for even normal humans with no criminal record to go about their daily lives without constantly proving their identities. Legal paperwork is required from birth to death, with verifications needed to enter school, get married, open bank accounts, rent a car, travel by air, shop online or cross many national borders. Authorities label people with identification numbers and track their movement, through purchases, phone calls, bank transactions and Internet usage. True anonymity is a luxury and a rarity that most people no longer truly possess.

While humanity may not pose the terrifying threat to them that the Gentry do, many Lost lack the tools to successfully interact with human society in one facet or another. Whether they're unable to reclaim their birth name because it is being used by their fetch, or they've been gone long enough to no longer convincingly pass themselves off as the person they were, claiming an identity is one of the challenges that face many Lost upon their return.

How would it affect the Lost, then, if identification became not just useful in most areas and vital in some, but mandatory for everyday activities? If being unable to prove who you were was enough to keep you from making purchase in stores and restaurants, driving down the street or crossing local area borders? And if any "suspicious activity" went on a permanent record, accessible not only by the legal authorities, but also by prospective employers, creditors and landlords?

Several scenarios exist where such a change could come about. Given time, the steady increase in reliance on technology (and the commensurate focus on securing the information gained from the same) could continue to creep into more aspects of society until identification was necessary to purchase any product (instead of just firearms, spray paint and cold medicine) or contract for any service. Video and audio monitoring could spread to the point where any action or conversation not held in a completely private location would be recorded for use by business owners or the authorities for both marketing and legal purposes. Traveling between states or provinces might become as difficult as crossing international lines currently is, and random identification stops could be frequent occurrences. Those without identification would not only be charged with lack thereof, but also might be held on suspicion of other illegal activity. After all, if they had nothing to hide, they'd be carrying their identification, right?

While it is possible that such a change could come about as a form of technological evolution, it could also be born of some dynamic event that triggers knee-jerk reactions from global, national or local governments. Terrorist attacks, large-scale wars involving attacks against primary world powers, or epidemics could spawn such a reaction, as could increased deregulation of private mega-corporations to allow them to behave as mini-tyrannical governments in their own right.

The Bright Side

Tightening down movement and activity in the mortal world would likely shift more Lost to rely upon the Hedge for both transportation and potentially residence. Entire freeholds might shift their populations into the Thorns, carving out Hollow-communities and doing their best to "tame" the alien landscape; a futile effort, at best, but one that might be attempted if the outside world grew oppressive enough.

Ironically, making it necessary to prove one's identity is actually likely to make it easier for the Lost to attain proof of their own identities than it currently is. In a world where even children and vagrants must have identification to avoid persecution, the demand for providing such is astronomical. And, of course, an increased demand for legal papers and verifications is likely to spawn an entire underground commerce system dealing specifically in providing such paperwork to those who do not have the means to obtain it legally. While serving the Lost is unlikely to be their intended goal, more demand for false identity papers means more suppliers able to profit from it. This, in turn, means more avenues for changelings to obtain new identities and legal documents for themselves than they've had in the past.

The Great Depression

While a Big Brother-esque turn for humanity would certainly have a strong impact on the Lost, in truth any significant change to humanity would affect changelings as well. Picture a situation where unemployment has grown to historic highs, and the economic prosperity of the world (or even just the area in which the changelings live) has plummeted; where the average person is scraping through on handouts from those few government agencies or charitable organizations still viable enough to even make an effort at aiding the unfortunate; where a change of clothes is a luxury and the basic necessities of life — food, shelter, warmth and safety — are treasures that one fights for on a daily basis, rather than commodities earned with little effort. If another Great Depression fell on human society, what sort of changes would it bring to the Lost hiding among them?

One of the primary fuels for changelings' fae magic is Glamour harvested from the emotions of human beings. While this is not the only source of Glamour, the impacts of a near-universal change in attitude and emotion could well have effects on the Glamour harvested as well. Like the cycle of the seasons and the separation of the Courts, the influx of emotions harvested by Lost has a certain balance that cannot help but aid in lending some stability and balance to Lost society as a whole. Even within each Court's cardinal emotions, wide variations occur, with one Spring Courtier focusing on the unrequited love aspect of Desire, another on passion and sexuality, a third on aspirations of grandeur and glory, and a fourth on attaining physical wealth and luxury. Similar breadth, of course, is present in each of the Courts, and this variety helps provide counterbalance for each faction and individual within the Court and ensures that the organization in its entirety does not tilt too far off kilter and spin recklessly out of control.

In the most severe of times, every bit of Glamour harvested might well be weighed heavily with the hungry desperation of the individuals from which it is being taken. While humans are, and will always be, individuals, with

unique and individual reactions to any given situation, as circumstances bind them closer together, their emotions and reactions may well grow closer as well. Just as great tragedy or triumph tends to bind at least a large portion of a population together, overcoming differences and establishing a common ground, a slow but inescapable downward spiral can act as a slippery slope down which the majority of humanity's emotions risk sliding.

What sorts of changes might subsisting predominantly on desperation-imbued Glamour make in changelings and their magic? Some Storytellers might choose to implement famine-esque mechanical changes to the existing systems, requiring additional expenditures of Glamour for most uses of Contracts or the like. Another potential is for harvesting Glamour itself to become more difficult, as humanity's belt-tightening reaches metaphysical levels and results in less available resources for the Lost as well.

The Bright Side

Some theorize that the reason the changing of monarchs over a freehold is a deterrent to the True Fae is that they, themselves, are both mercurial and unchanging. While they are driven wholly by their own whims and desires, they are and will always be what they are — no less and no more.

Broad-spanning changes in humanity, and thus in the Lost, hold the opportunity for individuals and groups to grow beyond their current definitions and become more than what they began as. Desperation, both human and Lost, is often a motivation for change beyond that previously thought possible. Not only might this lead Lost to new heights — stretching their Contracts to levels unknown to past generations, or developing previously unheard of expertise and abilities with dream-crafting — but any changes that come might serve to act as a further level of protection from the Gentry. After all, if the Others are thwarted by such predictable and ages-old changes as the turning of the seasonal Courts, what chance would they have to recognize Lost after truly drastic change. If the Lost managed to truly reinvent themselves, stretching beyond what they have always been, could they ensure their freedom from recapture?

Unmasked

One of the basic tenets of the World of Darkness is that supernatural things and creatures exist, but hidden from the majority of humanity. Although most supernatural races have strong prohibitions against unveiling themselves to mortal eyes (and to clean up any evidence if they do so), it's not inconceivable that one day someone's going to mess up big time and reveal themselves to humanity in a way that cannot be swept under the rug. How might such a change come about? What would it mean to Lost society to have humanity at large recognize their existence? What changes would it bring forth, and would the inevitable costs be balanced out by any potential gains this new openness might provide?

Several likely scenarios exist that might uncover the Lost's existence to mortal society. The first, and perhaps simplest, would be for there to be some sort of mass ensorcelment among those in human society who are reputable enough to convince others of what they had perceived. It's unlikely that the often identification-lacking members of society could gain legitimate audience with presidents, counselors, religious figureheads and other pillars of mortal society to convince them of the changelings' true nature. But it's possible that a concentrated effort by a sufficient number of powerful enough fae could do so. Other possibilities that could lead to the Lost being "discovered" include technology advancing to the point where it was possible for a high-tech digital recorder of some sort to capture a changeling's mien. If this became common enough, hiding their nature could become nigh impossible for the Lost. It's also possible that the Lost would not be the first supernaturals uncovered by mortal society. If vampires or werewolves or ghosts made themselves known in a very public and irrefutable fashion (and if they were not hunted and wiped out of existence for their troubles) it is possible that some changelings might seek the same public status.

However the Lost's existence might come to light, if the general population was forced to accept their reality in an undeniable and irrefutable way, the impact on changeling society would be tremendous. First and foremost among the issues they would face, of course, would be whether they were considered "humans" by humanity. While it is likely that governments across the globe would have differing views on their newly uncovered populace, the possibility that some nation somewhere might offer them the same legal status as "normal" humans would be a godsend to many changelings. Such a nation might become a veritable Mecca to the Lost, with changelings fleeing oppressive nations that treated them as animals, alien invaders or worse, for those where they might finally be themselves without fear of persecution.

Depending on their own nature, the means by which supernaturals came to be known to mortal society, and what humanity's reaction to this new knowledge was, some Lost might opt to attempt to clandestinely retain their secret and continue to masquerade as humans. This task, of course, would be made more difficult by the fact that mortal society now knows of their existence as something other than the stuff of fairy tales, and many individuals or groups might actively be seeking out those "closeted" Lost. If humanity instigated plans such as enforced registration, for example, it could be a crime for a supernatural to pretend to be a normal mortal. In such circumstances, clandestine changelings might be hunted not only by their Keepers, but by mortal authorities or bounty hunters as well.

If changelings gained full legal rights as if they were human, their secrets (and weaknesses) would likely come to light as well. Using their powers against others might become a crime, punishable by prison time in specially-formulated cells designed to deny them escape. It would be a truly cruel irony for a changeling to escape his Keeper and flee through the Hedge, find a world that had abandoned him and then finally regain a place within it, only to find himself captured and incarcerated in cold iron by humans, essentially held as a trussed pig waiting for the Gentry to find him once more.

Political issues and legal rights are not the only changes that unveiling would likely bring to the Lost. Some humans, drawn to the unique and exotic, might fetishize changelings, seeking relationships with them solely on the basis of their exotic and alien natures. On the other extreme, some people might treat them as less than human, discriminating against them for jobs, refusing to rent to those who can't pass a humanity test, or even actively seeking to do them harm in historic mob-mentality fashion. Somewhere in the middle, of course, would be the seemingly-tolerant — those who seek segregation and separation from them, while professing not to look down on them. While some Lost might be content to be seen as "separate but equal" and be treated as such by human society, others might lobby for integrated schools, anti-discrimination laws, and the right to work, live and marry indistinguishably from any other citizen.

The Bright Side

While the potential for persecution and even xenocide exists with the unveiling of their nature to humanity at large, the Lost also stand to benefit more from this single change than perhaps any other supernatural being would. If the Lost are able to educate humanity about the reality of the True Fae and convert the masses to their cause, it is possible that together the humans and former-humans might actually be able to take decisive action against the Others. Whether that consists of cutting off the True Fae's access to the mortal world for once and for all, rallying a joint military excursion into the Hedge (or even Arcadia) to try to exterminate them, or simply educating humanity so that no more unwary victims can be taken across, if the Lost are able to bring the human race onto their side, anything might be possible. Of course, that is a very big "if". But, as with any situation, risk and potential often go hand in hand. The greater the risk the Lost face, the greater the potential for gain.

Change from Within

While in many of the circumstances detailed above, change is something that is happening to the Lost, rather than something they are intentionally bringing about, even within Lost society there are those who actively seek to create and foster change in themselves and others. Whether they envision themselves as anarchists or revolutionaries, martyrs or muses, some believe that change is not only good for Lost society, but that it is *vital* to the health and well-being of each changeling and to the group as a whole.

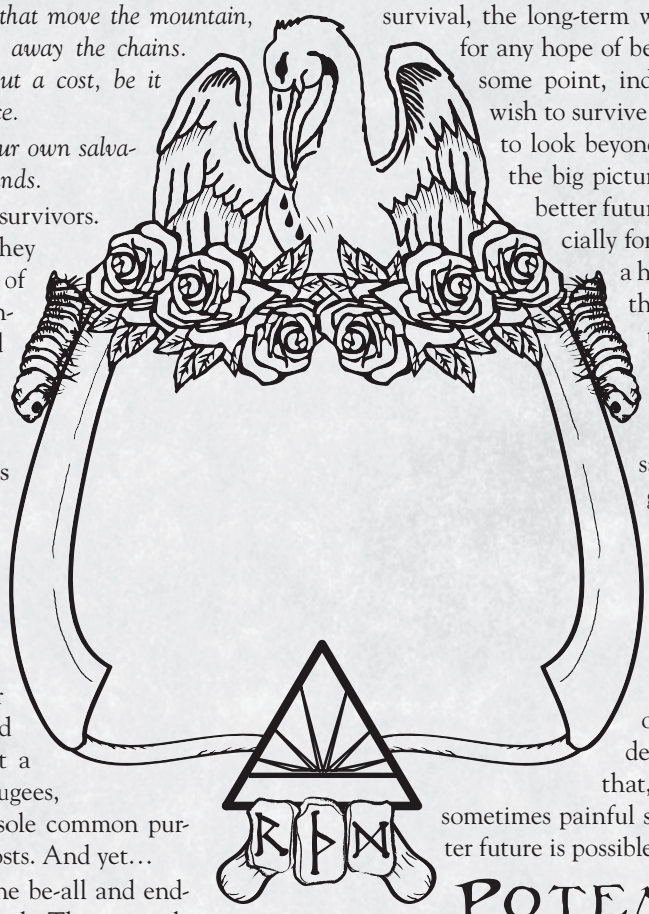
Many Lost of this mindset are recruited into the ranks of the Court of Dawn Others join the traditional seasonal Courts, using Wrath, Fear, Sorrow or Desire to spawn the change they perceive is necessary for the Lost to survive and prosper. Yet others refuse to align themselves with any Court, believing they can do the most good by remaining unaligned and unfettered by courtly politics or expectations.

Dawn Court

(The Bloody Rose, the Auroral Court, the Court of Salvations)

Change is possible; the potential for a better future exists. However, every victory has its price. It is our sweat that turns the wheel, our tears that move the mountain, and our blood that sweeps away the chains. Nothing good comes without a cost, be it hard work, denial or sacrifice.

We are the agents of our own salvation. The future is in our hands.



Changelings are survivors. During their durances, they have been the playthings of an inhuman godling, endured that which would destroy most humans — and survived. They have traversed the Hedge, suffered soul-rending injuries and spiritual transformation — and survived. They have returned to a world that no longer holds a place for them, found themselves denied the comfort of their former friends and families — and survived. They have built a society of outcasts and refugees, bonding together with a sole common purpose — to survive at all costs. And yet…

Survival cannot be the be-all and end-all of a group's long-term goals. There must be something more to keep them going. A degree of selflessness, compassion and generosity (or at least enlightened self-interest) is vital to any group's continued health. A group where each individual is solely motivated by their own personal survival quickly degenerates into utter selfish chaos. In such an environment, resources and information are hoarded. Trust is never extended. Others are valued only as tools and resources, expendable in the face of even the smallest potential risk. Only the utterly ruthless survive, and in the end, they too become vulnerable as the rest of the group is thrown to the proverbial or literal wolves at the first signs of danger. By focusing solely on the immediate battle for survival, the long-term war, both for survival and for any hope of betterment, is sacrificed. At some point, individuals and groups who wish to survive long term must be willing to look beyond the immediate, to grasp the big picture, and to work towards a better future. It can be difficult, especially for those who have survived a horrific past, to believe that the future can ever be better than the present. But some Lost believe that it is possible. They have faith that, with effort and sacrifice, the night will not go on forever and bringing about the dawn is a task that rests firmly in their own hands. While the odds seem stacked against them and the road is certainly not an easy one, the Court of Dawn dedicates itself to the ideal that, with hard work — and sometimes painful sacrifice — creating a better future is possible.

Potential and Sacrifice

Within Lost society, as in any group, members make certain compromises and concessions to keep the group viable and strong. Those who are not willing to make such sacrifices either find themselves alone or suffer the wrath of those who see the benefits of a group's protections and are willing to protect and promote the greater good.

Most times, these sacrifices are either so small or come so naturally that they are hardly thought of as sacrifices at all. Pledges to a freehold are made. Protection

and companionship are the reward, but restrictions on one's behavior are the price. An outspoken individual holds their tongue (or accepts some punishment for not having done so) to keep the peace with those who share in the freehold's defense. Grudges are settled in acceptable ways, before they degenerate into out-and-out war. Despite the possible reward, an individual member does not sell out the secrets of the reigning monarch at the Goblin Market, and the safety of the entire freehold is preserved. These minutiae are the sacrifices that foster the status quo, that give the Lost a sense of security and protection, and allow them to believe that they are safe, both individually and as a group. They do not, however, foster hope for improvement. At best, sacrifices made to support the status quo can only hope to allow a group to hold its own temporarily against the coming onslaught, with no real potential for betterment.

There are times, however, when a crossroads is reached and the potential for great change exists. When, with decisive action or great effort, going beyond the (often dismal) status quo and achieving a true step forward is possible. Great change rarely comes easily, however. Someone has to be willing to make the effort, break the calm, take the risk, in order for it to be achieved. Whether that means risking public ridicule and distrust by implementing a new form of freehold government, or standing up to lead a suicidally small force against an incoming army of Border Reavers, sometimes the greater good is served only through great individual sacrifice.

While any changeling is capable of rising to that occasion, the members of the Court of Dawn have made it their business to ensure that when those crossroads happen and potential exists for change to be implemented for the greater good, someone is willing to stand up and make the necessary sacrifices to bring about that change. Their certainty that it is not only possible but assured that things will get better for the Lost — so long as the necessary prices are paid — fills their courtiers with great optimism. However, their knowledge that those changes cannot be made without equally great sacrifice often balances that optimism with pragmatism and practicality, sometimes even to the point of cold-hearted ruthlessness; all in the name of the greater good, of course.

Courtiers

While the plight of the Lost may seem an endless night of danger, separation and pain, the Court of Dawn believes that, like any night, eventually the torment the Lost endure will end. It is this potential, this hope (and the willingness to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure it comes about) that forms the core of the Court of Salvations.

Just as there are limitless ways for Lost to follow the tenets of Wrath, Sorrow, Fear or Desire, not all Dawn Courtiers view Hope in the same fashion. Some focus heavily on the idea of the coming dawn, with every action focused entirely on the idea that better times are just around the corner. These individuals rarely become long-term members of the Court, however, as they often eschew the hard work and sacrifice that the majority of the Court recognizes is vital to actually bringing that dream to fruition.

Others focus on the theme of sacrifice. They believe it is their personal mission, their *raison d'etre*, to surrender themselves in one fashion or another for the greater good. They often have escaped from their durance under improbable or seemingly miraculous circumstances, and hold that their escape was an act of destiny to allow them to survive until such time as they might give their all to help the rest of Lost society. While this faction tends to refer to themselves as Saints, they (and the rest of the Court of Salvations) are often called Martyrs or worse, Victims, by those outside the Court. However they are viewed, Saints have been responsible for turning the tide in many crucial situations in Lost history, carrying out suicidal missions to protect endangered freeholds, or gathering vital items or information to improve other changelings' chances of survival, safety and prosperity. Many have paid harsh prices for their bravery — bearing the name of traitor from those who do not understand their work, being taken back across the Thorns or giving their life for those who cannot or will not comprehend the level of self-sacrifice that sometimes is required to instigate great change.

Much of the Court, however, believes in a combination of hard work, careful planning and painstakingly exact sacrifice to bring about change. Officially, the Court's credo is that it works for change "for the greater good," and certainly for many situations that is true. Like any other people, however, self-interest sometimes creeps in. Any individual member's interpretations of what is "for the greater good" are of course colored by his own interests, viewpoints and philosophies.

Most members of the Auroral Court do not believe in the value of change simply for change's sake, regardless of the cost or potential outcome. That mindset is, however, sometimes represented by sub-factions within the Court, as well as by members or allies of certain extremist Entitlements that view themselves as the rightful agents of change in the world. The main body of the Court tends to eschew connections with these anarchist groups, however. Such rogue elements are as likely to bring about utter chaos with no potential for positive outcome as they are to accomplish any improvement in the lot of the Lost.

The Longest Night

Many Dawn Courtiers gather on the Winter Solstice to celebrate a ritual of remembrance for those who have fallen in service to the Court. Those that have been recently lost (killed or taken back across the Hedge) are remembered, as well as great Dawn heroes whose names have become legendary for their sacrifices. This celebration begins as a solemn one. The host lights a single large candle on the morning of the solstice, preferably just as the sun has fully breeched the horizon. Throughout the next day and night, as the first mention of any fallen Martyr is brought up, a member of the Court lights a small candle from the central one. By the time evening falls, the entire gathering place is lit by the flames of countless candles, each representing one of the Court who has paid the ultimate sacrifice in an effort to hold back the night and bring the possibility of dawn to the Lost.

Throughout the day, other members of the Bloody Rose gather together, spending the day in quiet conversation. Topics include not only stories of those of the Court who have fallen, but also of current threats and dangers to Lost across the globe, both active and passive. It is not uncommon for decisions to be made throughout the day on which situations need change to be brought about and which should be left for now, as well as what course of action would be best used by the Court to bring about change where it is deemed necessary. The talks and stories continue throughout the longest night of the year, waxing and waning between seriousness, storytelling, merriment and melancholy. As the night gives way to dawn, the gathering begins to break up. At last, only the host is left to extinguish the candles after the sun has once again risen past the horizon.

Glamour and Hope

While humanity's often jaded state of existence might seem at first glance to be a veritable famine for Dawn Courtiers hoping to harvest Glamour, a surprisingly large number of resources are available to them. In many ways, the more dysfunctional and disconnected with one another human beings grow, the more Lost-like they become. And like the Lost, their faith in the potential for things to get better sustains them. Many people cling as tenaciously as any Dawn Courtier to their belief that, through hard work and sacrifice, they can make the future brighter. Some manifest through efforts to educate themselves; the determined studies of an abused mother returning to college to make a better life for her children or the first in a family's line to attend university would certainly be a potent source of Hope-inspired Glamour. Likewise, a hospital or research center populated with doctors, nurses and scientists who are dedicating their lives to curing or eradicating disease would serve a Dawn Courtier's Glamour needs well. In many of the places where life is the hardest, Hope is the strongest: schools and libraries in poor neighborhoods; missions in slums or third-world nations; physical and speech therapy offices; animal shelters and wildlife rehabilitation facilities; and charitable organizations that

facilitate people's efforts to better themselves and their families' situations. Those who have little, but refuse to give in to despair, attract the Auroral Court and serve to fuel the Martyrs' own continued efforts.

Change and Clarity

The need for safety is so strong within the Lost that any significant unexpected change to their existence has the potential to erode at their grasp of reality. One of the dangers the Dawn Court encounters is that, in attempting to bring about change in hopes of bettering Lost society, they may also bring about losses of Clarity for all those involved in said change, including themselves. In some circumstances, this danger can be mitigated through disclosure. By giving those who will be affected by it warning and opportunity to adjust to new ideas, the damage to their Clarity can be reduced or eliminated. But in some cases, secrecy or surprise is necessary to bring about change, or situations bring about unanticipated results. Some Martyrs see healing any damage that might come from changes they instigate as being their responsibility. These are likely to either have allies amongst the Blackbird Bishopric or study psychology and medicine themselves. Others see potential Clarity loss from change brought about "for the greater good" as an acceptable casualty, a regrettable but necessary sacrifice in the bigger picture. A pragmatic, if somewhat callous mindset, especially considering it is rarely the Dawn Court's own Clarity at risk.

Heraldry

As with many aspects of the Auroral Court, the symbols Dawn Courtiers choose to represent themselves and their philosophy may often seem to be a study in contradictions to those outside the Court. Some bedeck themselves in brilliant finery, choosing gold and rose colors and eye-catching patterns. They may, like their sister Court of Dusk, favor medieval stylings, although their tastes tend to run to velvets and silks rather than simple wools. Others take the opposite view, eschewing all finery and embracing an utterly austere visage they feel is more in keeping with the Court's theme of sacrifice. They may wear burlap or other rough fabrics, or dress all in rags, with the most severe wearing hair-shirts and other items of clothing specifically designed to be uncomfortable and unpleasant for the wearer. These individuals tend to be of the Martyrs, and their insistence on denial and discomfort

Symbols commonly associated with the Court of Salvations include, of course, sunrises and roses (often either dripping blood or with bloody thorns). Also frequently used, however, are wheels (especially mill wheels or wind mills' turning blades), caterpillars and butterflies or moths, pelicans (especially heraldic representations of them feeding their blood from their own breast to a nest full of young), the Tower card from the tarot, the Greek letter Delta (which resembles an upright equilateral triangle), sickles, chameleons, toads and frogs, lightning bolts and any of the symbols associated with individual historic martyrs. While Dawn does not tie itself to the Scandinavian culture as their sister courtiers often do, it has also adopted several runes as traditional symbols of the Auroral Court. These include Thursaz (also known as Thorn, for its shape), Raidho (representing wheels), and Dagaz (or daybreak).

Mantle

The Mantle of a Dawn Courtier represents both the wisdom to see where and when change should be made and the strength and self-determination to act, regardless of the cost. Thus Dawn Mantles are sharp and jangling sensory experiences, carrying with them the feeling of alertness and potential action. This may manifest as the smell of ozone in the air, the crisp crackle of electricity or the feeling of impending change that is found when one season or time of day is about to give way to another. Dawn Mantles can sound like the sharp crack of breaking glass, eggshells or bones, or the disturbing yet vibrant echo of a newborn's cries. They always carry with them the aura of impending transition, but not of capricious whim or senseless destruction.

The Mantles of many Courts clash when those of differing Courts are near to one another. A strongly Mantled Winter Courtier's icy breeze may push away at a weaker Spring Courtier's gentle gusts, or drop the temperature around a Summer Courtier's wrathful flames. Dawn's Mantles tend to warp those of other Courts when nearby. A Spring Courtier who is normally accompanied by a Mantle of classical music may find her tune changed to something more modern or upbeat, or a member of the Leaden Mirror find that his brightly-colored oak leaves have changed to maple or ash. These changes are always temporary, only existing when the Dawn Courtier is within five feet of another courtier's Mantle, and they only come into effect when the Dawn Courtier's Mantle is equal to or at a higher level to that of those she is near.

A member of the Dawn Court with Mantle •+ has begun to realize her potential for creating change in others. She receives the benefit of the Inspiring Merit at no cost. If she already has this merit, she can use its benefits twice in any given day (even on the same individuals). A character with Mantle •••+ is fortified when exerting her will to make significant change in the world around her. Once per day, she can focus her efforts and receive a +3 die bonus to any single instant action in

a situation on which her efforts are focused, creating significant change. Whether a situation is applicable or not is left up to the Storyteller's discretion. A character with Mantle ●●●●● benefits directly from her efforts to break others out of their stagnation. At any point she successfully spawns a significant change in another individual her Glamour pool completely refills. "Significant" change is left to the Storyteller's discretion, but might include things like changing a character's long-time views on a certain issue, recruiting someone into changing Courts, talking someone into (or out of) something they've decided their course of action on, etc.

Transitionists

The Transitionists are a little-known subsect even amongst the main body of Dawn Courtiers. They believe the Lost are a supernatural evolution of humanity, with the Gentry acting as an unfortunate but necessary catalyst for the transition. Further, they believe that changelings are just the next rung above humanity on the evolutionary scale, and that further evolutionary "progress" is possible.

Exactly what sort of experience could rival or exceed a changeling's durance and trigger the next stage in Lost evolution is a matter of conjecture amongst the sect. Some believe this secret lies hidden among ancient legends of the lost culture of Atlantis, while others believe that to fully achieve their potential they must become as powerful as the Gentry while somehow avoiding the Others' utter loss of humanity.

Their views of the True Fae garner the Transitionists enough distrust and hatred that most hide their views from other Lost, communicating with one another only through clandestine Internet sites and mailing lists, or small in-person gatherings held well away from the eyes of other members of the Bloody Rose.

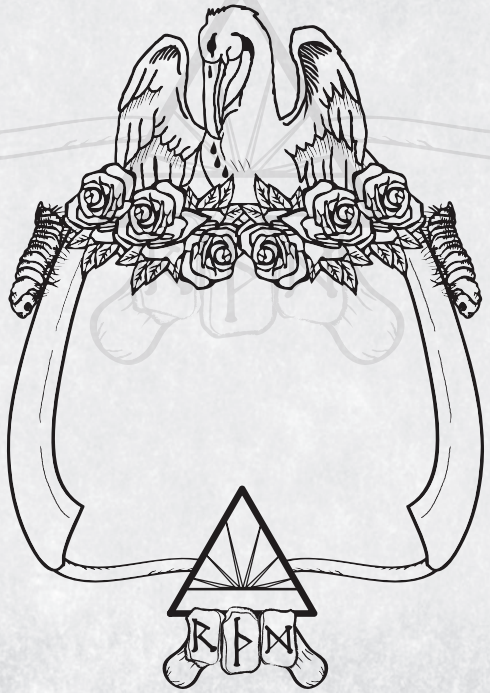
Stereotypes

Summer Court: They rush in to every situation with the same ardent fervor. If they only understood how to direct that fire, they might actually accomplish something.

Autumn Court: There is no room for fear if we are to accomplish what we must.

Winter Court: There is a time to hide and a time to strike. Why do they care only for the former?

Spring Court: Capricious and unfocused. They have great desire but no discretion.



Contracts of Potential

Entropy is an active force in the world, attempting to break down all aspects of reality. Left unguided and unsupported, all manner of things will deteriorate, whether they be objects falling to decay, politics tangling to disorder or ideals tarnishing into apathy. To combat this force and bring about positive change, active effort must be made. Determining where and when to bring about change is a heavy responsibility, but to ignore it is to concede the Lost existence to destruction, and that is an unacceptable fate to allow.

This is the basis of the Dawn Court's philosophy, and the bargains they've struck with Potential reflect their views. Because Dawn Court believes not all Lost are capable of the insight or responsibility to Lost society that must be possessed to use the Contracts of Potential wisely, Court Goodwill for Dawn is required in order for those outside the Court to purchase the Contracts of Potential. It is their hope that all Lost will eventually come to see the wisdom of the Bloody Rose, and, in doing so, play their own vital role in Lost culture's future. They are, however, pragmatic enough to know that time has not yet come. Contracts of Potential are non-affinity Contracts for any Lost who is not a part of the Dawn Court.

Light the Path (•)

Lost are as capable of duplicity and subterfuge as any other sentient beings, but an accurate understanding of another's true motives can be vital when determining what path to take forward. For the Dawn Courtier whose life is at stake (along with the lives and Clarity of others), being able to sense others' true motivations in taking a certain action can be vital.

Prerequisite: Mantle (Dawn) • or Court Goodwill (Dawn) ••

Cost: 1 Glamour

Dice Pool: Wits + Wyrd versus subject's Composure + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling has caught the target in a lie previously.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling receives an incorrect motivation about the specified action or statement, and believes it to be true.

Failure: The character cannot discern the target's motivation.

Success: The changeling learns one of the subject's motivations of the specified action or statement.

Exceptional Success: The character learns two motivations of the specified action or statement or that only a single motivation exists for it.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+0	The statement or action is currently happening or just happened in the last turn.
–1	The specified statement or action is not currently pertinent to the situation at hand (ie: is not being discussed, was not recently witnessed, a similar situation is not happening, etc.)
+1	The changeling was present for the statement or action.
–3	The changeling was not present, but only heard about it second hand.
–1	The motives for the specified action or statement are something the targeted individual is actively hiding or considers a secret.
–3	The targeted individual is not, himself, aware of his motivations for the specified action or statement.

Read the Web (••)

No man is an island. When decisive action must be taken, knowing the relationship between those involved can help to minimize potential unexpected backsplash from said action. Being able to sense where one's allies or enemies exist is even more helpful. A changeling with this clause can perceive and interpret the relationships of those around him, as represented by a web of ethereal threads perceivable only to him.

Prerequisite: Mantle (Dawn) •• or Court Goodwill (Dawn) •••

Cost: 2 Glamour

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Wyrd – subject's Composure

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling shares a pledge with the target.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character misreads the relationship threads between the target and other individuals. This could manifest as if no web existed, or in a wholly inaccurate set of readings.

Failure: The changeling is unable to perceive any relationship ties between the target and others.

Success: The character perceives the connections between the target and those presently around him as translucent threads that run between them. This effect lasts only for a single turn, and the amount of information gleaned is equal to the number of successes achieved (see Relationship Threads sidebar for details.) Examples of information gleaned include but are not limited to: whether the target has a relationship tie with the other individual, the general length of acquaintance, the intensity of the target's feelings for or about the other individual, the dominant emotion

Relationship Threads

The relationship threads brought to light by the use of Read the Web represent the connection between two individuals in a visible fashion. Read the Web gives the character using it the ability to see and understand the relationship threads connecting his target with others present at that time. The changeling can choose to gain one piece of information about a thread between his target and any other person present. The first success is enough to tell if there is a relationship thread present between the target and one other individual present. If more successes are achieved, the changeling can either note the existence of threads between the target and other individuals, or garner more details on the first thread noted (assuming that a thread exists.)

Relationship threads grow in dimension over time, so the bonds between two individuals who have just met might be as narrow as a spider's web, while those between Lost who shared decades' worth of a durance together might appear as a thick rope. One trait the changeling can look for is the thickness of the thread, from which he can garner a general idea of whether the target has known the other individual for a long time or is a recent acquaintance. As with all information garnered using this clause, the data is general. A lifelong acquaintance will obviously be thicker than newly-met individuals, but exact months, or even years of time are impossible to tell.

Other traits that can be learned from a relationship thread are the intensity and general emotion felt by the target for the person on the other end of the thread. Different relationship types are represented visually through different colors. Romantic love glows a bright and healthy pink, with lust and passion tinting the connections into the burgundy range. Anger or hatred flares a jarring orange, while loathing or distaste falls into the icy blue-white range. Bland or casual acquaintanceships are represented by threads that are likewise bland and dull in color, whereas intense emotions (positive or negative) appear vibrant or even luminescent.

Oathbound individuals' ties to another person are woven through with tiny red decorative threads, with the ornamental threads being thicker to reflect weightier oaths.

Note that this clause shows only the general feelings of the target for the person on the other end of the relationship thread, not the other person's feelings for them. While some relationships will be equal in both directions, if a stalker who is obsessed with someone was the target, his thread might show a bright and loving thread for his object of admiration. On the other hand, if the object of his admiration was the target, her thread to him might show apathy or distaste.

the target is feeling for or about the other individual at the moment, whether the target shares an oath with the other individual and how significant that oath is.

Exceptional Success: As per a success, however the number of pieces of information gleaned is twice the number of successes.

Martyr's Will (•••)

Sometimes doing what must be done to help bring about change demands more than the average Lost can provide. For those who steel themselves to the task, however, using Martyr's Will can bolster their resolve and supplement their bravery even beyond what Heroic Effort normally can reach.

Prerequisite: Mantle (Dawn) ••• or Court Goodwill (Dawn) ••••

Cost: 3 Glamour

Dice Pool: Resolve + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling deliberately sheds a few drops of his own blood.

Drawback: Using Martyr's Will stretches the potential of even the strongest Lost's Willpower. After successfully activating this clause, the changeling may not regain Willpower by any means for the next 24 hours.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling's will is simply not strong enough to bolster them. The Contract fails, and any attempts to spend Willpower to gain bonuses to actions or Resistance efforts garner one less die bonus than normal (ie: only 2 for Heroic Effort and 1 for Resistance efforts.)

Failure: The Contract fails to have any effect.

Success: For the remainder of the scene after activating Martyr's Will, the changeling receives an additional +2 dice bonus (for a total of a +5 dice bonus) to any action where Willpower is being expended for Heroic Effort (pp. 132–133 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.) They also receive a +2 die bonus to any Resistance efforts where Willpower is expended (for a total of a +4 dice bonus.)

Exceptional Success: As with a normal success, but the effect of Martyr's Will lasts until the next sunrise.

Shift the Foundation (••••)

Sometimes one's own efforts are not enough to create great change, and allies must be formed or opinions swayed. This clause allows the Dawn Court to create fundamental (although temporary) changes in others, shifting their Virtue or Vice to one which is more conducive to the targeting changeling's goals.

Prerequisite: Mantle (Dawn) •••• or Court Goodwill (Dawn) •••••

Cost: 3 Glamour

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression + Dusk Court versus the subject's Composure + Subterfuge

Action: Instant

Catch: The changeling and target are actively involved in a conversation related to the Vice or Virtue he hopes to shift the target towards.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The targeted individual's Virtue or Vice is unchanged. Instead, the changeling's Virtue or Vice (whichever he was attempting to shift) changes to match that of the target.

Failure: The clause fails to have any effect.

Success: The target's Virtue or Vice temporarily changes to that specified by the changeling. If the target's Virtue or Vice is already what the changeling is attempting to shift it to (either naturally or because it has been successfully shifted previously), that Virtue or Vice is strengthened, and the target must make a successful Resolve + Composure roll (or spend a Willpower) to avoid taking action in any situation where their Virtue or Vice comes into play. Either effect lasts until the next sunrise.

Exceptional Success: As with a normal success, but the target makes a Resolve + Composure check at the next dawn. If he fails, the effects continue until sunset. Tests are run at each dawn and sunset and the effects last until the target succeeds in his roll.

Tenacity of Hope (•••••)

Some victories are simply too important to allow anything to keep them from being accomplished. By using Tenacity of Hope, a changeling can supernaturally dedicate himself towards achieving a certain goal and be aided by the force of the Wyrd in their efforts.

A changeling attempting to activate this clause must focus it towards a certain specific goal that is achievable through the action of the Lost in question. The Storyteller is the final authority on what goals are acceptable to use for this clause, and whether a specific goal has been accomplished or not. Specific goals such as "To discover who betrayed my motley" is likely acceptable. "To bring about Mara-Zen's social downfall" might be acceptable, although vague. "To have the sun come up in the morning" or other accomplishments that are assured to happen through no action of the Lost are not appropriate goals — unless for some reason the sun is currently being prevented from rising in some fashion and the changeling has set the goal of fixing the matter.

"To survive" is never an acceptable goal for the purpose of this clause. The Wyrd will not make bargains in a situation where its price (the drawback) has no chance of being fulfilled.

Prerequisite: Mantle (Dawn) •••• or Court Goodwill (Dawn) •••••

Cost: 3 Glamour and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Resolve + Wyrd

Action: Instant

Catch: The target is using this Contract for a selfless purpose (ie: to benefit someone other than himself, or Lost society as a whole.)

Drawback: Once the Contract is successfully activated, if the specified task is not fully accomplished before the Contract wears off, the character receives a penalty of –3 dice on *all* attempted actions and a –2 dice penalty on *all* Resistance efforts (not just those related to the goal) for a number of days equal to the duration of the clause. If the goal is achieved during the drawback, the drawback ends immediately.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The changeling fails to receive any benefit to attempts to accomplish the specified task, and loses the benefit of the 10-again rule on any attempts related towards that task for the next 24 hours; attempts by the changeling to activate Tenacity of Hope on that that specific task within the next 24 hours will automatically fail.

Failure: The clause fails to have any effect.

Success: The changeling receives the benefits of the 8-again rule towards any actions taken to accomplish the specific goal focused on while activating it. As well, any action or resistance rolls directly related to achieving that goal are made as if they were under the effects of Heroic Effort rules (p. 132, **World of Darkness Rulebook**). These include a +3 die bonus to any actions taken towards achieving the goal and a +2 die bonus to Resistance efforts related to attempts to deter or delay their efforts towards the goal. These bonuses end when the task is completed, or after a number of days equal to the number of successes achieved, whichever comes first.

If the goal is accomplished before the Contract wears off, no drawback is enacted. Once activated, Tenacity of Hope cannot be voluntarily "turned off" before the duration runs out or the task is accomplished, whichever comes first.

Exceptional Success: As with a normal success, but the changeling receives the benefits for a number of days equal to twice the amount of successes rolled or until the goal is achieved, whichever comes first.

Dawn Treasures

Like other Lost, Dawn Courtiers use all types of tokens, Hedgespun items or goblin fruits and oddments. However, the Court has discovered or developed a few tokens to aid them in their work. They are fairly open with some, sharing them to help encourage other Lost to do their own part in working to create a better existence for Lost as a whole. One, however, the Kingslayer, is kept predominantly secret from those outside the Court, both because of the damage it could do if put into the wrong hands and because its effectiveness would be drastically reduced were the general public to learn about it.

Kingslayer (•••••)

Even amongst freeholds where the seasonal Courts hold sway, sometimes a monarch or a set of monarchs takes control and reigns in a manner that is dictatorial or even dangerous to those who live within their demesne. While revolt is not the only tool used by the Court of the Dawn to attempt to free oppressed Lost from a tyrant's hold, it is an effective method. By interfering in the Wyrd's blessing of a reigning monarch (and eradicating their Wyrd-granted crown), a Dawn Courtier may begin to sow the seeds of dissent against an unfit monarch or tyrant.

Because its power is firmly rooted in raising suspicion and distrust of the target, Dawn Courtiers almost never speak about the existence of Kingslayers. It requires extensive research after seeing or hearing of the effect to uncover knowledge of their existence. (Make an extended Intelligence + Occult roll at a –2 penalty, with each roll representing a day of research and a total of 15 successes required to learn about the clause.)

Dawn Courtiers who acquire this token from other members of the Dawn Court are cautioned against using it lightly or speaking about it to those not of the Court, but the value of being able to manipulate the Wyrd's manifestation of monarchy over a freehold has proved vital to protecting and promoting the cause of the greater good in many situations throughout history.

Action: Instant

Upon a successful activation of this item, the activating Lost may attempt to make a contested roll targeting any currently reigning monarch in his direct presence. The roll is the activating Lost's Presence + Politics + Dawn Mantle versus the target's Resolve + Politics + Court Mantle. This attempt is an instant action, and may be attempted once per turn for the remainder of the scene (with appropriate penalties, see below.) At the end of the scene, the Kingslayer grows dormant and may not be activated again (by any Lost) until after the next dawn.

Success indicates that the Wyrd rejects the target's claim to rule her freehold. The currently manifested representation of the ruling crown (and any mechanical benefits thereof) disappears. This does not mean the target cannot utilize social or political influence or manipulation to still be seen by the members of the freehold as the reigning monarch, but no amount of support on the part of the freehold will re-manifest the crown of that freehold for the targeted individual for an entire year and a day.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	The target has ruled for more than three months consecutively.
–1	This is not the first attempt made to use the Kingslayer's power on this Lost (–1 penalty cumulative with each attempt after the first.)

Mien: Kingslayer tokens take many forms, although most are symbolic of some sort of assassination – a miniature guillotine, a hangman's noose, or the like. Regardless of what material the token is made of, its surface carries a slightly oily texture, which leaves a residue on the hands that is difficult to wash away.

Drawback: The Wyrd dislikes being told what to do. If a Lost successfully uses a Kingslayer token to remove a reigning monarch's crown-blessing, the Wyrd will never recognize the activating changeling as rightful monarch of the affected freehold. While the Lost may use political pressure or social acumen to be named as such by the members of the freehold, the Wyrd will not manifest a crown upon their brow for the affected freehold, no matter how great their public support as ruler might be. This is a permanent effect of having used Kingslayer even a single time upon one of that freehold's reigning monarchs.

Catch: The Auroral Court distrusts Kingslayers in the hands of other Lost, and will actively seek to reacquire any of these tokens when their use becomes known. Should a non-Dawn Courtier speaks publicly about or uses this item (or a Dawn Courtier talks about it to those outside the Court or uses it irresponsibly), Storytellers should feel free to consider it an open invitation to bring the Dawn Court's attention on the offending Lost as the Court seeks to recover the token.

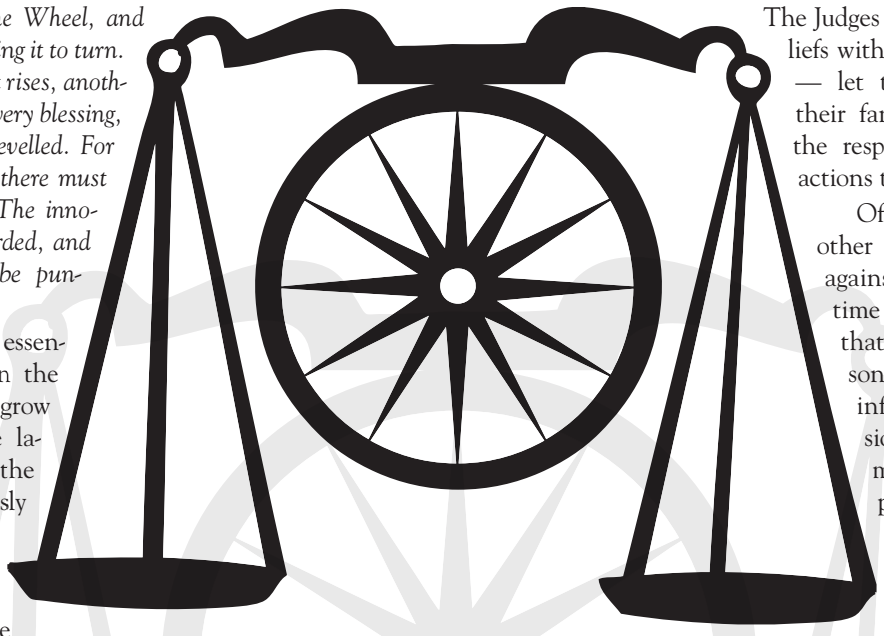
Lords Of Dawn

Change is a dangerous thing to the Lost. Too much, too quickly can erode their sense of self, and leave them without an anchor to hold onto. And yet, change is also a critical part of being human — to fall into stasis is to lose what it means to be alive.

The following Entitlements are emissaries and reactionaries to change. Each of them has seen the state of the world, and seeks to prepare for its changes, to forge a balance or overcome the limits of the present. These nobles are not afraid of a changing world — they embrace it, taking its Mantle for themselves. Any of these orders might be appropriate for a Dawn Court changeling, or they can fit into the structure of the Entitlements of the seasonal Courts.

The Adjudicators of the Wheel

I stand at the Wheel, and my actions will bring it to turn. For every one that rises, another must fall. For every blessing, a curse must be levelled. For every judgement, there must be a reparation. The innocent must be guarded, and the guilty must be punished.



There is an essential imbalance in the world. The rich grow powerful off the labor of others, the poor work endlessly for little reward. Scions of "the right families" prosper while those born without connections must struggle, and brilliant but ruthless people crush their kinder rivals into the dirt. Success, be it fiscal, romantic, or social, even seems to be as much a result of chance as it is of talent.

The Adjudicators of the Wheel are firm believers in the principles of fairness and justice. They look at the inequalities in the world and are filled with the need to balance the scales. However, the Judges do not believe in spreading wide-scale social change, at least not by themselves. Instead, they function on a much more personal level. Adjudicators are silent observers and meddlers, a cabal that bears witness to actions and metes out punishments or rewards as they see fit, and takes care that neither their beneficiaries nor their victims can trace their sudden shift in fortunes to anything but simple chance.

The Judges hold to a philosophy that everything in the world changes, but is also in balance. For one person to prosper, another must suffer. For one to feel joy, another must feel sorrow. This is the nature of the world, and although it is a harsh nature, it is a simple truth. The most good, therefore, can be done by ensuring that the people who are prospering deserve their success, and those who fail deserve to be punished. This is a philosophy that many among the Lost find deeply disturbing. They would prefer to think that good luck doesn't require bad, and that they can be happy without someone else suffering for the experience. The Judges respond to such beliefs with an indulgent smile — let the innocent have their fantasies. They leave the responsibility for their actions to themselves.

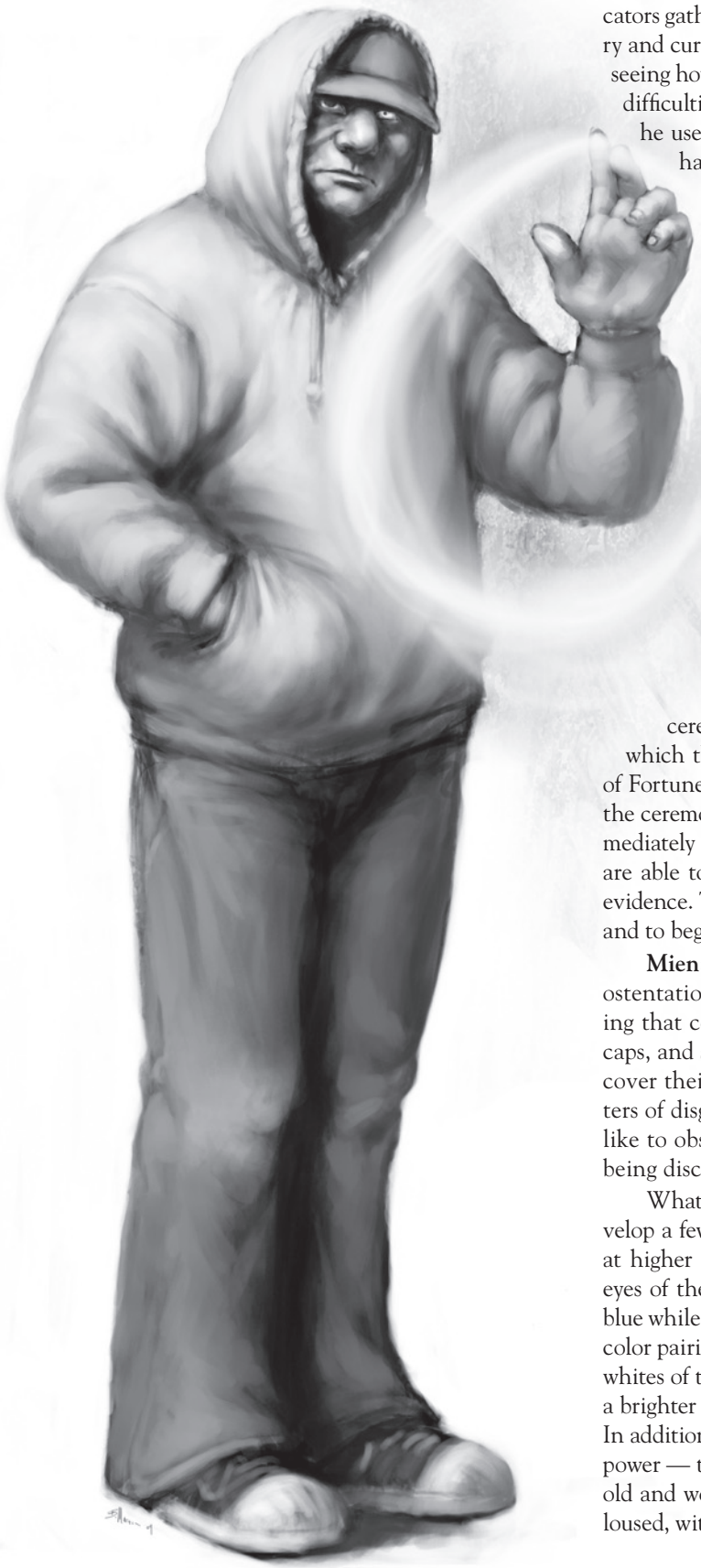
Of course, there are other claims levelled against the Judges from time to time. Some say that they let their personal feelings strongly influence their decisions — not just on moral levels, but on political or personal ones as well. After all, if a Judge is a devout Christian, why not promote the pastor at the expense of the atheist? If he is a fervent Marxist, why not corrode the authority of the bank manager and help the protesters? If he hears of a dispute between a friend and someone he doesn't like, why not just help the friend and hurt the rival, all in the name of balance? The Judges themselves claim that they view cases dispassionately, but many believe that such detachment is impossible.

Ultimately, such claims are hard to prove. The Adjudicators keep the list of those they help and harm close to their chests, revealing their activities only to one another. With nothing but hearsay and conjecture to work with, the Lost have difficulty determining if any sort of bias exists, and indeed it may only be the secrecy itself that makes them expect it. For their part, the Judges are unconcerned with the worries of others. As long as their fellows agree that they are doing a good job, that's enough.

Titles: Judges

Prerequisites: Contract of Hearth 2, Investigation 3, Wyrd 3

Joining: Because of their role as arbiters over the lives of others, the Adjudicators tend to be very cautious about who they allow into their order. While they are happy to explain their ideology to outsiders, they generally require someone to approach them about the possibility of membership.



If a potential member asks to become an arbiter, he must consent to have his entire life examined. The Adjudicators gather and study every aspect of the applicant's history and current situation. They are particularly interested in seeing how the applicant has dealt with the challenges and difficulties of his life, and with how actively and openly he uses his Contracts. If they decide that an applicant has been insufficiently subtle or overly partial in his life, they deny his application outright.

If, however, an applicant is deemed sufficiently skilled and appropriately behaved, the Judges will gather him and run him through a series of tests, during which he must study situations and identify the best people to aid or stymie. Explanations are required, and the methods by which the hopeful makes his decisions are every bit as important as the decisions themselves — the Judges prefer careful study and insight over hunches or magic. At this time, the Adjudicators meet alone, and vote on whether to allow the newcomer to join. A two-thirds majority vote is required for acceptance, and a rejected candidate is told firmly but politely to not bother re-applying.

If accepted, new candidates must attend a ceremony alongside the freehold's current Judges, in which they swear to always work to balance the Wheel of Fortune, and to be impartial in their judgements. After the ceremony, the newest member of the Entitlement is immediately taken in to their first meeting, at which time they are able to see how the other Judges present and vote on evidence. They are expected to participate in that meeting, and to begin their own investigations shortly afterwards.

Mien: Adjudicators prefer a simple look, the less ostentatious the better. They also tend towards clothing that conceals detail; heavy coats, low-pulled baseball caps, and scarves in the winter — anything that will help cover their features without standing out. Many are masters of disguise, and use hair dyes, contact lenses, and the like to observe their targets in a variety of guises without being discovered.

Whatever their natures, however, all of the Judges develop a few traits that give them away to changelings and, at higher Wyrd, can hint at their natures to others. The eyes of the Judges never match; most often, one eye turns blue while the other becomes a shade of deep grey, but other color pairings have been known to occur. In time, even the whites of their eyes change slightly, with the one becoming a brighter white and the other seeming almost a dirty grey. In addition, the hands of the Judges change as they grow in power — the left hand becomes increasingly lined, looking old and worn, while the right becomes smooth and uncalloused, with its lines barely visible. This trait carries over to

any gloves or rings that a Judge might wear, leaving the left looking old and worn, and the right shinier and new.

Background: There are two general beliefs that tend to be common in those who become Adjudicators. The first is that life is not fair, and the second is that it should be. People who have suffered tragedies in their lives, and then risen above them, are the most likely candidates for being chosen. Of course, since most changelings can point to at least one major tragedy — their own durance — this is not a difficult task.

Members of the Adjudicators hail mainly from the Winter Court. Sorrow is considered an integral part of their task — they are bringing sorrow to those who don't deserve their good fortune, and saving the worthy from a life of misery. The other Courts sometimes appear within the Entitlement, but they are much less common: the Spring Court focuses on giving or taking away what people want; the Autumn Court looks at delivering them from (or into) their fears; and Summer Court Adjudicators tends to focus on granting revenge.

Whatever an Adjudicator's Court of origin, Social Attributes and Skills are very common among the Judges, as they use them to manipulate their charges into situations where they will benefit or suffer. Mental Traits take a close second, especially the Skills of Investigation and Politics. Physical Traits other than Stealth tend to come in a distant third — as far as the Judges are concerned, if you are taking direct action against your subject, and they know you're there, you've already done something wrong. Adjudicators are fond of Contracts that allow them to hide themselves and control the fates of others — Hearth and Smoke are common choices.

Organization: The Adjudicators of the Wheel are well-aware that there are far too few of them to balance the lives of all, or even most, of the people that they meet. With that in mind, they prefer to concentrate their efforts rather than to spread out too thinly, leaving many areas of the world completely without their guidance to focus their efforts on a smaller region. Newly-accepted Judges are always admitted into the order on the understanding that they may have to relocate to a different freehold than the one they currently live in, if no other Adjudicators are present there.

Within a freehold, the Adjudicators form their own miniature tribunals, made up most commonly of five Judges, but with the potential to hold as few as three or as many as seven. In extreme circumstances, it has not been unknown for a tribunal to hold up to nine members, but such situations are always interim cases that end with three Judges leaving to form a new tribunal in another city. If the number of Judges in an area ever drops below three, for any reason, they suspend judgements until they can call to another tribunal for a replacement, or recruit a new Adjudicator from the local changeling population.

The Judges hold to the principle that all within their Entitlement are equal, and that while seniority and prior skill might grant one of their members a certain amount of social clout, there is no organizational rule to back it up. With that in mind, every tribunal follows a similar procedure. Each Judge seeks out a situation that involves one person who has suffered through no fault of their own, and one who has advanced without merit. In some situations, the two are involved in direct competition, while in others they don't even know each other. Either way, the Judge spends time gathering the information that she needs, and then presents her evidence to her fellow Judges.

Following this, the Judges vote on whether to move against the target. The Judge who gathered the evidence is allowed a vote, and Judges tend to support each others' decisions, but if a majority of the gathered Judges feels the people involved do not deserve the attention of an Adjudicator, the Judge who presented the information is bound by that decision. If (as is usually the case) the tribunal agrees that the evidence is sufficient, the Adjudicator moves into action, using his magics and skills to reverse the situations

Rumors of the Wheel

The nature and methods of the Adjudicators means that a host of rumours have been spawned about them, and circulate through the society of the Lost.

- Because of their over-use of the Contract of the Hearth, the Adjudicators sometimes accidentally create a major backlash, twisting luck and fate around one of their targets and turning them into walking coincidence magnets. Good luck and bad swirls around them for months, making their lives increasingly complicated, and the Judges just have to lie low and let things calm down. In even rarer cases, the problem never resolves itself, and the Judges must remove the unfortunate victim.

- The truth is, there is a greater purpose behind those that the Judges help or harm. If you carefully studied all of their targets, a difficult task given the secrecy in which they shroud their work, you could discover a hidden agenda to create widespread social change and grant them power.

- The Adjudicators are a paper tiger. They almost never act on their abilities — they spend so much time gathering information and sizing people up that they don't actually reach the stage of action except in rare situations. Most of the cases attributed to them are actually random chance for which they just claim the credit.

of his targets. Updates are given at periodic intervals, depending on the situation.

Usually, although there is a great deal of oversight after the fact, the Judges give each other free rein with their activities. Only when a tribunal suspects serious error or rampant bias do they step in against one of their fellows. In such cases, punishments can range from undoing all the work done by the offender, through enforced pledges, to the very rare possibility of expulsion from the Entitlement. Such punishments are not common, however; most Judges understand their responsibilities very well.

Privileges

The natural balance of luck that the Adjudicators strive endlessly to create gives them access to a unique capability to manipulate chance, which is defined below:

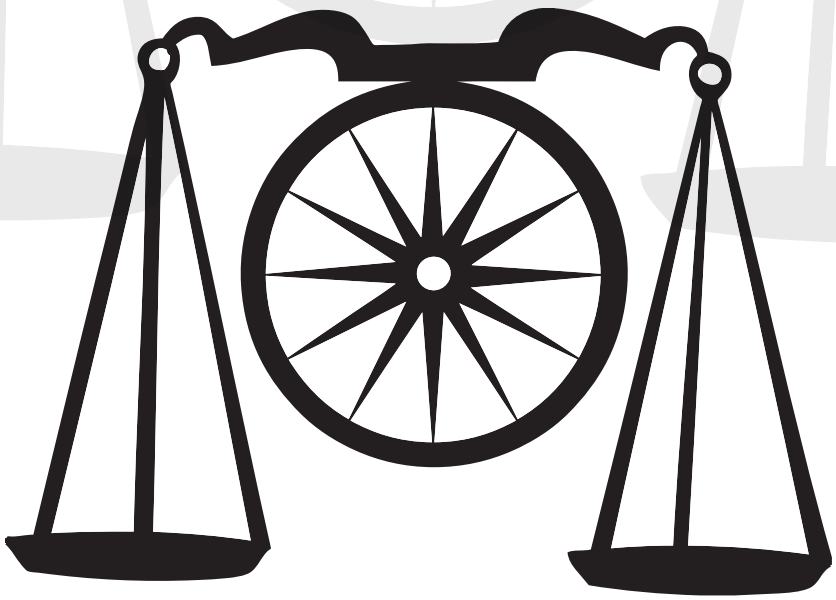
Fortune's Wheel

Adjudicators who stick to their tasks soon learn they can carefully displace luck, gathering it from one person with curses and distributing it to others, or vice versa. By combining their talents with their learned affinity for the Contract of the Hearth, they learn to shift luck from one person to another.

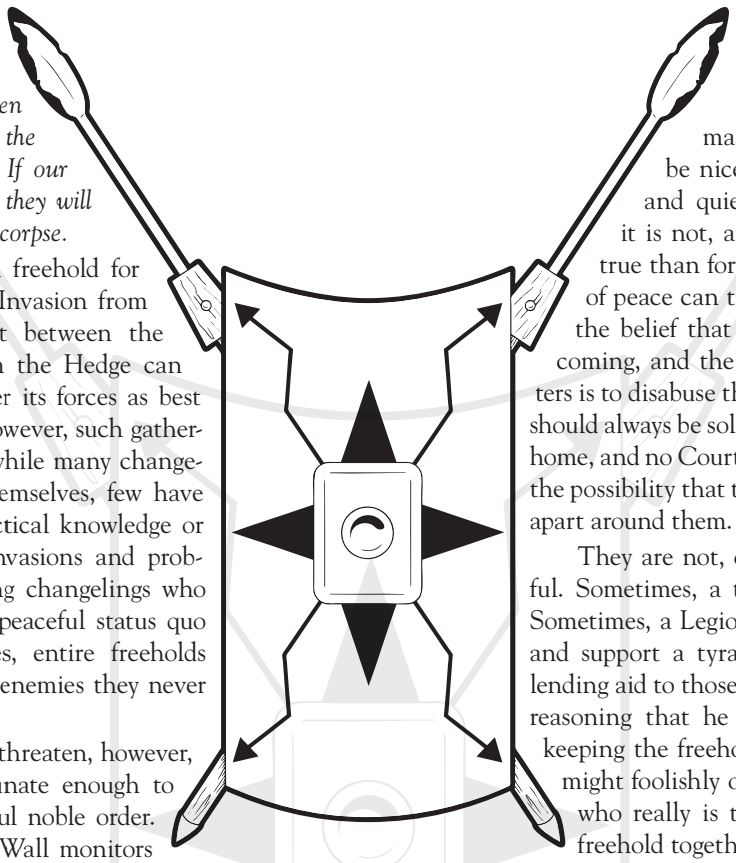
A Judge may choose to activate Fortune's Wheel whenever she uses a power of the Contract of the Hearth; this increases the cost of the Contract by a point of Glamour. In doing so, she "stores" a Contract activation that opposes the one that she has enacted, and may trigger it against a second person later in the day.

Upon activation, Fortune's Wheel creates an effect that is the opposite of the one provided by the initial Contract, as follows. Fickle Fate and Favored Fate simply reverse, with the former granting a +4 die bonus to its second target, and the latter applying a –2 die penalty. Beneficent Fate downgrades the subject's next exceptional success into a standard success. Fortuna's Cornucopia causes one target to lose the 10-again rule and have their 1s removed from successes on a single roll, and Triumphal Fate causes a single extended action to end disastrously, causing a dramatic failure on the first roll for an extended, non-resisted action.

Three special rules apply to the activation of Fortune's Wheel. If the character does not release her Fortune's Wheel within one day, it will automatically release targeting whomever she used her initial Contract on. Furthermore, Fortune's Wheel cannot be used on a given target more often than the usual rules for each level of the Contracts of the Hearth — an attempt to do so will cause it to backlash onto the initial target in the same way. Finally, the character may only enact this Privilege once per day, which means that she can only have one Fortune's Wheel prepared at a time.



The Legion of the Iron Wall



I am the line between safety and death, between the monsters and the hearth. If our enemies want to advance, they will do so only over my cooling corpse.

War can come to a freehold for any number of reasons. Invasion from a Gentry force, conflict between the Courts, or enemies from the Hedge can force a freehold to gather its forces as best it can to defend itself. However, such gatherings are often small — while many changelings learn to defend themselves, few have any sort of advanced tactical knowledge or understanding. Often, invasions and problems build quickly, taking changelings who have become used to a peaceful status quo off-guard. In some cases, entire freeholds have been wiped out by enemies they never saw coming.

When such dangers threaten, however, some freeholds are fortunate enough to gain help from a powerful noble order. The Legion of the Iron Wall monitors the status of freeholds across the world, keeping an ear to the ground to find those that have become complacent and those that are in danger of being overrun by the threats that surround them. They pay special attention to rumors of gatherings in the Hedge, newly forming trods, and other warning signs of potential Gentry attacks. And when they find evidence that a freehold is in danger from a threat external or internal, they ride into town to try and sort things out.

In ideal situations, the result of this is that danger is undone before it begins. When a troop of loyalists comes raiding into town expecting some light resistance, and discovers organized tactical squads laying traps and drawing them into ambushes, they barely have time to understand the danger they are in before they are destroyed. When a host of Border Reavers crosses the Hedge to pillage and burn, only to come against a troop of experienced warriors, the damage they could have done is shattered in moments. And when the Legion looks back at a freehold that they have helped, and see it prospering, they know the feeling of a job well done.

The policy of the Warmasters is simple. It would be nice if the world were a safe and quiet place, they argue, but it is not, and nowhere is that more true than for changelings. A few years of peace can trick a freehold's Lost into the belief that there is no more danger coming, and the purpose of the Warmasters is to disabuse them of that notion. There should always be soldiers ready to defend their home, and no Court should be unprepared for the possibility that their careful life will come apart around them.

They are not, of course, always successful. Sometimes, a threat is underestimated. Sometimes, a Legionnaire will choose to try and support a tyrannical king rather than lending aid to those trying to overthrow him, reasoning that he has the best chance at keeping the freehold safe. Other times, she might foolishly overthrow a Court Leader who really is the only thing holding a freehold together, and find herself forced to try and maintain things herself until the situation settles. But usually, the Legion's arrival in a freehold is a good omen, a reminder that while danger is always around the corner, there are also always going to be those who remember that it is not only the bad things that will pass, but the good times as well.

Titles: Legionnaire, Warmaster (informal)

Prerequisites: Any of (Brawl, Firearms, or Weaponry) 4, Persuasion 3, Wyrd 4

Joining: The process for becoming a Legionnaire varies depending on which member of the Legion chooses to induct a person, but it includes a few common practices. First, anyone who wishes to join the Legion must taste what it offers. This means spending a full year and a day taking the oath of the Freehold's Defender (see below), following the orders of a Warmaster, and being both willing to fight to the end for the safety of others, and capable of winning difficult battles. Many Legionnaires watch their soldiers closely, and pay close attention to those who choose to renew their vows when the year ends.

If it becomes clear that a soldier has both the discipline and dedication required to devote their lives to war, and the skill to survive doing so, their commanding officer will suggest the path of the Legion to them when the time comes for their oath to expire. At this time, if the new recruit agrees to join up, there isn't much of a ceremony. The Legionnaire issues the oath to his new charge, explains exactly what it means to walk the Iron Wall, and gives their charge one last chance to back away, and live a life free of violence. If the charge wishes to go ahead, she recites the oath of allegiance to the Wall, swearing to dedicate her life to defending freeholds and raising armies against the enemies of the Lost. At that time, the oath is complete and a new Warmaster is born.

In rare cases, when a freehold is badly beset, a Warmaster may choose the best of his soldiers and offer them membership without the usual lengthy observational procedure, so that if the Warmaster dies, someone else can take up the banner and keep the armies of the freehold fighting. This process works much the same as the one above, except that it is more likely to result in a Legionnaire who is uncertain about her role in the world once the current crisis ends.

Mien: Violence is the nature of the Warmasters, and it shows in their mien. Even at low Wyrd, a Legionnaire seems dangerous. Their smooth edges seem blunt, and their lines seem sharp enough to cut. Faint scars and signs of their many battles dot their skin and clothing, and their weapons never look shiny and new — they look used, but still intact, ready to inflict violence at a moment's notice.

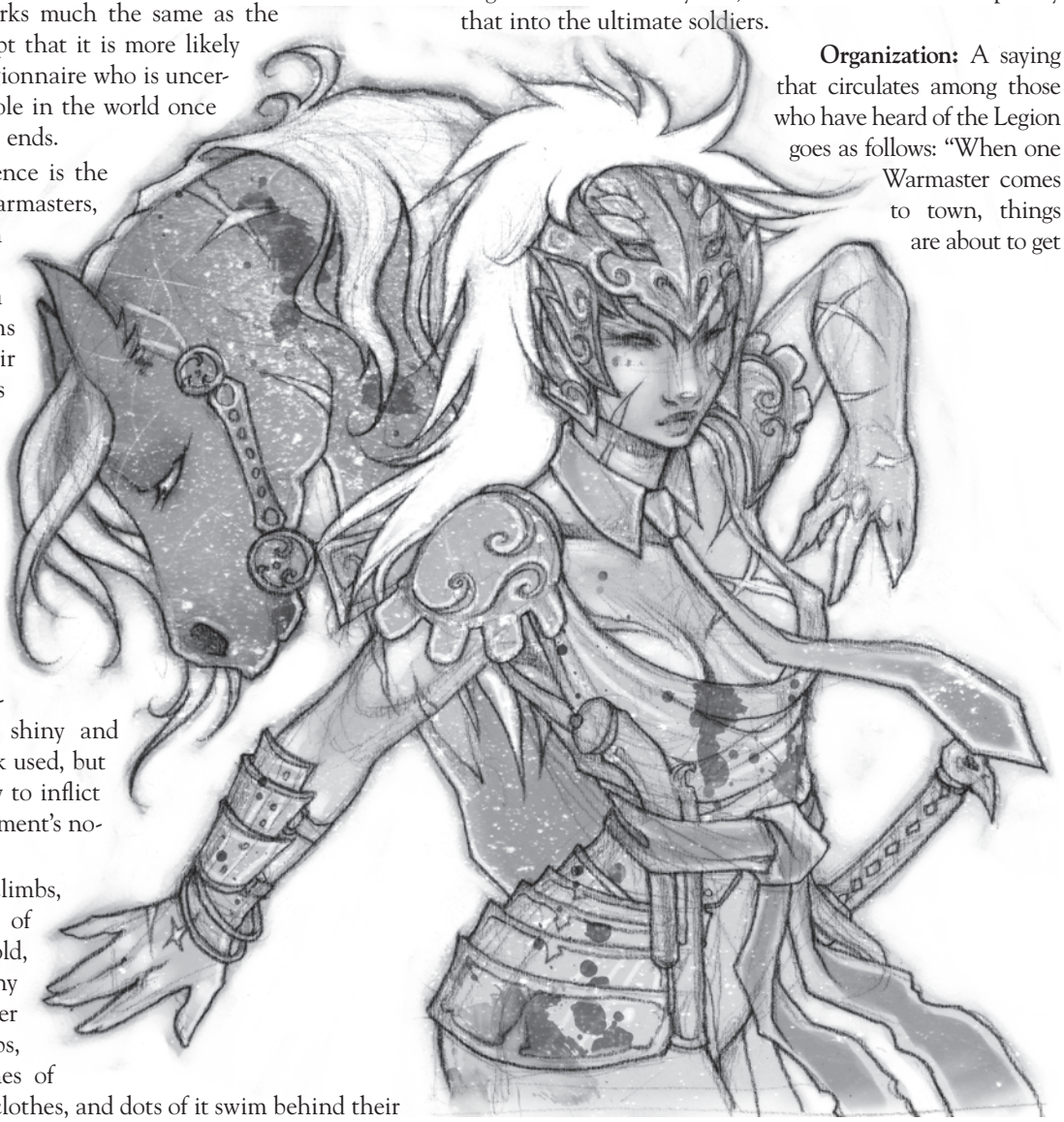
As Wyrd climbs, the second sign of the Legion is old, dried blood. Tiny flakes of it gather in their fingertips, long-dried patches of it form on their clothes, and dots of it swim behind their eyes. Death surrounds them like a shroud, enough to make some uncomfortable with the proof of the Legion's life.

Background: The Legionnaires, without exception, come from martial backgrounds. They are those who aren't willing to become complacent, people who have spent most, if not all, of their lives fighting. Many of them were forced to fight during their durances, and the marks of that violence resonate with them for the rest of their lives.

The majority of the Legion are, unsurprisingly, members of the Summer Court, whose attitudes are perfectly in line with the principles of the Iron Wall. Other Great Courts sometimes join, bringing their own perspectives and methods to the wars in which the Legion involves itself, but they remain a strict minority.

Physical Traits are, of course, the strong favorite among the Legion. After that, it varies drastically from Legionnaire to Legionnaire, but Traits and powers that improve leadership and tactical capability are much more common. The Legion defines itself by war, and its members are shaped by that into the ultimate soldiers.

Organization: A saying that circulates among those who have heard of the Legion goes as follows: "When one Warmaster comes to town, things are about to get



loud. When two show up, leave." The truth of the saying is debatable, but it can't be argued that the Legion is often seen to go to where the action is. They arrive in war-ravaged freeholds and lands on the brink of failure, and they stay long enough to organize and fortify the freehold before leaving again. However, what is less obvious is that the Legion spends as much time in freeholds not facing imminent danger as though about to be destroyed — in such places, they leave only when the feel that the freehold has formed the martial forces needed to defend it if such a danger should come about in the near future. It is rare for a Warmaster to stay in a freehold for more than a year or two, and generally only happens in situations where one expects that his services will be of critical need.

With that in mind, the Legion tends to be solitary in nature with regards to one another, saving their organization for those that they form into freehold armies. There's no real advantage to a freehold to have two Legionnaires present, beyond the general advantage of having two skilled soldiers, so Legionnaires usually prefer to spread out, traveling anywhere where trouble has broken out to calm things down again and forge a new peace at the blade of a sword. A few Legionnaires will meet from time to time to share a drink and reminisce, but they eschew the formal gatherings or festivals that most Entitlements enjoy.

On the other hand, the Legionnaires consider information-gathering and coordination to be critical activities. If the Legionnaires aren't appraised of a situation, freeholds can fall while two Warmasters arrive independently in the same freehold to help fight its problems. If the Legion doesn't send a member to a town lacking in soldiers, it might not last long enough for help to arrive if a serious problem breaks out. To forestall this, the Legion keeps detailed communications with one another, and warns members when a problem is seen developing in an area. They can't keep track of every problem, and sometimes the Warmasters are simply too busy to intervene in a given situation, but they do their best to make sure that freeholds can always count on their support when it is needed the most.

Sometimes, in particularly problematic situations, two Legionnaires will arrive in a freehold with competing goals – one seeking to overthrow a corrupt leader to save a freehold, while another fights to keep him in power and preserve the balance of the seasons. Because they have no formal process to deal with such a situation, these freeholds can descend into bloodbaths as two immensely skilled soldiers start to maneuver against one another, drawing ever-growing numbers into a fight that can rapidly escalate into a personal feud. Such a situation will only be solved if the leaders of the two sides that the Warmasters have joined make peace, or if one Legionnaire dies.

Privileges

By taking on the role of the war leader of a freehold, the Warmasters assign themselves the ability to swear any changeling to the freehold's defense, forging impressive armies in astonishingly short periods of time. They do so with the following privilege:

Freehold's Defender

The Freehold's Defender is a pledge to which Warmasters can swear other changelings. The Knight swears it on his Title, without fail — in doing so, he allows others to use him as a fulcrum for their own oaths to the freehold.

For the Knight, the Freehold's Defender Oath has the following traits, which cannot be altered or expanded upon:

Type: Corporal Oath, upon the Knight's weapon, a Title Emblem / Nemesis Pledge: While the Warmaster must swear this oath upon his Title, those he swears it with do so by requiring him to punish them for forsaking their duties. The exact Contract penalty depends on the Warmaster.

Tasks: Endeavor, Medial (–2): The Knight and his new soldiers must serve as a soldier in defense of the freehold.

Boon: Adroitness: Persuasion (+1), Vow Focus (+1) / Adroitness: Brawl, Firearms, or Weaponry (+1), Blessing, Lesser: Fast Reflexes (+1): In addition to gaining a bonus die on all Persuasion rolls, the character gains the ability to become the second party in any number of Freehold's De-

Rumors of the Legion

Tales follow the Legion like crows follow the smell of blood and death.

• Sometimes, a Warmaster decides that a Court leader isn't a good fit for a freehold. When this happens, his oaths pull him to declare war, fighting until the leader is ousted and someone more to the Warmaster's taste comes into power. Because of this, most leaders are terrified of the Warmasters, and secretly try to keep them from coming into power.

• The Legion is fanatical, and that fanaticism bleeds through their oaths. If you swear to serve them, your life will be marked by violence forever — even long after you've tried to quit. No one ever retires from being a Legion soldier.

• Because they would rather die than betray their oaths, the Warmasters have been known to stay on, fighting, long after a freehold falls. Guerrilla warriors will roam through the Hedge for months after a war ends, carrying on fights. Some people claim there's still an old Legionnaire haunting the Hedge near Denver, his Clarity shredded all to hell, fighting for a king who died decades ago and unable to tell free changelings from a Keeper's minions.

fender oaths. This functions much the same way as a Vassalage Oath does for the local Court Kings, and for similar reasons, although it provides no other bonuses. His soldiers, on the other hand, gain instant familiarity with weapons and ability to react quickly to danger. Note that they gain this dot of Fast Reflexes even if they fail to meet the prerequisites or have the Merit at its maximum usual rating.

Sanction: Banishment (–3): Those who betray the freehold must leave it, never to return.

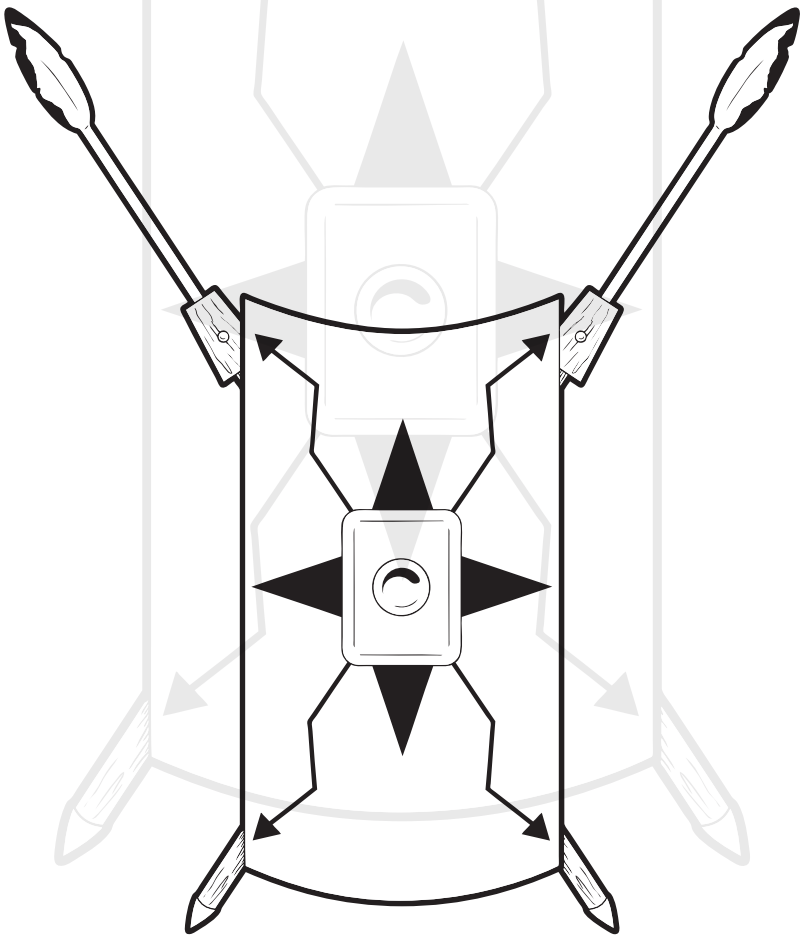
Duration: Year and a day (+3)

Invocation: One Willpower point each; the Warmaster invests a Willpower dot as per the Vassalage oath, and recovers it at the end of his time as Freehold's Defender.

Typically, the Legion's Knight will be careful about who he swears to defend a realm, and impress on them the penalties for failure. At the same time, his ability to swear large groups if needed allows him to gather a highly dedicated force to defend the freehold and fight on its behalf. It is worth noting that in a civil war situation, both sides might believe that they are defending their freehold, and thus would not be guilty of violating this oath.

Master Of Combat

The second benefit granted to the Legion is their ability to train their followers in the name of war. After a week of training, followers may purchase any one of the following traits, even if they do not have the experience for it: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina, Brawl, Firearms, Weaponry, or any Fighting Style. The Warmaster must have the trait at a higher rating than the person learning it. The person who learns the trait, once they gain the needed experience, must spend it, and can't buy anything else until they do. A given character may benefit from Master of Combat only once per year, even if they train under multiple Legionnaires.



The Order of the Hallowed Garden

Life should be approached as a garden. Sometimes, that means protecting a delicate flower. Sometimes, it means pruning weeds.

The Order of the Hallowed Garden is an old one, its roots stretching back centuries to the dawn of the seasonal Courts. As the Courts first spread across the world, many of the Gentry noticed that their former slaves were creating places of safety, regions where they could live safely without fear of being snatched away at any moment. One of these Keepers, whose name has been lost to history, sought to duplicate the feat, but in reverse. He theorized that if he could send a group of loyalists to Earth, they could create an area that would welcome and support him, instead of turning him aside. Teaching five of his slaves the arts they would need, he sent them through the Hedge, promising them great rewards if they succeeded, and terrible punishments for failure.

Over a period of several years, the slaves toiled, secretly inserting themselves into a local freehold as they prepared the nearby area for their master's approach. As time went on, however, they grew increasingly distraught over their plans. Without discussing their plans with one another, each began to secretly sabotage the project. Instead of forming a land friendly to the Keepers, they forged it as a trap to destroy him. When the day came for him to come, each of them launched a sneak attack simultaneously, prepared to die fighting the monster, only to be surprised and encouraged by each others' treachery. At the end of the furious battle, their Keeper was destroyed, and the former slaves agreed to use the gifts they had learned to create new safe havens for mortals and changelings alike.

In modern times, the mission of the Hallowed Garden continues. Their nature is to reform and change populated areas, making new "gardens" in which certain ideas can grow and flourish, and preventing dangerous ideas from taking root. As a rule, the order prefers to work to create quiet, peaceful communities — places where those who have suffered can rest, and find new things to live for. They are architects of urban renewal and change, careful guardians of whatever ideals they believe in.

There are those who mistake the Gardeners for simple philosophers, but this order was formed in violence and death, and the keepers of the Hallowed Garden know that action is required to make their desires a reality. They form neighborhood watches, look after their fellow citizens, and do whatever needs to be done when their new friends are threatened. They stand on the front lines, leading by example, and their purpose and activities are clearly visible. The Gardeners are not secret benefactors — they are proud of what they are, and inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

On the other hand, the Gardeners are an intensely political group. They have the power to change society to match their ideals, and not everyone agrees with those goals. In plenty of freeholds, there are running rivalries between a congregation of Gardeners and any number of other forces that have different ideas about what the world should look like.

Titles: Gardener

Prerequisites: Politics 3, Socialize 3, Wyrd 3

Joining: Joining the order is a deceptively simple task, but a long one. To become a member of the Gardeners, a character simply has to express admiration for the work that they do, and offer to lend help as it is needed. Unless the offerer is dramatically at odds with what the local order thinks is appropriate, such help will always be accepted. The admirer will be asked to do favors and work for the communities that the Gardeners oversee, and will receive favors in return — the arrangement tends to be a casual one, at this stage. This also gives the order a chance to see their prospective target in action, and his decisions and methods will be carefully, but subtly, scrutinized. Most of the time, the situation never progresses past this point; there are many people that the Gardeners consider to be skilled or virtuous enough to be allies, but not enough to be members.

If someone does meet their exacting standards, one of the Gardeners will approach them and suggest the possi-

bility of their alliance drawing closer. Even at this stage, not everyone accepts — some are content to remain simply allies, not wanting to devote their lives to the principles of the order. If they do not wish to proceed, the order generally appears to shrug philosophically and resume their original agreements. In fact, however, they will usually begin to work behind the scenes to persuade their new target that he would be able to work with them, and would be happy to do so. Various forms of manipulations, subtle bribes, and even the occasional creation of a problem the target might be able to solve much better as a member are attempted, but only if they can't be traced back to the order, and won't cause actual harm.

When the target finally sees that her destiny is aligned with the Hallowed Garden, and agrees to join the group, all of the existing Gardeners in the freehold gather to welcome their newest member to the fold. After an elaborate and formal dinner, the newest member swears his oaths to the order, and the others warmly welcome him as one of them.

Mien: Generally speaking, Gardeners prefer to dress for the situation, rather than for their own preferences. With that in mind, they fall into two categories — the ones who want to stand out as the best of that situation, and the ones who want to blend in as part of the crowd. The former are as fashionable as they can be, whether they are wearing Court finery, immaculate business suits, or gang colors. The latter are much simpler, wearing clothing as close to the average of those around them as possible.

Whatever their clothing, there is always one sign that the order cannot, and rarely tries to, hide. Over time, the fingers of a Gardener are gradually stained green, as though she had been working with plants in the recent past and hadn't had time to clean. As her Wyrd climbs, this becomes noticeable even in the mortal world. Gloves can cover this sign, but most of the order's members are proud of their affiliations, and don't care to conceal who they are from their fellow Lost.

Background: Social interest and understanding is the core to the Gardeners' creed, along with a general belief that they're better able to understand what people need than the people in question do. Pride and envy are common failings amongst the Gardeners, who look at the world and see the faults that they would correct.

With that in mind, most members of the order prefer to lead by example. Social Attributes and Skills tend to be primary, but every trait is considered valuable. Often, different Gardeners will co-ordinate their skills and magics so that they each have an area of expertise — one will become a physical defender of a location, another an information-gatherer, and a third will learn to sway the hearts and minds of those inside. Fleeting Spring is a very common Contract learned by the order, who find the ability to understand or, in a pinch, alter desires to be critical to their efforts.

The majority of the order's Great Court adherents owe their allegiance to the Spring Court. Desire and its outcomes are at the root of what the

Hallowed Garden stands for, and Spring is most aligned with their goals. Some hail from the other Great Courts, and there are a few well-known gatherings of Courtless fae who create areas free of the Great Courts entirely, but they are solidly in the minority.

Organization: The Gardeners organize into congregations of anywhere from three to six members. Lone members of the order occasionally take up residence on their own, but it is the exception, rather than the rule. Every member of a given congregation will have similar political and social views — when differences arise, the dissenting member will usually leave rather than stay to create trouble in the ranks.

As long as they are able to work closely with one another, the order will pick a single neighborhood or similar area, and work to transform it into a place that will attract the sort of people that they want to see more of. This is not something that is done lightly, however. The order will meet, and will hash out exactly what they are looking for in their new protectorate, how they intend to go about getting it, and what possible problems might arise. Having done so, they will divide their tasks appropriately before they take the step of actually swearing to make the location a place worth living in. They will also keep track of previous hallowed gardens, just to make sure that nothing is backsliding without their influence.

Usually, after a few areas are established, the Gardeners find that it takes more time than they have to both keep areas as they want them and establish new ones. At that time, they meet to decide whether to cut a few areas loose, trusting that they can grow and change on their own, or whether to stop forming new havens. Different groups make different choices on that front — some will end their patterns of growth for years at a time, while others will abandon havens as soon as they seem to be more or less stable. Usually, the order will keep watch over one or two stable areas, and let the rest grow as they will.

There is some communication between different branches of the order, but not extensive cooperation. Because individual congregations often have very different viewpoints on what constitutes a secure location, their ability to make large-scale changes tends to be limited, and there are no formal gatherings of Gardeners from different locales. Instead, they simply keep in touch as much as they want to, devolving into a sort of cell formation where each group of Gardeners is highly organized amongst themselves, but have essentially no oversight from one another. Of course, this also means that there's no one to step in if a congregation turns dangerous, which has been rumoured to happen, but the order as a whole tends to feel they're above that sort of problem.

Privileges

The subtle powers that flow through the Gardeners grant them the ability to attune themselves to a particular area while they work to revitalize it. This capability is detailed below:

Oath Of The Hallowed Ground

The character pledges to care for and shape an area, and the region itself hears her calls. This functions as a special pledge that is sworn upon whatever the character chooses, which must be renewed each month. The character promises not to abandon the region, and will spend time every day looking in on it and working to make it a place she cares for. In exchange, the region promises to help her.

The character must define what she wants the area to be. An area can be any neighbourhood with an area not exceeding either a radius of (Character's Wyrd x 200) yards, or a population of (Character's Wyrd x 1,000) people. The definition can be anything that can be summed up in a single sentence, such as "artist's haven", "street free from crime", or "business district". Whenever someone within the area is not aligned with its principles, they feel faintly uncomfortable. Characters must make a Resolve + Composure roll. If he is not opposed to the principles of the region, but his presence doesn't support it (such as a businessman staying at an artist's haven without wanting to sponsor the arts), he gains three bonus dice, while if he or his goals are directly opposed to the principles, he gains no bonus. If he succeeds at the roll, he may remain for a number of days equal to the successes rolled. If he fails, he may spend one Willpower at the end of the scene to remain for another scene and make a new roll. Supernatural creatures of any sort gain three bonus dice to this roll, regardless of purpose.

On the other hand, people whose desires are in alignment with the area find it calling to them. While present in the region, they gain a +1 die environmental bonus on rolls also in direct alignment with the area's goals. Furthermore, the feeling of security that the area gives them is subtly addictive. As long as the area remains pledged, anyone who is aligned with it and spends at least a full day there must make a Resolve + Composure roll every week or else return, for a period of at least a few hours. Most of those who find the area will come back more often than that, and will flourish there.

A character may only swear a pledge to one region at a time. If she forsakes her pledge by not caring for the area, it turns against her. The purpose of the region changes to "make the character's life miserable", and all of its effects change to support that purpose. The area will change into one where those friendly to the character feel unwelcome, and the things she hates most in life take root and flourish. This antagonistic region remains in place for three months.

Tales of the Garden

The origins of the order as a tool of the True Fae, along with their hardline attitude towards those who second-guess them, leads some changelings to distrust them and refuse to take them at their word. Rumours often swirl around the Gardeners, wondering what they might be keeping secret this time.

• When someone starts causing particular trouble for a domain, the order is not above using immoral or flatly illegal methods to remove them. Mortals who have tried to interfere in the societies that the order builds have been known to vanish, never seen again. Whispers abound that the order's more fanatical members kill such problem-people — or even sell them to hobgoblins in exchange for help in other areas.

• In the fateful battle that founded the order, one of the Gentry's slaves did not revolt. He escaped the death of his former master, and formed his own Entitlement with other loyalists — one that seeks to reproduce the effect their master worked towards. These dark Gardeners are not always recognizable as different from their counterparts, but the two groups have been fighting a shadowy war for centuries.

• Occasionally, the Gardeners will gather to create traps — by forming areas that are safe for a group that they hate or are opposed to. After some time has passed, and only those they hate remain, they spring the trap, letting their oaths to the region lapse upon expiry to remove the benefits from which the newly-assembled miscreants were benefiting, and then entering the area to end them. There have been stories of dangerous gatherings of hobgoblins wiped out in this manner, after careful planning with the Summer Court.

The Pilgrims of the Endless Road

I will kneel at the altar of my own weakness no longer.

Nearly everyone, if asked, will claim they want to change, to give up their failings and to improve themselves. Most of those people are lying. Change is terrifying, and a person's weaknesses and foibles are as much a part of them, treasured and held close, as their strengths. Faced with the potential for self-improvement, they fear the possibility of failure, and thus never try to begin with. Others take their first steps down those pathways, only to find them too difficult, the price for their change too high. Most find a place where they are comfortable, where they can find a simple balance between strength and ease.

The Pilgrims of the Endless Road are not those people. As far as they are concerned, the journey of self-improvement is the most important journey that a person can take. Changing politics, changing the world, none of these things matter if you do not first master yourself, because the weak can only create further weakness, and the world is full of weak people. As far as the Pilgrims are concerned, very few people have the raw strength of will to understand the need for constant growth, to never become complacent or content with what you have made of yourself. For those few, however, the Pilgrims wait with open arms.

The Pilgrims hold to a philosophy of self-control and striving, a nearly-religious devotion to their ideals that admits no weakness. As far as they are concerned, no one should stop trying to improve themselves until they are perfect, and since perfection is unattainable, the process of self-improvement is an endless road. To walk the Road, as they put it, is to train the body and mind, to study the mysteries of magic to fine-tune them, to dedicate yourself to your own achievement. There are those who consider it a selfish philosophy, because it prizes self-improvement, and disdains asking for help and those who can't keep up. As far as the Pilgrims are concerned, however, it is a simple logic. Everyone should work to improve themselves. Anyone who can't doesn't deserve to have the world handed to them on a silver platter.

Of course, there are those who are intimidated, or even outright frightened, by what the Pilgrims represent. Envious of their capabilities, they think that there must be hidden shortcuts or dark secrets that mask their intent. The Pilgrims laugh at these people, but they aren't surprised. Such whispered stories are only more proof that the masses aren't able to reach for what they think they deserve.

This mixture of intense self-focus and indifference to the beliefs of others leaves the Pilgrims without much of the political power that comes with many Entitlements. Where others provide great power or vast connections, the Pilgrims provide little more than a way to focus themselves and to find others that they understand. This is as they like it, however. One of the core tenets of the Endless Road is that one must choose to walk it; with no desire to gain large numbers of converts or to change the world, political power is nothing but a diversion from the Endless Road.

Titles: Brother or Sister

Prerequisites: No Attribute at 1, Resolve 3, Wyrd 3

Joining: Becoming a Pilgrim is not an easy task. The Entitlement demands absolute dedication from its would-be members, and rarely offers membership directly. More commonly, someone who is impressed by the demonstrated abilities of an existing Pilgrim seeks to join the order, and existing Pilgrims must decide if they are worthy.

The first stage in proving yourself to a Pilgrim is to demonstrate that you are not a slave to your weaknesses. Anyone who displays physical addictions, mental obsessions, or similar failings must overcome and abandon them to even be considered for membership. Pilgrims will carefully study their prospective members, and any lies about one's weaknesses are considered to be a serious failing in and of themselves.

If someone is considered worthy of testing, the Pilgrims advance to the second stage, in which they put their prospec-

tive newcomer through an astonishing array of tests, challenges, and hardships to determine their strengths and weaknesses. This covers everything from trial by combat or complex riddles to spending five days without sleeping or swimming across a lake. They do stay on hand to make sure their attempted recruit is never seriously hurt, and passing every test is by no means required – everyone has weaknesses, after all, and these tests serve as much to find areas where the new recruit will have to train as to find their strengths.

Once the tests are complete, the final trial is put into place. As a rule, this involves forcing the new recruit to train and focus on one area of their talents where they are seriously lacking; they can train however they like, with whomever they like, and have a month to focus and dedicate themselves to improving. At the end of that time, a challenge based around their former weakness is put before them, and they must pass it to advance. Those who fail the test are sent away. If they wish to reapply, they may do so in two years' time, at which point a new series of tests will be undergone and a new challenge will be issued.

Those who are accepted are sworn in during a simple ceremony, by the Pilgrims who trained and tested them originally. New members of the order swear never to let their dedication lapse, and take on the features and traits of the Pilgrims as they symbolically cast off their old weaknesses.

Mien: The physical sign of the Pilgrims is perfection; in a way, that is often subtly off-putting. A proper Pilgrim has no hairs out of place, no stubble unevenly directed across the skin. Their hands don't develop calluses and their legs are never too hairy — everything is symmetrical, just developed enough without being ostentatious. Buttons never hang loosely on their shirts and loose threads never dangle from their sweaters. This perfection doesn't make them look more attractive, however — with most people, in fact, it is faintly disturbing, as though they are just a little too perfect to be real.

Pilgrims have no particular preference when it comes to clothing, aside from a tendency towards the functional — tight collars or long dresses are much less common than comfortable and effective clothing for whatever purposes the Pilgrims want. They often prefer simpler clothes, but this is far from a uniform choice on the order's part.

Background: There are a thousand ways to walk the Endless Road, and the Pilgrims come from every walk of life and every area of focus. However, some things can be said as generalizations about the order. For one, Pilgrims draw from those who believe firmly in the ideals of the Road; lip service to the principles of the Entitlement are not sufficient for entry into the order, nor would someone who managed to make that modicum of effort be satisfied with the position in which she found herself. On the other hand, most of those who will become walkers of the Endless Road have a firm belief in their own superiority that only a few recognize as another failing to work to overcome.

Because the nature of the Endless Road is to overcome one's weaknesses and confront one's fears, the majority of its seasonal Court followers hail from the Autumn Court. Its principles of understanding and control resonate well with the concepts that the Pilgrims advance. The other Courts usually find their own emotions get in the way of the Endless Road's beliefs, and only a few ever seek it out.

There are many pathways to the Endless Road, however, and Pilgrims are as varied in their abilities as in their outlooks. Strong focus on Resistance traits is common, with an emphasis on enduring hardships over bypassing them being common. They also tend to spread out their traits, having several rated at 2 to 4, instead of spending the time required to specialize an Attribute or Skill up to 5. A similar approach is taken to Contracts, with most Pilgrims learning low-level Clauses from a half-dozen sources instead of focusing in one area to the detriment of another. Because Pilgrims are focused on personal growth instead of material gain, they usually have Physical and Mental Merits, rather than Social ones.

Focus on Wyrd tends to run in one of two directions. Some Pilgrims consider Wyrd to be a measure of their personal might, and try to increase it as much as possible. However, most see the weaknesses that appear as Wyrd grows, and are wary of exposing themselves to new risks and problems, regardless of the benefits they might gain. Because of this, it is very rare to see a Pilgrim with a Wyrd rating above 5 — those who do generally raise it as far as they can, as quickly as they can.

Organization: Most of the time, the Pilgrims have no organization to speak of. Their philosophy is an intensely personal one, and their lack of interest in the political sphere as a group prevents them from gathering to use whatever clout they might have gained. Furthermore, there is no need for Pilgrims to gather to accomplish their purpose, and thus it is uncommon for more than a few of them to appear in any given freehold.

At the same time, however, there is a deeply spiritual aspect to their quest, one that any Pilgrim will say is not understood by most of those who surround them. Because of this, the Pilgrims keep in touch with each other. They pass on names and abilities, gossip about new recruits or failed tests, and come to visit one another from one freehold to another. When a Pilgrim indentifies a weakness in herself and seeks to overcome it, the most common trainer she will seek out is another Pilgrim. Similarly, when she is approached by a potential recruit, she will refer him to whatever one of her Brothers or Sisters she feels will best train him, rather than simply trying to do so herself.

In particular, the Pilgrims have yearly gatherings, where every Pilgrim in a region will come together to discuss their progress, what they have learned, and what they seek to advance. They strive against and encourage each other — after all, competition is among the most effective ways to improve. These gatherings will typically hold a dozen or more Pilgrims, from hundreds or even thousands of miles away. These gatherings rotate from freehold to freehold, always in a new place to prevent stasis from setting in, and the exact date varies from year to year. Individual Pilgrims will often go to different meetings in different years, to meet new followers of the Path and learn new ways to approach their endless quest.

Ultimately, however, the Pilgrims remain solitary people by nature, able to converse with each other but equally comfortable spending time training or researching alone. Despite their gatherings and conversations, they keep to themselves, and trust that others won't waste their time with trivialities when important matters wait to be attended to.

Privileges

The Pilgrims of the Endless Road, upon joining the order, gain access to the support of their colleagues if they choose to seek it out, and most develop low-level Allies or Contacts with their fellow Pilgrims. In addition, the final ordeal and oath of admittance that each Pilgrim swears reshapes her body or mind, granting them the following benefit.

The Perfected Body

Upon becoming a Pilgrim, a member of the Endless Road must choose a second kith blessing, which may not be from the same seeming of which the character is a member. As a rule, pilgrims always develop new kiths that balance out their former flaws, especially those that they had to face as part of their final ordeal. For example, a Pilgrim who has focused on physical perfection and who had to train herself to memorize lengthy passages to enter the order may find that her mind sharpens, granting her the Antiquarian or Oracle blessing, while a Pilgrim who has focused on her social capabilities and had to endure punishing pain to enter the order will develop the power of a Broadback or the resilience of a Stonebones.

A character's second kith will affect her mien, but never to the same degree as her primary kith. If the Storyteller is using any of the optional rules for blended kiths from Winter Masques or Rites of Spring, the kith granted by the Perfected Body does not count towards any maximums imposed by these rules.

Tales Of The Endless Road

Endless devotion to self-improvement, and disdain for the foibles of others, leaves the Pilgrims an ominous figure to many, and stories about their true purpose abound among those who have heard of them.

• Many of the Pilgrims come to consider humanity itself to be a weakness. They have decided that the Gentry are demonstrably powerful, far more so than mere Lost, and that they should strive to become like them. They are not loyalists, because no Gentry would subordinate themselves to another, but they are something far more dangerous, because they seek to cast off their empathy and mortality to become monstrous gods.

• The Pilgrims, in their endless quests, have uncovered tokens and Hedge fruits that allow them to transcend their mortal limits, becoming ageless and immortal. They keep their newfound powers a secret, leaving their old lives behind as people start to wonder why they aren't aging, and only allowing the elder members of the order the benefits of the secrets that they have discovered — after all, why give such gifts to those who would only waste them?

• Many of the Pilgrims are willing to go several steps past simple self-improvement in their quest for perfection. They kill Hedge Beasts, and use arcane magics to steal the creatures' power and add it to their own. Some people say they can even do this to changelings that the Pilgrims feel are wasting abilities that could be better used by others.

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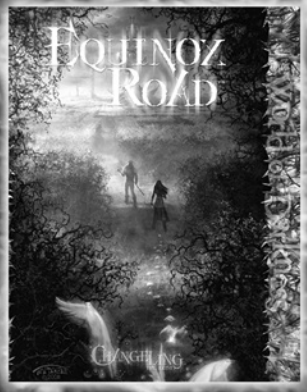

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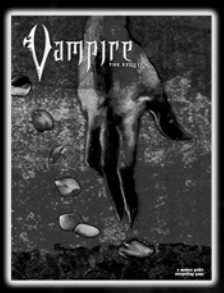

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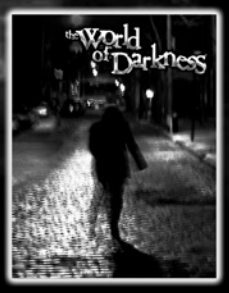

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