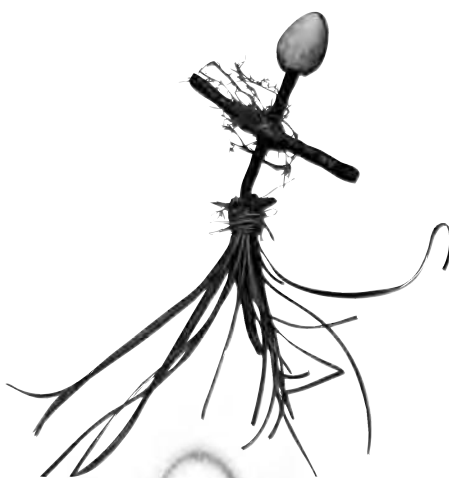


WORLD OF DARKNESS
Dark Ages
OFFERS



WORLD OF DARKNESS Dark Ages FAE™



By AARON DEMBSKI-BOWDEN, CARRIE ANN LEWIS, FORREST B. MARCHINGTON,
DEENA MCKINNEY, KRISTER M. MICHL, MATTHEW J. ROURKE, MALCOLM
SHEPPARD

VAMPIRE CREATED BY MARK REIN•HAGEN

Credits

Authors: Aaron Dembski-Bowden, Carrie Ann Lewis, Forrest B. Marchington, Deena McKinney, Krister M. Michl, Matthew J. Rourke, Malcolm Sheppard.

Vampire and the World of Darkness created by Mark Rein•Hagen

Storyteller game system designed by Mark Rein•Hagen.

Development and Additional Material: Matthew McFarland

Special Thanks: BEAU Brown, Michael A. Goodwin, Laura Kelley, Morgan A. McLaughlin, Jonathan L. Shepherd, Peter Woodworth.

Editor: Ellen P. Kiley

Art Direction, Layout & Typesetting: Becky Jollensten

Interior Art: David Day, Vince Locke, James Stowe, Timothy Truman, and Melissa Uran

Front & Back Cover Design: Becky Jollensten

Playtesters

Ryan's Group: Ryan Brandos, Jasmine Gribble, Robin Nair, Matthew Petosa.

Matt Rourke's Group: Jose Gonzalez, Matt Rourke, Stephanie Kostuk, James Fazzaro.

Krister's Group: Krister M. Michl, Daniel Byström, Robert Holmberg, Jonas Håkansson, Mattias Närvä, Björn-Egil Dahlberg, Mattias Renmark, David Bergkvist.

Pete's Group: Peter Woodworth, Andrew Scott, Alyson Gaul, Dan DiFlavis, Greg Curley, Meg Strittmatter, Tim Sullivan, Rich Brodsky, Fletcher Bennett.

BEAU's Group: BEAU Brown, Whitney Carnes, Jay Self, Jonathan Shepherd, Matt Nitchie.



1554 LITTON DR
STONE MOUNTAIN, GA
30083
USA

© 2004 White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews, and for blank character sheets, which may be reproduced for personal use only. White Wolf, Vampire, Vampire the Masquerade, Vampire the Dark Ages, Mage the Ascension, Hunter the Reckoning, World of Darkness and Aberrant are registered trademarks of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Werewolf the Apocalypse, Wraith the Oblivion, Changeling the Dreaming, Werewolf the Wild West, Mage the Sorcerers Crusade, Wraith the Great War, Trinity, Dark Ages Storytellers Companion, Dark Ages Vampire,

Dark Ages Fae, Dark Ages Mage, Dark Ages British Isles, Dark Ages Europe, Right of Princes, Spoils of War, Bitter Crusade, London by Night, Under the Black Cross, Cainite Heresy, Constantinople by Night, Jerusalem by Night, Libellus Sanguinis I Masters of the State, Libellus Sanguinis II Keepers of the Word, Libellus Sanguinis III Wolves at the Door, Libellus Sanguinis IV Thieves in the Night, The Ashen Knight, The Ashen Thief, Road of the Beast, Road of Kings, Road of Heaven, Road of Sin, Iberia by Night, Transylvania by Night, House of Tremere, Wolves of the Sea, Fountains of Bright Crimson, Wind from the East and Veil of Night are trademarks of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. All characters, names, places and text herein are copyrighted by White Wolf Publishing, Inc.

The mention of or reference to any company or product in these pages is not a challenge to the trademark or copyright concerned.

This book uses the supernatural for settings, characters and themes. All mystical and supernatural elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. This book contains mature content. Reader discretion is advised.

For a free White Wolf catalog call 1-800-454-WOLF.

Check out White Wolf online at

<http://www.white-wolf.com>; alt.games.whitewolf and rec.games.frp.storyteller

PRINTED IN CANADA.



DARKNESS Dark Ages FAE™

Table of Contents

PRELUDE: THE LOSS OF HADAN'S CREEK	4
INTRODUCTION	12
CHAPTER ONE: THE WORLD OF THE FAE	20
CHAPTER TWO: ORIGINS AND COURTS	54
CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTERS AND DRAMA	76
CHAPTER FOUR: DOMINIONS	116
CHAPTER FIVE: KINGDOMS AND QUESTS	164
CHAPTER SIX: STORYTELLING	192



Prelude:

The Loss of Hadan's Creek

The village of Hadan's Creek was silent and still as we approached under the light of the crescent moon. The cluster of farmhouses and stables looked almost empty; shutters locked tight against the incursion of the wind, doors barred shut to keep the night creatures at bay. Although the Town Road ran straight through the center of the tiny settlement, rutted and pocked from the passage of wagons and horsemen, no one stopped here, and the place was in a dismaying state of disrepair. There was nothing to see, no inn to offer a comfortable seat and mug of mulled wine to a weary traveler. The town seemed dead, but Garain had chosen it regardless, and nothing I could say would sway him. He strode purposefully and without discussion toward the small cluster of houses. A pair of horses in a nearby stable whickered nervously as we passed, but no one came to quiet them.

I had to try again. I knew it wouldn't do any good, but I had to try.

"Garain," I began, my voice pitched low so as not to awaken the farmers and their goodwives. His jaw set firmly at the sound of my voice, pale skin glinting like polished marble in the sharp moonlight. I held my hands up in a gesture of placation, sending my crown of leaves to rustling. I repeated his name, using the lulling monotone I often employed to soothe the forest creatures that came near my grove, and almost against his will his feet stopped. Still, he refused to turn to me, or to look me in the eye.

"I will do this, Thewlis," he said simply, and as always, the beauty of his voice was enough to bring tears to my eyes. The drops ran down my cheeks, staining them with sap, but I heeded them not. Garain and I had been constant companions since the days of our Fostering. Although I could never grow used to the Tear-Bringer's voice, I had grown to accept it.

I pushed on regardless, something that amazes me to recall. We willows are not known for obstinacy; that is a trait better suited to describing the oak or the evergreen. It is against my nature to push. It is a testimony, I believe, to the strength of my feelings that I pressed on despite the resistance that the firstborn had given me.

"Lyselle was tricked," I protested. "Bepheth lied to her."

"Lyselle is gone," snapped Garain, looking down at the bundle clasped closely in his arms.

"Yes, Garain, I know." I walked next to him and ran a hand down his back. He wore the armor I'd made him out of my own branches, and I could still feel the magic I'd bound into those loops of wood wrapped around him, protecting him. "She is gone, and no punishment to Bepheth or his kind will bring her back."

"Neither will mercy." His voice was death, winter, bleak days with no true sunshine. "I cannot take arms against Bepheth and the coward will not fight me. I have no recourse but this."

"But the truce will end soon—"

"Thewlts, I don't care!" In simple speech Garain could make a stone weep. In anger, the dim light fled from him and left the three of us in shadows. His arms tightened around the bundle in his arms possessively, and I knew immediately that I had pushed too far. Still, I pressed. I cannot explain why I did it; it was obvious that I could never win this argument. The only explanation I can offer is that I feared the humans and what they might do to a faerie-born more than I feared my friend's temper.

"This is not justice, Garain."

He looked up at me, and stood there a long moment before he turned his back on me, silent and stern. He paced to one farmhouse that stood set back from the road, as if seeking some small measure of isolation. A small earthenware bowl filled with fresh cream sat on the doorstep, but otherwise, it looked no different from the other human dwellings we had already passed. I watched him, and I felt strangely small, frighteningly alone. It must have shown on my face, because Elsabet crept up behind me and slid her small hand into mine. She gave me a comforting squeeze; I winced inwardly at the feeling of cracking bark and snapping twigs, but still, I embraced the comfort she was trying to offer. I wanted to accept it.

She turned her eyes up to meet mine; they glittered yellow in the dark, giving her an almost feral look that contrasted with the sweet, soothing smile she wore. "All will be well," she murmured. "Remember, I know."

Elsabet did not give me a chance to answer. Those yellow eyes fell upon the cream on the doorstep and she practically cooed with delight, scampering over to crouch in front of the bowl, picking it up and drinking hungrily. Garain looked down at her slight figure as he stood on the step; she offered him the bowl, but he ignored the gesture. To her credit, she did not take it personally, but then again, Elsabet has always been accepting of her fates. Once, I think the same might have been said of me.

Garain put his hand to the door and pushed, but it would not open. This was less than surprising; most mortals are so afraid of the dark that I imagine them sleeping with the covers pulled over their heads to shield them from whatever might be lurking about outside. His jaw set tighter, and he glanced down at Elsabet. She smiled, cream dripping from her teeth, and stroked the door as if tickling a cat. From inside, we heard the wooden bar move, and the door swung open silently.

Garain hesitated then, either out of a sudden reluctance to go through with his task, or a sense of revulsion for what he was about to do. Neither of us had ever spent much time around mortals; we had always kept ourselves cloaked in the Mists whenever possible. Now we were about to enter the home of a mortal family, and mortals are and have always been dirty, mewling little things. But Elsabet remembered well her time spent living in a mortal village, and she scampered through the door, turning back to us with her eyes like foxfire in the dark. Garain followed, and after a moment's reflection in which I tried to think of some reason to turn back, so did I.

We passed the mortals with barely a glance. The female shifted in her sleep and reached out to the wooden cradle that rested beside her pallet. I looked down at the human infant that slept peacefully within it, and I fought against the wave of revulsion that swept over me.

"We cannot do this," I hissed through clenched teeth. "You cannot leave her here. The child is one of us, and she shouldn't pay for her father's deeds."

"It is the only way," replied Garain. He looked down at the face of his enemy's infant daughter, cradled in his arms. "I cannot keep her and I will not return her. Elsabet, if you would please..." He gestured to the cradle, to the human within it.

Elsabet knelt swiftly and pulled the child from the cradle. The child let out a muffled cry before her yellow eyes caught the infant's gaze and held it transfixed. The mortal woman shifted in her sleep, able to hear her

child's whimper even if she could not hear our conversation. The changeling removed the woolen blanket swaddling the babe and exchanged it for the finer garment woven of silken thread that I had brought with me against my better judgment. Garain wrapped his enemy's daughter in the coarse blanket and placed her in the cradle, then quickly turned away. Elsabet turned to go with the mortal child in her arms, and Garain followed on her heels as fast as he could, clearly eager to leave; but I did not want to go. I wanted to stay, to watch over Bepheth's child, to make certain that no harm would befall it at the hands of such uneducated, filthy creatures. Bepheth was Garain's enemy and therefore mine; but his daughter was fae, and too young to be concerned with the war between the Courts. I wished I could pick her up, raise her myself, but what could I know of raising babies? Could I teach a child, even a firstborn, to drink in nourishment from the sun? Could I teach her the joy of drinking water through roots?

I could not, and I knew it, and I hated the honor that drove me from the cradle to follow the others. I wanted nothing more at that moment than to have been Sained into the Winter Court, so that honor meant nothing to me, so that I could kill the child rather than leave her here. Still, I knew full well that the Winter Folk never would have accepted me. Willows weep, after all.

When I stepped out of the farmhouse and onto the road, Elsabet was dancing across the dirt road outside with the bewildered infant clasped to her breast, and my lips quirked into a smile despite myself. She'd long wanted a child to raise but refused to mate with mortal men, even though she'd been raised by one herself. She stopped in front of me, panting and laughing.

"She needs a name, does she not, Thewlis?" she asked.

I nodded, but I had no suggestions.

Elsabet turned to Garain. "Sir," she asked respectfully, "what shall I name the child?"

"I care not," he replied gruffly. "The child is yours, to do with as you will. I shall Sain it when the time comes, as I promised, but otherwise I wish nothing to do with it." He turned and started down the road to our keep without the slightest backward glance.

"I shall name her Priscilla, then. I have always thought it was such a lovely name. Don't you, Thewlis?"

She smiled with such evident delight that I could not help but agree with her. Angry and frustrated as I was, I could not find it within myself to ruin her moment of pleasure; so I remained at her side while she chattered excitedly. Still, I kept my eyes always on Garain's back, wondering how many tears the Tear-Bringer himself had shed in grief for his dead love, in anger for his enemy.

Garain and I did not speak when we returned to his keep. I tried to seek him out, hoping that I might find the right words to change his mind, but he avoided me. Finally, I cornered him one evening as he sat by the fire in his chambers, fingers steepled as he stared into the flames.

"We need to talk," I said flatly.

He nodded.

"You do not understand why I made my choice," he ventured. I tried to hold in tears, and failed. He politely did not mention it. I sat across from him, as far from the flames as I could manage, always cautious not to singe my leaves.

"No, I don't." He said nothing. "I understand your hatred of Bepheth. I understand what he did to you, and to Lyselle. I understand why you had to seek other means of satisfying revenge, but to visit it upon a child—"

"Revenge is visited upon the father, not the child."

I blinked.

"I don't understand."

"No," he said gently. "Of course you don't. Allow me to explain, old friend. The Oath-Truce will be ending soon; this is no secret. And it is naïve to expect

such an event to pass without strife. I smell battle on the wind, and I fear we shall be swept up in it."

"I know all this," I replied impatiently, wiping the tears from my cheeks, shaking myself from the spell of his voice. "What does that have to do with Bepheth's daughter?"

"I will reclaim her when she is old enough to understand, and to fight. Elisabet will train Priscilla from the cradle. When the Oath-Truce falls, we shall have two more changelings, able to walk among humans as skilled as any damned Autumn-kin, but Sated into our Court. The choice was clear, surely you can see that now."

"But—"

"And Bepheth will see his daughter wearing the Spring banner," he said harshly. "Our banner."

I nodded, slowly. The story of having two more changelings was a convenience, a way to save Garain from saying the truth — that all that mattered was Bepheth's face when he saw his firstborn daughter not only a changeling, but under Garain's command. I tried to imagine how I should feel about this, but the willow doesn't ask for revenge against the animals that eat its leaves or the birds that build nests in its branches. I considered very carefully what I could say to make Garain feel better about his choice, to help him accept what he had done.

"Can I at least watch over the child? May I have your permission to watch over her and keep her safe until you go to claim her? Allow me this, at least. Otherwise, she will be left alone with those..." I trailed off, unwilling to say it. To say it would make it real.

Reluctantly, he nodded, and I left the room before he could change his mind. I checked on her that night, and the night after that. Then, to my shame, I became engrossed in some work I was doing at my grove and the happenings at the keep, and I did not visit her for some time.

When I finally returned, she was already walking. The mortal caretakers that Garain had selected called her Bridget, and little Bridget was a curious lass, always getting herself into trouble. I watched her from the woods; she dashed for the horse trough the moment the mortal woman's back was turned, splashing in the water, making a mess of herself in the dirt road, and I laughed. Humans were amusing creatures.

Endearing, if I were to be honest.

I believe now that the mortal woman suspected something had happened to her daughter; she constantly gave Bridget sidelong glances and never let the girl out of her sight. She was often looking over her shoulder as she worked, and she had a furtive hunch to her posture as if she felt as if she was being watched. Actually, this was not far from the truth, because I was there more often than not. I had resolved not to let time get away from me once again; humans grow so much faster than trees or fae. So I watched and I waited for the day when she was old enough, when I could step out from the woods and see the recognition I knew would be in her face. Surely, Garain would want to be the one to approach her when the time came. I knew that full well; his honor would stand for nothing less. But I could not help imagining how it would be if I were the one to do it. How delightful it would be to hold her hand and to reacquaint her with all that she had lost.

I admit it now. I was obsessed. I sometimes stole into the room where she slept and watched her breathe. I even grew to accept the mortal man and woman who kept her safe and happy, although I still did not care for mortals much. Bridget was the center of my world, and I had only to watch her as she grew to womanhood. I looked forward to nothing so much as telling her the truth — that she was not human, but so much more.

And then they came to ruin it all. The priests in their stoles peering out of their carriage, claiming the empty fields for their Church. The mortals are cattle; they could do nothing against the likes of these. They

would not fight for the old ways, and even if they would, this enemy was beyond them. So I took my case before Garain, and his wrath matched my own. We blazed forth from the keep with all of the fae in tow, determined to rout the interlopers before they broke the few oaths we had left and cut the humans from the old ways forever. But, to our amazement, the crucifixes they had hung over the doors of the farmhouses burnt through our minds and caused our bones to twist — and this was nothing compared to the agony of walking onto the grounds they had selected for their church. We howled and ranted and tried to push through the agony, determined that we had never lost and would never lose, but lose we did. We returned to the keep, the builders continued to erect their church, and there was nothing we could do to stop them.

At the least, Garain and I resolved that Bridget should have nothing to do with this unnatural place, this twisted religion. Although she had not yet reached womanhood, she was very close to it, and we arranged that I would shelter and teach her until it was time for her Saining. Elsabet offered to assist me, and the thought of Priscilla and Bridget playing together pleased me. They were as sisters, after all.

That very night, we stole into the village once again, Garain and I. We asked Elsabet to accompany us, since she of all of the local fae understood the humans and their ways, and she might be helpful if we came across any problems. The idea that we might have trouble from mere humans was uncomfortable and strange, but Garain and I both agreed that there was too much at stake to be reckless. He had changed much since the churchmen came to Hadan's Creek. He had not been interested in hearing my stories about my frequent visits with Bridget — about the time when I was watching her splash about in the creek with friends, and she looked directly at me, hidden by the Mists though I was. She saw me that day. I know that she did, and I should have swept in then. I should have stolen her away before it was too late. But I did not. I did nothing.

We were confident that Bridget's mortal family, at the least, would still be true to the old ways. The lies of the Church would not sway them. They had held to the oaths more strongly than any of the other families in Hadan's Creek. Elsabet confided that she went to their doorstep in search of fresh cream and often found it. They of all people remembered us and kept faith, and we resolved that we would protect them, at least, as best we could. We even discussed moving them to another village, somewhere under our protection where they could avoid the churchmen and continue on in peace.

When we arrived, I was dismayed to see that there was no cream on the front step, but Elsabet reassured me that they were not obligated to feed us every night, and lately their offerings had been somewhat less frequent because they had a new baby in the house. I hadn't even noticed that the mortal woman was with child, so intent was I on watching Bridget.

We entered the house easily. This time, the door was not locked at all, and we entered without the need to call upon our Dominions. We walked past the mortals in their beds, past the cradle that had once held both Priscilla and Bridget and now held the newest babe, a boy child that murmured in his sleep when we passed him. Finally, we came to Bridget herself, tucked safely underneath a rough woolen blanket on a pallet. Her skin glowed in the moonlight, a testament to her faerie heritage for those who knew what to look for, and she was so beautiful that I forgot myself entirely. Before Garain could so much as say a word, I willed her to see me; I bent down to rest a hand on her shoulder and wake her, even though it was not my place to do so.

Touching her was agony. My bark skin crackled and burned, and my whole body shook uncontrollably. It was as painful as if I had walked onto those accursed church lands, but I could not take my hand away. But under the piercing ringing of my ears, I heard another sound, a high-pitched sound that rose higher and higher. When I finally pulled my hand away, I understood — Bridget was screaming.

She had her blanket pulled up in front of her like a shield, and she held out an object in front of her that glinted like a knife in the moonlight. A silver cross. Pain stabbed me in the head once again as she yelled at me.

"Monster!" she shrieked.

Her mortal caretakers were all rising from their beds, murmuring in anger and fear, and her shouts were loud enough to rouse the entire village. I didn't fear them, or so I told myself, but the thought of facing the priests with their magic water and their chants was too much for me. I retreated to the blissful darkness in the corner of the room, and I called down the Mists so that they could not see me.

Garain and Elsabet did not stay.
It was too painful to

reduced them to babes, weeping on the floor in the face of such beauty.

But as he inhaled to speak, one of the priests held up a small piece of bread and murmured something in a strange human tongue. And Garain's voice died in his throat. Armies had fallen before his songs, but one mortal priest with a piece of blessed bread had silenced the Tear-Bringer.

Elsabet took his hand and called down the Dominion of Dusk, and was away. I bore her no malice for leaving me behind; she knew I could escape just as easily. But I had more to do.

As I was leaving, I discarded the Mists for just one moment. I slammed a fist into the doorframe,

remain in
Bridget's presence,
or in the village at all.

They tried to cast out whatever unclean spirits the Church had placed in the villagers; at the least, they wanted save Bridget, but they could not do it. While they were trying, the priests appeared and began to scatter their magic water about the room, and it hissed and smoked so that Garain and Elsabet had no choice but to leave.

I watched as Garain the Tear-Bringer opened his mouth to speak, and I felt a surge of hope. Now, perhaps, these humans would learn respect for the fae, when his voice



yelling,
"Remember us!"

It was all I could think of to say. Garain would have made a better speech, and his voice wouldn't have sounded like cracking branches. But the words didn't matter. I Unleashed the Dawn as my hand struck the crafted wood of the farmhouse, and it blew apart, shattered into a million pieces, and the mortals, including Bridget, wept as they watched in fear.

We went back to the keep after that. There was nothing else to be done; Bridget was clearly lost to us, and my friends did not want to remain and see what the priests would do

with their water and crosses and chants. Garain locked himself in his chambers, but Elsabet sought me out. I had taken sanctuary in my grove, nursing my wounds among my willows where I felt safe once more, and she cooed over my blackened hand and the once silvery bark that had covered it. She could not do much for me, but it was enough to feel her touch and to see her yellow eyes crinkle at the corners as she smiled reassuringly at me.

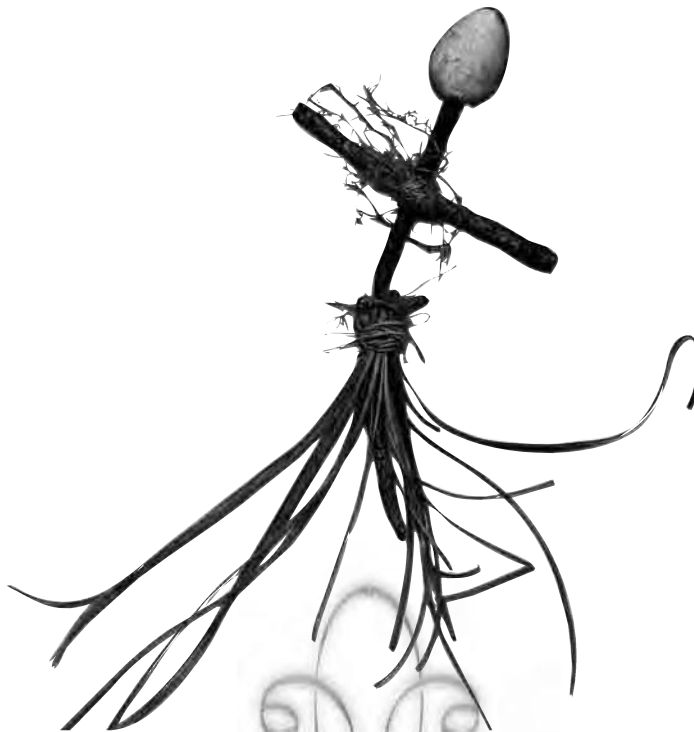
I spoke to Garain some time later. I thought of so many things to say to him. I wanted to tell him of the strange water-ceremony that the humans had performed on Bridget that had stripped her of her heritage entirely. I wanted to suggest that this revenge was better than any he had devised,

for now Bridget was not dead but lost completely. Bepeth could visit the village himself, if he were told where it was, and see what remained of his daughter. I wanted to tell Garain that he had won, after all and besides, Priscilla would still be Sained into our Court.

I was painfully aware how hollow and cruel all of this sounded. I said none of it. I said only that I was sorry. Garain nodded, and said nothing.

I have, in fact, not heard him utter a word since that night. He wears his armor as before, and prepares for the approaching war, but has not spoken or written of Bridget or Bepeth, or even Lyselle.

And with him silent, I have no cause to weep.





Michael looked around the wreckage of Constantinople, and wept.

Of course, the wreckage was gone. The fires had long since been extinguished, the dead buried, the rubble cleared away. Michael knew that, in human years, nearly a lifetime had passed. But through the Dominton of Dusk, the shadows of time, he saw the city burn, and he wept for all that was lost.

Faith, he thought. What preys on the human mind like faith? That acceptance of something they can never truly know — yet they cling to it like a babe to a teat.

Michael walked through the streets, sunlight playing on the bronze he wore. The humans didn't see him for what he was, which was just as well. If a prophet was unwelcome in his own country, then he, Michael Who is Like God, inheritor of the Creation of the World, would certainly be unwelcome here.

And yet... he saw his name in their minds. He had visited this city before, seen it change from Byzantium to Constantinople and knew that the name would change again, but the name *Michael* remained in their dreams. His Court held power over the thoughts and minds of others — but why that name, that icon, should resonate so clearly here, he could never fathom.

Michael rounded a corner and saw his goal, a tiny shrine to the Archangel who bore his name. Making these shrines wasn't a common practice yet, but if he had his way, it soon would be. He stopped in front of the shrine and drank in the love that had been put into it, saw the children whose hands had sculpted the tiny figures there. He reached down, brushed away the wooden trinkets, and picked up the most important thing there: a tiny piece of unworked bronze.

He ran it between his fingers, drawing strength from the oath, relishing the trust — the *faith* — that these mortals put in their Archangel. He tested the notion, once again, that he actually *was* the angelic Michael. After all, he had been a soldier, and the angel was supposed to have fought against God's enemies. Might these Christians simply be mis-remembering the War of Seasons? It wasn't so hard to accept; human minds were frail and cluttered.

He tucked the piece of bronze, no larger than a pea, into a pouch around his neck and walked off. He had never visited the Venetian quarter — had it even existed the last time he had been here? — but as the sun began to sink and the Dusk juncture began, he knew exactly which roads to take. He approached the house where Maria lived, the young girl taken from her native Venice and brought here, frightened and unsure, by her ambitious father.

Michael saw her outside her home, waiting for him. That was the oath — a piece of bronze for the touch of God. Michael could bestow that. He clasped his hands together just as humans did when praying and felt the magic of the Mists rise.

Maria would feel God's touch tonight, through Michael. *For who is like God*, the firstborn thought to himself?

I am.



INTRODUCTION

“And if the Devil — he’s your Puck —
Waved his claw to bring you luck
You’d get it then worse still.”
— Author unknown

Humanity fears the fae, and well it should.

Even the language betrays their fear. The word “faerie” comes from *Fata*, the name of the Roman goddess of fate. The word “fey” comes from a Middle English word meaning “fated to die.” Humanity sees, in the fae, an unpleasant and perhaps inevitable end.

Humans don’t understand the fae, of course. Every human culture has legends and folktales of monsters, goblins, spirits and beasts. Some of the creatures are considered helpful; the domovoi of Russia protect the houses in which they live. Others prey on humanity like the German erkling, which leads children to their deaths in the woods. Many such creatures are kind and cruel by turns, or are generally vicious but can be tricked or bested by the person who knows just how. In pre-Christian cultures, these creatures might have been servants to one god or another, or might have sprung forth from the land itself. Under the shadow of the Cross, of course, these beings are typically regarded as lesser imps and devils, servants of Satan, on Earth to plague humankind.

Humanity has no idea that these creatures actually share common origins and have a society older than any that humans have developed. While people might tell stories of battles between gods, monsters and spirits, they have no idea that these battles are but skirmishes in a war stretching back to the dawn of time (as humans understand it) — one that will continue until one side has triumphed and reclaimed the world.

• DARK AGES •
• FAE •



The Truth

The truth, according to the fae, is that they created the world and all life in it. They ruled the world for thousands of years, and it wasn't until four factions developed among them and then vied for control that they ever considered granting any sort of authority to the humans. Understanding how the fae could believe this in the Dark Medieval — when humans so clearly rule the world and everything in it — requires understanding of a few key facets of the fae psyche.

Mists and Weaving

These two concepts describe fae magic and its application in the world. For fae, however, “magic” isn't just a means to an end or a tool to achieve their desires. The faeries recognize that they are inherently magical beings, and that means that any time they work magic, they are inflicting *themselves* (not just their desires) upon the world. This doesn't always instill a sense of responsibility; indeed, the fae are capable of being just as capricious and reckless as humans when given power, if not more so.

Mists

The “Mists of Creation,” or simply “the Mists” is a catch-all term that the fae use much as a human would use “the Divine,” except that the fae don't ascribe any sort of drive or self-awareness to the Mists. The fae believe that everything — life, matter and spirit — formed from the Mists, and that they were the first self-aware creatures to be able to shape and control the power of the Mists. The fae recognize, somewhat sadly, that once something is formed from the Mists it can never be un-formed (else surely the fae would have broken the world down into its magical components and started all over again), but it can be changed with relative ease.

The Mists are chaotic and unpredictable; simply exposing a material object or being to the Mists might have any result: changing its shape, destroying it or leaving it completely unaffected. Speculating on such effects is generally academic anyway, as no pockets of pure Mists remain available to the fae (at least, none that are commonly known). The fae have a great deal of reverence for the Mists, but understand that although the Mists and the physical world remain separate, it is still possible to recede into the Mists, vanishing entirely. Some fae covet such a fate, stating that the only fae left on Earth mucking about with humans are the ones too stupid to figure out how to leave. These cynics aside, however, the fae have no reason to believe that any fae who fades away entirely remains "alive" (or even sentient).

The general consensus is that the Mists surround and empower the world with magic, but are inaccessible in their purest form. All fae, however, can channel the Mists to various effects, including powering their magical workings (called *cantrips*); cloaking themselves to avoid recognition by humans, or conversely allowing humans to perceive them even more clearly; and releasing their magic in a barely controlled but extremely powerful burst called an Unleashing. The fae known as the firstborn, who sprang fully formed from the Mists at the dawn of time, have superb control over Unleashed magic.

Weaving

Weaving can be considered the complement of the Mists; where the Mists are pure, chaotic power, Weaving is ordered application of that power. Thinking of the Mists as water, Weaving is a trough or funnel. Through the power of Weaving, fae are able to refine magic into cantrips, and control their Unleashings somewhat. In a less quantifiable sense, Weaving is what allows the fae to exist on Earth at all, and retain information, form and personality from one moment to the next.

Human beings, the fae admit, have mastered Weaving to a great extent, and continue to improve with each passing year. Their achievements in arts and architecture alone, not to mention war and agriculture, show an ability to take the materials the world has given them and weave them into more desirable results — results that even the most anti-human fae might envy. The fae also recognize that some humans can actually wield magic in a more literal sense; these spell-casters rarely work magic in the same ways as faeries, but the results can be just as devastating.

Many fae consider Weaving to be a necessary evil; they would rather simply direct the magic of the Mists without strictly controlling it, but it can be dangerous. Changelings, who are partially human, excel at Weaving.

Imbalance

All fae have a limited degree of control over both Mists and Weaving, chaos and order, magical potential and magical application. For an individual faerie, keeping both of these forces in balance is critical, however. If one overshadows the other, a fae can become Lost (an overabundance of Mists) or Locked (an overdependence on Weaving). Both of these states, if left unchecked, can spell the end of the fae, causing

him to either fade away from the world entirely or become so entrenched in the physical and predictable that he loses his connection to the Mists and becomes, for all practical purposes, human.

Time and Space

Fae recognize how time passes — hour, day, week, month, year, season and so on — but they have a relationship with time that greatly differs from the human perspective. Likewise, the fae understand that the world is larger than humanity understands, and that many "pockets" of space lie protected by the Mists and their fae masters.

Time

Fae don't age the way humans do; they reach adulthood and then live forever. Unlike vampires, who were born human and therefore don't have the mental capacity for immortality (which is why they go mad after a few centuries), fae avoid the mental ravages of time by not experiencing all of it. A fae might become involved in the day-to-day maintenance of her household and family, and scarcely notice that a century (or more) has passed. The reverse is also true; the fae might devote herself to learning a language or a new spell and toil for what she perceives as days, but then look up to discover that she has spent only moments at her studies.

This temporal distortion (although the fae insist that it is humans who truly suffer for their rigid attention to time) is one reason why a few horrifically powerful elders don't dominate fae society. While it is true that older fae tend to have greater command of their Dominions, younger fae can learn just as much in a short span of time, if they put their minds to it. A fae who has seen the passage of millennia of human time and another who has only recently left his Saining do not necessarily occupy vastly different strata of power. That said, age is still a measure of respect among the fae — it just isn't always an indicator of personal might.

Space

According to the fae, the world was once mostly a formless void, pocked by islands of stability where a given fae or court of fae held power. Over the years, this void was further and further defined, the Mists woven into land or sea, until finally there were no known un-Woven areas (that any fae knows of). The fae don't lament this, necessarily; a formless stretch of Mists doesn't do anyone any good, as no one can claim it or hold it. They do, however, regret that the human perspective of space seems so... limited. A fae stronghold might appear, on the outside, to be a large oak tree: Massive, to be sure, but nothing compared to a castle. Inside, however, the tree holds many rooms, with space enough to house a small army. The human mind can only barely grasp the possibilities of space, and so their dwellings are just as small on the inside as on the outside.

Fae realms dot the land, however. Humans can be invited or even stumble accidentally into them, but usually walk right by the gateways without recognizing them (or, if they do recognize them, usually crossing themselves and walking

quickly in the other direction). While many fae realms are found in forests, deserts, swamps and other areas that humans don't often venture, some gateways to fae lands can be found in the hearts of human cities. In particular, every bridge in the world, from an ornately carved stone edifice to a log set across a stream, contains a gateway to the darkened realm of Underbridge.

On the rare occasions that fae must explain their strange relationship with space to humans, they usually state that if a human could unfocus his eyes and look a bit beside and a bit around normal space, he would be able to enter faerie realms, walk upon the pathways reserved for the fae (called *trods*) and vanish in a blink of an eye, just as the fae can. The fae then express their relief that humans *can't* accomplish this; they've overstepped their boundaries quite enough already.

Oaths and Echoes

Humans have power over magic, even if they don't know it. When a human agrees to be part of an oath with the fae, they are agreeing to part of the magic of the Mists. By placing their faith in other forms of magic, humans enable ordinary items such as salt, bells and bread to harm the fae.

Oaths

The first oaths were sworn as the fae went to war and left the world in the care of humanity, or so the histories say. Those first oaths were with entire nations and cultures, giving rise to traditions and customs (and sometimes even laws) practiced down through ages. When a family sets a bowl of cream out for the house spirits, they are honoring an oath that their ancestors swore centuries ago, and the fae still reap the benefits.

But no oath is one-sided. Humans always receive some benefit from their part of an oath, although they rarely remember the particulars. A certain community might know to always leave some sea-wrack for the faeries, but they don't know that the faeries shield their community from the worst of the storms blowing in off the ocean. Unfortunately, many of the oldest oaths have long since slipped the memories of the humans, and those that still honor them do so out of habit rather than true dedication to their forebears' promises. This makes the oaths that much easier to break if they become inconvenient.

Fae can still forge new oaths, but not on the same scale they once did. Now, a faerie can swear an oath with an individual human or a small group, promising her power, favors or simply protection in exchange for a simple service. Some clever fae manage to swear oaths that lock humans into service or provide other benefits, but the main purpose of fulfilling oaths is one of self-preservation. Only through oaths can fae find protection from Echoes.

Echoes

Echoes are possibly the most pressing concern of any fae in the Dark Medieval. An Echo is a remedy or proscription that humans can wield against the fae. Some of them are actually the product of oaths: A fae might have sworn in centuries past

not to harm anyone wearing his shirt inside out, and that badge of protection now might actually force the faerie away. Some are folk remedies that humans have discovered over the years; iron and salt commonly repulse the fae, for reasons no faerie can fully fathom. But the greatest source of Echoes is the Church. Many fae, when faced with a cross, a church bell or a whispered prayer, shriek in pain and flee... or worse.

Echoes vary from faerie to faerie; just because one fae finds salt distasteful doesn't mean another, even of the same Court, will. This, in part, gives rise to the variety of legends concerning fae creatures and the great number of supposed proscriptions against them. Fae are advised not to grow too overconfident, however; all fae can gain new Echoes. All that is required is for a human to understand that he sees one of the fae. When a human knows what he beholds, he can inadvertently give the fae a new weakness.

Oaths can shield fae from Echoes. An oath gives a faerie a place within the human world, and so the methods of driving away other-worldly creatures don't work on fae under such protection. But once an oath is broken — no matter how terrible the punishment exacted, no matter who breaks it — it is gone, and will never shield the fae again. Even fae who hate humanity cultivate and nurture their oaths carefully. No fae wishes to turn to stone when faced with a cross.

Theme and Mood

While many of the themes and moods listed in **Dark Ages: Vampire** work well for **Dark Ages: Fae**, the game carries its own themes and moods as well.

Themes

- **Wonder:** The fae world is immense; it contains everything the human world does and then some. A cave might lead to a stone hall filled with the remains of a once-mighty ruler's court, if only the faerie knows how to knock. Great creatures lie sleeping beneath the earth or in the sea, and some fae know the secrets of calling these creatures up. Nothing about the fae world is predictable; even their magic often takes on a life of its own. The fae are constantly searching for information about themselves, about their society and what it has lost, and that leads directly into the next theme.

- **Reclamation:** The fae have been fighting against each other for millennia; and during the time between the last major battle (roughly AD 340) and an event that refocused their attention on the human world (AD 1130), they knew little but preparing for further internal conflicts and rebuilding their own populations. Many of their greatest secrets were lost, and so investigators, adventurers and explorers of all Courts seek to reclaim what it means to be a changeling or an *inanimae*, what it means to serve one of the Courts — what it means, even, to be a faerie.

- **Fate:** The fae prepare to return to war; and although some few of them believe that doing so will spell the doom of the entire race, they accept that the War of Seasons *will* recommence. The fae's relationship with time means that they

have a better understanding of what will happen in the future, even if they can't predict it consciously. A fae doomed to die in battle understands it, but cannot change it, because that would change what he already knows to be true. Put another way, the fae know the future as it will be, not as it might be, and so do not speak of it openly (those fae who do make predictions of the future discover that the future has a way of changing once it is named; the fae respect this, as they change in much the same way).

Moods

• **Anxiety:** The current mood of fae society is tense. The War of Seasons was a cold war, at best, for almost 800 years; the official state of truce has held for the past century. In AD 1230, the truce will fall and no fae is sure what to expect next. Will armies take the field again? How can the fae go to war, now that humanity covers so much of the world? Will the next wars be fought *against* humanity? The Courts teeter on the brink of war, and the fae are certain that death and horror lie ahead. But even the most militant of the fae know that the rules have changed, because humanity has changed them. That fact is probably the most frightening at all.

Chapter by Chapter

Dark Ages: Fae assumes that you have access to **Dark Ages: Vampire** or the core rules packet available at <http://www.white-wolf.com>. The basic rules for the game are not printed in this book. Everything else that you need to play **Dark Ages: Fae**, however, can be found in the following chapters:

The **Prelude** tells the story of three Spring Court fae who go out among the humans and learn, to their dismay, how much has changed over the long years.

Chapter One: The World of the Fae explains the current state of fae society and how it reached that state.

Chapter Two: Origins and Courts presents information on the three Origins from which all fae spring and the Four Courts that they may join, as well as information on the outcast Solstice fae.

Chapter Three: Characters and Drama details character creation for **Dark Ages: Fae**: new Backgrounds, Abilities, Merits and Flaws; system information on Mists and Weaving; and instructions on building a fae's oaths, Echoes and fae mien.

Chapter Four: Dominions puts forth complete information on faerie magic, including example cantrips and information on Unleashing.

Chapter Five: Kingdoms and Quests includes faerie creatures, lost strongholds and some of the most notable fae in existence.

Chapter Six: Storytelling helps the Storyteller design **Dark Ages: Fae** chronicles, and includes two ready-to-play stories for your enjoyment.

Sources

Looking for source material on "faeries" can have mixed results, but the following books and films should

HUMANITY AND THE FAE

The fae pre-date humanity. The inanimae and the firstborn were never human. How, then, can you portray such a character in a roleplaying game?

The fact is that humans rule the planet. When the fae began their War of Seasons, they gave humanity the right to define the world as they saw fit, confident that when the War was over, the winners could simply take back this control from humanity at large. Whether or not this would actually be possible is something of a moot point at present; no Court is anywhere close to winning the war, and the humans have defined the planet so thoroughly that to exist in the human world, the fae must actually make some concessions to those definitions. This means, at a very simplistic level, taking on humanoid forms and engaging in activities such as breathing and eating, succumbing to gravity, and other things that humans long ago decided would be best for the world but now take for granted.

Leaving any discussion of fae needing to conform to human laws of reality aside, the fae are always inexorably drawn to humans. Firstborn find humanity's command of its world fascinating; giving humans the decision to maintain themselves through eating and breathing was one thing, but the firstborn never expected such magnificence as stone circles, let alone cathedrals. The forms, shapes and uses to which humans put the components of the inanimae intrigues spirits of the elements (some find this shaping offensive, of course). Changelings, naturally, are part human, and cannot ever escape the world of their birth. No matter how much the fae might rave about their hatred (or hunger) for humans, and no matter how true those ravings might be, the fae cannot escape humanity.

provide some inspiration for players and Storytellers of **Dark Ages: Fae**.

Books

Checking any bookstore will yield a wealth of books on faeries, medieval superstition, strange creatures and, of course, history. The following are just a few of the books the authors of **Dark Ages: Fae** found useful.

A History of Pagan Europe, by Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick. A survey of the pagan beliefs of Europe from Cretan bull worship to modern Wicca. Beyond this it has an impressive bibliography — 11 full pages worth! — filled with texts regarding legends, myths, folklore and history.

The Encyclopedia of Superstitions, edited by Christina Hole. An alphabetical listing of superstitions and old wives' tales. A good resource for oaths or Echoes to ward away the fae. Some of it's fun, some of it's disturbing, but all of it is interesting.

Stardust, by Neil Gaiman. Child's rhymes have power, mighty fae rulers poison and murder each other for inheritance, and one lone changeling blunders his way through it all chasing a falling star. You could do worse for inspira-

tion than this book. An earlier Gaiman novel, *Neverwhere*, is also well worth the read despite its modern setting.

Films

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*. The books, of course, go into an amazing amount of detail about Middle Earth and its inhabitants, and are well worth the read. The films, however, enable the viewer to see the battles between man and orc; ent and orc; elf, man and orc; and so on. The War of Seasons, with perhaps a bit more obvious magic, might look a lot like this.

Labyrinth. Out of period and a bit more benign than most of the fae in this game, it's worth noting that any of the characters in this film are possible beginning **Dark Ages: Fae** characters.

Willow. Having the biggest army in the world doesn't much matter if a fae witch can turn all your soldiers into pigs with one *Unleashing*. A good movie to showcase the raw power of the fae as well as being an all-around good time.

Website

<http://www.pantheon.org>. An absolutely indispensable resource for running any game concerning faerie creatures and gods.

Lexicon

Agenda: A broad term for a fae's political or social goals. The common agendas are: Constantinian, Humanist, Militant and Truce-Bearer. The Patrons are also considered an agenda, but are actually an organized faction rather than a general philosophy.

Cantrip: A specific magical application of a *Dominion*.

Changeling: A faerie/human hybrid. Changelings are created when firstborn babies are swapped for human children (this actually results in two changelings, as both babies grow up part-human) or when humans spend long periods of time in fae realms and learn to wield the *Dominions*.

Court: One of the four seasonal factions of fae. Court influences a fae's ideology, social upbringing, magic and *mien*.

Dominion: One of four spheres of magic allowing control over a particular set of associations. The *Dominions* are: Dawn, Day, Dusk and Night.

Features: Facets of a fae's *mien*. Some of these (Lesser Features) are purely cosmetic, while others (Greater Features) also have game system effects.

Firstborn: A "true fae." The firstborn sprang from the Mists of Creation in the distant past. New firstborn are either the children of other firstborn, or *sprites* changed into fae by powerful *cantrips*.

Fostering: The period of time in a fae's life before the *Saining* wherein the fae is taught about fae society and history, and instructed in her *Dominions*.

Fostering tongue: The language taught to all fae during the first part of their *Fostering*. All fae speak the *Fostering tongue*, but most only use it when conversing in one of the *Courtly languages* isn't possible.

Inanimae: A fae of the natural world. Inanimae usually spontaneously spring from natural phenomena corresponding to one of the five elements (air, earth, fire, water or wood). Inanimae of the same element can also breed to produce young, although the notion usually repulses them.

Locked: A state in which *Weaving* grows too dominant; the fae becomes incapable of *Unleashing* and grows obsessed with order and routine.

Lost: A state in which the *Mists* grow too dominant; the fae becomes incapable of casting *cantrips* and grows obsessed with chaos.

Mien: A fae's true, faerie form, in which her *Features* are visible.

Mists: The magical energy of Creation. Fae use the *Mists* to perform their magic, as well as hide themselves from mortals.

Oath-Truce: An agreement between the Four Courts to suspend hostility for one hundred years. This agreement began in AD 1130 and therefore will fall sometime in AD 1230.

Oathcircle: A group of fae bonded for a common purpose. The circle might form for military or exploratory purposes, or for simple companionship.

Origin: One of three "races" of fae: *inanimae*, *changelings*, and *firstborn*.

Patrons: A faction of fae that wishes to reinstate seasonal rule, with each Court ruling during its given season and turning over power at the end of that time.

Saining: The process of being inducted into one of the Four Courts. The *Saining* consists of three steps: the *Cleansing*, wherein the fae lives for three seasons adhering to his Court's ideals; the *Naming*, wherein the fae receives his *Courtly name*; and the *Acceptance*, wherein the fae completes his training and is formally accepted into the Court.

Solstice fae: Fae who were never given the chance to *Sain* into a *Court*; refused that chance; were exiled from their Courts; or whose ritemasters botched their *Naming* ceremonies. Solstice fae are outcasts and considered scum, but they find work as couriers and mercenaries. Also known as *Disgraced fae*.

Sprite: A minor fae spirit, usually bound in service to a more powerful fae. Sprites come in all shapes and sizes; one might look like a cloud of butterflies while another resembles a tiny blue flame or ball of light. Sprites can become *firstborn* if they grow powerful enough.

Weaving: The force of order in fae magic, which allows them to take the magic of the *Dominions* and channel them into *cantrips*.

Unleashing: The act of releasing the magic of the *Dominions* without channeling it into a *cantrip* but simply trying to guide it into a desirable outcome. Always very obvious, and dangerous if allowed to run wild.



Muriel stood outside the door and frowned.

The wind grew in intensity. It was a fallacy to say that Muriel controlled the wind, loved the wind or even spawned the wind, for Muriel *was* the wind. She preferred, however, to specify herself even further. After all, a wind could aid humanity by blowing its sails or cooling a hot day. Muriel was the wind beneath the door in the winter, the wind that howled for blood and souls during storms.

And Muriel was growing angry.

The gates to this fortress had remained shut for a long time, even by fae standards. Judging from the amount of progress the wind had made in pushing up snow drifts and dissolving away the stone and metal of the doors, Muriel guessed that these gates had stood shut since before the Battle of Stone. Supposedly, the fae ruler who lived here had seen that battle coming, and had ranted about “a day of slaughter” and “a time of fear and cowardice.” The time after the Battle of Stone, Muriel reflected as she stroked the keyhole, certainly qualified.

But it wasn’t for either of those predictions that she had sought him out. Those things had come to pass, obviously, and that he had predicted them was nothing more than an interesting distraction. Many fae could see the future in a limited capacity, though Muriel had no such curse herself. This fae ruler had apparently made one other prediction before Unleashing his power over the landscape, calling down snow, ice and stone to seal off his lands. He had also raved about a human king wringing fae blood from a white cloth, and this Muriel and the rest of the Patrons found very interesting.

Muriel had already attempted several different cantrips on the door, but it wasn’t moving. Time or magic, one or the other had made it impossible — but nothing kept the wind out forever. Muriel shut her eyes and joined the song of the wind, and slid under the door in a frigid gust. She reformed her body on the other side, and marveled at what she beheld.

It was a palace of stone and crystal, a true paradise for the Winter-kin. Muriel looked up and saw that humans hung from the ceiling encased in sheaths of ice, their faces serene and passive, waiting for someone to partake of the ruler’s hospitality. How long had they hung there, she wondered? Since before the Battle of Stone? Impossible — that was nearly nine centuries of human time. But how had they arrived here?

“Underbridge,” said a voice as if in response.

Muriel started. The ruler, taller than her but thin and gray, stood before her.

“Underbridge,” he repeated. “The humans fell from bridges, or crept beneath them to rot, and stepped out here.”

Muriel glanced around the palace, but saw no bridges. “I’m not unfamiliar with Underbridge, sir,” she said, “but I see no gates to that place here.”

The ruler seemed not to have heard. “They step out from under bridges,” he said absently, “and never leave.”

The wind in an instant shook her head. “You are Lost,” she said, and the snowflakes on the ground began to swirl. “I cannot cure you, but neither can I let this magnificent palace remain in the hands of a weakling like yourself.”

If the ruler heard and understood, he did not show it. *Just as well*, thought Muriel, as she called up her coldest winds. *This way, I can call it mercy. That should please the weaker of the Patrons.*



CHAPTER ONE: THE WORLD OF THE FAE

So very difficult a matter is it to trace
and find out the truth of anything by history.

— Plutarch

Every land has curious tales about creatures mercurial and supernatural. Those creatures have many different titles among many different peoples, and legends ascribe myriad capabilities, whims and proclivities to them. In some places, these beings are called “the Good Folk” or “the Fair Folk,” not because people believe these creatures *are* good or fair, but because an unkind word spoken about them might bring down disaster and ruin upon a family.

People tell all sorts of tales about where these creatures come from. Human myth has it that some of these beings spring fully formed from the world around them; creatures such as dryads and undines appear from trees and pools, spontaneously rising from the natural world. Others don’t even bear that much resemblance to anything humans can understand — these faeries take on human forms when dealing with humans, but in their own lands, only God knows what they might resemble. The most terrifying of all the Fair Folk, though, are the changelings; fae children left in place of abducted infants to be raised by unwitting people. Anyone, then, could be fae-touched.

• DARK AGES •
• FAE •



Origin and Court

Human legend is correct on a number of points, but humans are ill-equipped to understand the fae for what they truly are. Even the fae's methods of creating more of their kind are often strange and alien from a human perspective.

Origins

Fae hail from three different Origins. Firstborn fae are creatures of pure magic. They are either children of other firstborn, or the result of minor fae spirits gaining enough power and control over their magic to take an active role in the human world.

Inanimae are fae spirits of nature, appearing spontaneously from the intersection of the Mists and the natural world.

Finally, changelings are fae and human hybrids. Some are children of humans and firstborn, but most changelings are firstborn children swapped for human infants. Both the fae child and the abducted human baby may grow up to be changelings.

Courts

In AD 1230 (as humans reckon time) the fae are poised on the brink of war, as a century-long truce is about to end. This war — the War of Seasons — raged for thousands of years, culminating in the terrible Battle of Stone in the fourth century AD (the history of the War of Seasons is examined in more detail later in this chapter).

The Four Courts of the fae each control strongholds across Europe, but during the Oath-Truce some of these strongholds have opened their doors to fae of all Courts — or, conversely, become isolationist to the point of excluding any faerie who cannot quickly prove her allegiance.

The Courts of the fae correspond to the seasons of the year.

Spring Court

The Spring fae embrace change in all forms, watching life progress over the seasons and reveling in all of its myriad

variations (including the many different ways it can end). They have lost many of their greatest holdings from centuries past, but of all the Courts, they are most adept at finding new homes and adapting to new surroundings.

Summer Court

The Summer Court prides itself on adherence to tradition and structure, and harsh observance of discipline. Summer fae are stern but fair masters, and their love of traditions means that they have retained many treasures and strongholds from ages past.

Autumn Court

Fascinated with humanity, even more than most fae, the Autumn-kin are contemplative and clever. Swearing an oath with an Autumn fae is much like making a deal with the Devil — enticing, empowering and often deadly in the final analysis. The Autumn fae look at humans and their faith with wonder and ambition, and they of all faeries know that the next phase in the War of Seasons depends entirely on dealing with humanity.

Winter Court

The most brutal of all the fae, the Winter-kin lurk under bridges and in dark forests. While they are vicious warriors, most of them are not looking forward to the end of the Oath-Truce with any degree of enthusiasm. Organized war isn't much to their liking, but preying on humanity, the thrill of nighttime hunts, the taste of blood and fear — these things are very much to their tastes. It is only the notion of plunging the world into a dark, savage night that spurs them to participate in the War at all.

The Three Steps of the Saining Path

Entering a Court isn't a matter of birth. Fae are, according to custom, allowed to choose their Courts, or at least to apply to join any Court that they feel suits them. In practice, this choice has only become an issue since the Battle of Stone. Before that time, a fae who wished to join a Court other than the one she was raised by was shamed, or in the case of the Winter or Summer Court, killed outright. It was, and is, possible to fail in the process of joining a Court and become a Courtless outcast, known as a Solstice fae. Every so often, in fact, a faerie refuses to join a Court, deliberately becoming one of the Solstice-kin. Most fae, however, undergo the Saining ritual and join one of the Seasonal Courts.

Over the course of one year, as the human world measures such things, the fae goes through the Saining under the guidance of a ritemaster. Before this, the fae is called a "Fosterling," and while technically belonging to no Court, she is under the protection of whatever Court rules the household in which she grew up (see Chapter Three for more information on the Fostering). The three steps of the Saining Path are not only unique to each Court, but each ritual itself is an individual

THE SIGN

The fae are aware that the Oath-Truce will end at some point in the human year AD 1230. Over the century since the treaty was forged, however, the exact details of the Oath-Truce's end have decayed into rumor and speculation. Consequently, each of the Courts has a near-myth regarding the actual event that will signal the end of the 100-year treaty.

The Summer Court holds to a tale that the sun will die for a short time, blanketing the world in darkness at a time of day when the Summer fae's magic should be at its strongest. For these fae, it is a time to prepare for the recommencement of the War of Seasons.

The Winter-kin speak of the "quiet sky," when night shall impose upon the brightness of day, and their Court's members will ravage the land around their hallowed grounds in a frenzy of gluttony and bloodlust.

The Spring fae believe the signal will be an event known as the Great Change, when the cycle of day and night are disrupted by an unprecedented shift in the balance of light and darkness. The Great Change is not only a sign for the resumption of conflict, but a signal that time is running out to repair the relationship between the human and fae realms.

The Autumn Court prepares for the Shadow Hour, where the human realm will be darkened in the shade of a second sun. This "black sun" will appear for a short time in the daylight sky, in direct opposition to the true sun, before disappearing once again.

process that stands alone from any detailed comparisons. Through the year-long rite, the three steps form the core of the aspirant's progress toward Saining, but as many permutations exist as do fae themselves.

The Cleansing

The first step of the Saining process is actually the longest and most arduous. Despite a fae's eagerness to join the ranks of her chosen Court, the actual process of doing so can be disheartening and difficult. The Cleansing takes place when the fae has petitioned the Court she wishes to join, and those in authority are considering the aspirant.

Those who hold the right of decision weigh many factors when considering supplicants. Even trivial considerations such as bearing and attitude might be judged by some Saining ritemasters, although the significant insight of the Cleansing is into the truths that lie within a fae's heart and soul. Each Court naturally seeks different qualities, from aspects such as charm, memory and quick-wittedness for the Autumn Court, to charisma, parentage and honor for the more traditional Summer Court. Magical potential and ability, linguistic skills, human lore, battle prowess — any and all of these might be important to the Court in question, depending on local factors.

The Cleansing is the means by which all of a fae's previous crimes and other social errors (if any) are removed from her honor. These past mistakes are difficult to gauge in themselves, for the Winter Court's idea of a crime or faux pas will not match the Spring or Summer ideas at all. In this regard, it is left to the individual ritemaster to perform a minor ceremony at the beginning of the Cleansing, where the aspirant confesses to any acts she wishes to lift from her conscience or reputation. Any such confession is not private, and the admitted acts are spoken to the local domain at large, so all might know the aspirant is ready to cast her old life behind her and be Sained into a new one.

The aspirant prepares for entrance into the hallowed ranks of the Court of her choice, and is no longer considered among the less-respected members of society. Once a fae begins her Saining, she is considered pardoned from any responsibilities (even crimes) from her previous "life," as she steps closer to the fae's concept of adulthood. To be Sained into a Court is not simply to adopt one Court's ideology as her own, it is also a spiritual and symbolic rejection of the three others.

For three seasons, traditionally the three seasons that represent the three Courts the fae is rejecting, the aspirant lives her life strictly according the codes of her Court and any conditions the local lords have placed upon her. Take for example a fae who aspires to join the Winter Court. Her Cleansing involves living according to the ways of the Winter Court through the seasons of spring, summer and autumn, doing her utmost to maintain what would be expected of her if she were a full Court member in truth. This might involve looking into forging new (albeit rela-

THE CONFESSION

Confessions depend entirely on both the aspirant's Courtly ambitions and her own personality. Winter Cleansings might involve long dirges in memory of friends that could have been saved from the Inquisition's torches, or a short tirade against the local Spring fae, ending with a mocking apology that the aspirant has not gotten round to killing them all yet. Summer and Autumn confessions might involve apologies to political or social rivals in the domain, usually for plots and plans that were discovered in their implementation. A Spring aspirant's confession would more likely involve seeking absolution for previous events where the aspirant dealt foolishly with humanity in some way.

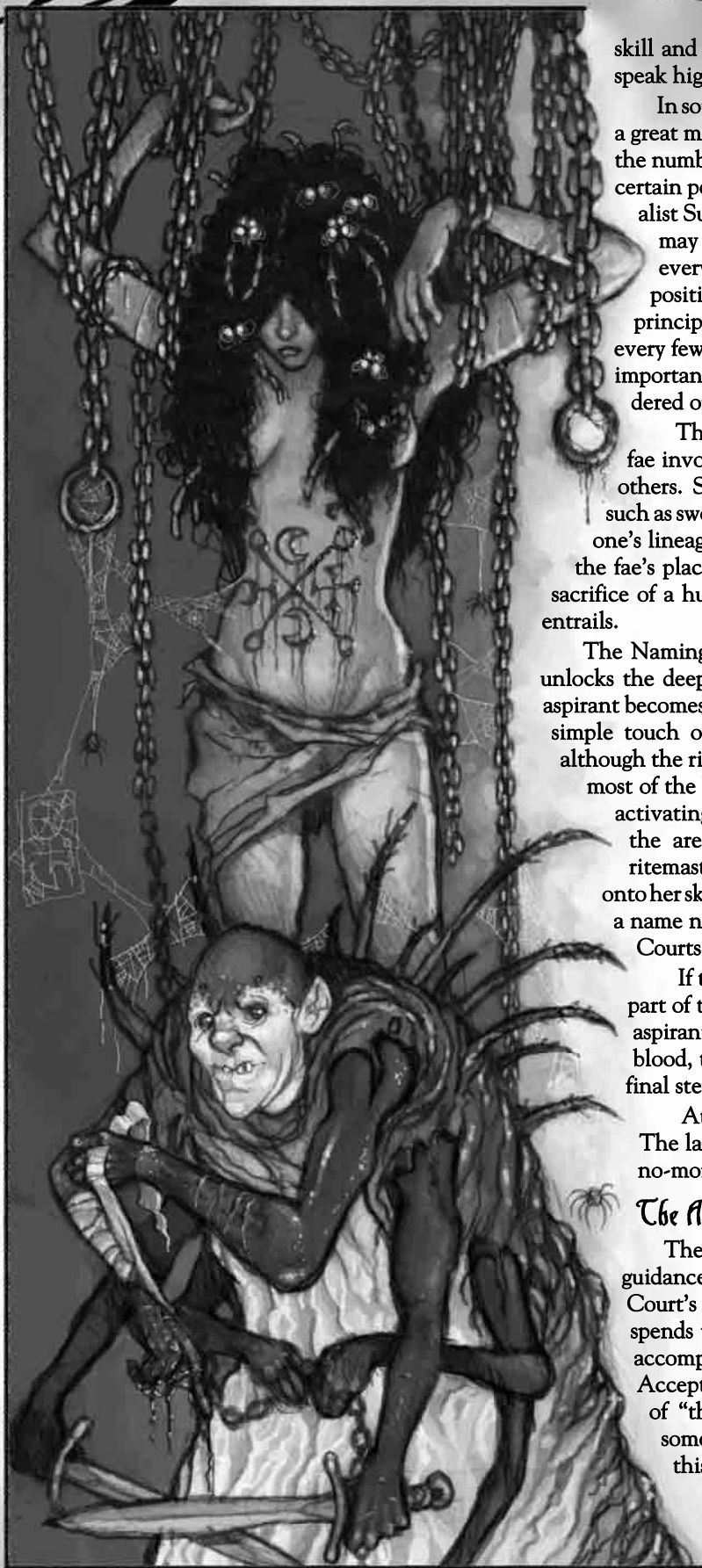
The driving force behind the Cleansing is that an aspirant can confess and seek forgiveness for every minor event on her conscience, or she can merely shrug and mockingly ignore the whole opportunity. Smart aspirants usually seek a balance between these two extremes, admitting to childish acts of spite or foolishness, and any more recent acts of laziness, malice or betrayal. Since the entire point is to be forgiven for these acts, most fae are not shy in admitting them.

tively minor) oaths that will be of use to her after the Saining, working on ways and methods to strengthen the Court's influence in either realm, and any other number of subtle ways to further her Court's agenda. These actions are colored by the local fae's wishes, of course. If the aforementioned aspirant is petitioning the Winter Court in a stronghold predominantly controlled by Militants, her assigned tasks will be very different than in a stronghold run by Humanists.

Throughout the Cleansing, the aspirant is never alone in her travels and dedicated efforts. A ritemaster is assigned to the fae, acting as a mentor and guide from the Court in question. The relationship between ritemaster and aspirant is usually very emotional, for the former is helping to shape the latter's spiritual destiny. Many of these relationships carry on throughout the faeries' lives, frequently in the form of a shared love, trusting friendship — or in some cases, as bitter enemies.

The Naming

The true heart of the Saining comes after the Cleansing. At this stage, the ritemaster has met with the local Court lord, and acknowledged the aspirant as a worthy addition to the ranks of the Season. Personal relations between the ritemaster and the aspirant are supposed to be irrelevant, but biases and grudges do exist. Ideally, no matter what the ritemaster may personally feel toward his student, if the aspirant has truly walked the first step with



skill and dedication, then the mentor is honor-bound to speak highly of his ward.

In some local courts, tradition states that there must be a great many ritemasters, for many lords impose a limit on the number of aspirants a fae can Sain into a Court over a certain period of time. In some of the staunchly traditionalist Summer holdings, this can even mean a ritemaster may only have one aspirant Sained into his Court every few hundred years. Obviously, this is an extreme position to adopt; but many holdings operate on the principle that a ritemaster is only allowed to Sain a fae every few decades at most. The rite is a sacred act, and its importance can never be overstated, nor its value squandered on any cheap and worthless "mass recruitment."

The Naming ritual itself is deeply personal to the two fae involved, and the details are very rarely shared with others. Some are relatively simple and straightforward, such as swearing oaths to the Court in question and reciting one's lineage and details of bloodline, or a meditation upon the fae's place in the world. Others might involve the ritual sacrifice of a human and the divination of the future from the entrails.

The Naming lasts for but a short time, but the ritual itself unlocks the deep magical potential within a fae's soul, and the aspirant becomes one with the powers of the Court. Sometimes, a simple touch or magical word Sains the fae into the Court, although the rite certainly does not end there. It is common for most of the Naming time to be spent in furious Unleashing, activating and expending magical energy on everything in the area. As the fae collapses from exhaustion, the ritemaster blesses the aspirant with a mystic sigil painted onto her skin. This symbol represents the fae's Courtly name, a name never shared with members of the other Seasonal Courts.

If the ritemaster does not use his own blood for this part of the rite, the Saining fails completely. Should the aspirant be blessed by a name-symbol with the ritemaster's blood, then the Naming is complete, and the third and final step is all that remains.

At this point, the fae is now a member of the Court. The last step of the Saining path requires the aspirant-no-more to prove that she is a *worthy* member.

The Acceptance

The final season of the year is spent without the guidance of the ritemaster. For the last season — the Court's favored time of year — the newly Sained fae spends time with the other members of the local court, accompanying them on tasks, missions and errands. The Acceptance is sometimes known by the derogatory term of "the Apprenticeship," representing the fact that some fae are merely exploited as cheap labor during this period.

In truth, the Acceptance is supposed to reflect the coming of age, status and power at the end of the Saining. It is often a chance to study under many Court masters and nobles, assisting them in their respective efforts and both learning valuable lessons and making valuable contacts for the future. In reality, rumors abound of newly Sained fae being set tasks that are essentially suicide missions, or running near-fatal errands at the bequest of one of their “tutors.”

It is considered the height of weakness to complain about any treatment received during the Acceptance. After all, the period is supposed to represent a newfound maturity and responsibility. Likewise, the fae is ritually bound not to share a single word with her ritemaster for the three months of the third step. This is a traditional declaration of independence and maturity, and displays to the rest of the Court that the fae has learned her lessons well, and needs no more heavy-handed instruction. It is significant that the Patrons are infamous for ignoring this tradition of the Acceptance. They claim to have documents and writings that tell of the ancient times, when the forced ignorance of the ritemaster was unheard of. As it stands currently, the tradition of silence binds the Courts, for it is a powerful assertion of independence and many elders approve of it greatly.

After the Acceptance months, the fae meets with her ritemaster once more, this time before any fae of the local court who have been invited to witness the end of the Saining. Here, the ritemaster intones the particular local holding’s seal of acceptance — usually a single sentence — and the Sained fae swears allegiance to her Court with the ritual reply.

The Saining is then over. Some fae retreat for personal time at this point, with loved ones or simply introspective meditation, while just as many throw outrageous parties that might even catch the attention of any nearby human settlements. Tales of the “music of the Fair Folk” heard in the deep forests may well stem from overhearing a raucous Saining celebration. Of course, it’s just as likely that sinister stories of murdered farmers and stolen livestock have their origins in the same celebrations.

Friction and Fractures

In this time of change (forced change, no less), the relative stasis of fae society is breaking apart at the seams. Exultant battle-cries unheard since the last major engagement in the War of Seasons — the Battle of Stone more than 800 years ago — echo in the minds of those who work within the Seasonal Courts. Soon, those cries will hail from their lips as conflict breaks out once more, and the Courts contend for rulership of the world once again.

Other groups among fae society have a stake in the way the world will turn in these tense nights, however. Some are mere cults and coterie of likeminded fae who either hold no faith that the War of Seasons can end satisfactorily, or,

more likely, that any potential ending of the conflict will not suit their own interests. Other groups of gathered fae simply believe that the resumption of the War is a huge step backwards — that the state of the human realm and its recent changes must be addressed first and foremost, before any vague concerns of ownership and a triumph that may never occur.

Some fae refuse to join a Court, giving up the support and tutelage they might otherwise enjoy simply in order to show their distaste for the upcoming conflict. After all, some say, the War of Seasons quieted after the Battle of Stone, when the Courts nearly annihilated one another. What’s to say that this will not happen once again? These gatherings of fae are usually more than eager to hire other Solstice-kin, specifically soldiers, and send them to infringe upon a particular Court’s efforts in the preparation for war. They reason that once another deadlock is clearly inevitable, the Four Courts will sit down and batter out terms of a new treaty — a *lasting* treaty, to replace the expired Oath-Truce.

Some rare fae believe the human realm should remain exactly that: a human realm. Some of these are the rebellious folk who maintain that the humans have progressed beyond the need for the fae. They advocate complete withdrawal, simply because the War of Seasons has no basis — the fae as a whole have already lost the world. Others insist, from an extreme standpoint, that the humans should be left to their own destinies without interference from their once-masters.

These last opinions are not, on the whole, particularly popular. By and large, fae society is gearing up for a war — *the war* — and by magic, blood and blade, the other factions will be brought to heel, and the victors will retake what was once theirs.

At least, so goes the traditional mantra of the Courts.


And yet, they are not the only factions who have ideas for the fate of both worlds.

Agendas

Through the traditions of the Saining, the Courts assure tight loyalties and kinship in their ranks; but fae society holds many levels of ideology and conviction. From political or rebellious organizations such as the Patrons or the Coterie of Drail, to the more populous, loosely defined and accepted agendas, the fae are a race with a fluid and complicated social arena. The agendas represent varied attitudes or alternate systems of belief regarding the current state of both fae society and relations with the human realm. It is with these alliances and divisions that the fae enter their war once more.

Militants

A great many fae are eager for the Oath-Truce to end so they can return to the engagements of the War of Seasons. The driving emotions and loyalty inspired from



being Sained into a Court are fierce and are difficult to lay aside over any matter. Almost every member of the Four Courts truly believes that his way of life is the true way, be it in the form of a better world for all, or simply that the strongest deserves to rule.

Accordingly, the resumption of the fae's war is not something that strikes dread in the hearts of many of the factionalized fae. In fact, quite the opposite — it is the end of a too-long delay, a signal that the battles to decide the fate of the world can finally begin.

Militants emerge from every Court, although the Summer Court cradles the most Militants among their number and the Autumn Court the least. The Winter and Spring Courts, though they lack the same enthusiasm for world rule that the Summer fae display, do not want for reasons to commit troops to the front when the War of Seasons begins anew.

Humanists

The Humanist faction is not what one might expect from a casual reading of the name. Rather than a faction that advocates kindness and tolerance when dealing with the human realm, it embraces an ethic that is primarily concerned with *understanding* humanity.

First, with the emergence of several human faiths and rituals that actively repel the fae — especially the Christian practice of baptism — even many changelings admit that they no longer understand humanity the way they used to. Times have changed, and left the fae by the wayside. The humans now have numbers and power beyond what the fae themselves possess. This is a sudden and extremely sobering realization. The Humanists believe that this is the time to gather information about humans, treat with them, forge new oaths, and in all ways seek a balance between the two races before it's too late. This faction is well aware that in time, it's likely that the fae will simply become irrelevant to humans, which is a factor never even previously considered. Accordingly, while most fae are Humanist to one degree or another, members of this faction significantly populate the Spring and Autumn Courts.

Many Humanists wish for a solution that will resolve the matter in their favor — what can humans do for the fae? But ultimately, the Humanists wish to achieve a level of co-dependency with humans, where the fae are acknowledged once more, and either valued and respected... or simply valued and feared.

Truce-Bearers

"Truce-Bearer" is the term applied to those fae who seek to end the War of Seasons, either by extending the Oath-Truce indefinitely, or forging a new, lasting treaty that will cease hostilities between the Courts.

Many of this faction adopt an air of disinterest in the human realm. They see their own society as infinitely more important, and in immediate need of attention, than the

world of mortals. Other fae, over the course of the 800 years since the Battle of Stone (and especially during the 100 years of the Oath-Truce) have forged close alliances and friendships with members of rival Courts, and are less than eager to take the field against these new comrades.

Finally, some fae don't care if the Courts return to war; they would just rather they themselves didn't have to join in the conflict. Many of these advocate a return to the Homeland — or keeping out of the way of humanity at the very least.

Truce-Bearers of all Courts tend to be isolated individuals or small groups of fae who fervently work in the social arena to sway the local courts towards peace. Unsurprisingly, they are rarely successful, but this only serves to stoke the fires in their hearts. Peace, no matter the price, is their calling.

Constantinians

Fae who sought to understand the details of human faith were always seen as pursuing a fairly useless path of scholarship — until now. The Constantinians have enjoyed a vast increase in membership during the years of the Oath-Truce. Named after Emperor Constantine I, these fae seek to know more of the human religions, especially the Christian Church, and are interested in doing so for potentially any number of reasons.

As a whole, the fae's reaction to the Church is generally an uneasy balance of fear and awe. Constantinians take this attitude and combine it with their desire to learn more of the mysteries of human faith. Some members of this agenda feel respect for humanity's beliefs and the power they now wield because of them, but just as many Constantinians feel hatred, revulsion and even jealousy.

Those who follow this path of research and deduction tend to do so for one of two main reasons: to understand the phenomenon of faith and find a way to balance it with the fae's place in the world; or to seek any weakness in humanity's new power, and find a way to exploit it. The greatest threat posed to the fae is the practice of baptism, and the ritual is accorded a great deal of attention and study by those with a Constantinian agenda. The powers of faith that can physically repel the fae are also heavily researched — these are worrying and dangerous new developments that need to be understood.

The Autumn and Winter Courts have Constantinians among them, although most of these fae tend to use their knowledge of the Church for their own advantages (and to humanity's detriment). The Spring Court boasts the largest proportion of those fae who seek to understand the Church for the betterment and balance of both worlds.

The Patron Council

The agendas listed above are general ideologies rather than organized groups; a fae student of politics might describe an individual or even a household as being

“staunchly Militant” or “having Constantinian leanings,” but no fae goes to Truce-Bearer rallies or wears a Humanist badge on his shirt. The Patron Council, however, is an organized body and has a distinct goal for the fae as a race.

The Patron Council (more commonly referred to as “the Patrons”) is a loose alliance of traditionalist fae. “Traditionalist” in this sense refers to a point of history before the War of Seasons, when each Court held rule over the world for an allotted time. The leading Court would hand the reins of power to the next Court when its agreed-upon tenure ended (this process is examined more closely in the history section at the end of this chapter).

The Patrons occupy the position that the War of Seasons is, at best, counterproductive to the fae’s actual interests, and at worst it is an act of complete folly that will lose them the chance to retake the human realm from those they once left to guard it. As with all political organizations, especially those with a creed of supposed idealism, a variety of layers and levels of interest and intrigue comprise the group that is collectively known as the Patron Council.

The Seekers

The core faction is referred to as the Seekers. They are the heart of the Patrons, those fae who hold closest to the old legends of the “shared rulership” system of council. With a liberal view of each Origin, and a membership drawn almost equally from all three, these fae truly believe in the ideological ramifications that shared rule might bring. The Seekers are comprised mainly of scholarly, hidebound fae, and as such have a relatively low-key presence in the public eye. This is the faction of the Patron Council that delves deeply into the tomes of old legends and sends out searchers on the trail of even the vaguest rumor of historical faerie lore. Lost artifacts, fragile manuscripts that speak of the past age, even weapons and items of ancient craft — these are all clues to the ways of the past, and are invaluable to the Seekers’ cause.

The Seekers founded the Patron Council, and continue to work within the ever-expanding web of Patron influence, holding fast to their ideals of a better, equal fae society. Of course, it’s fiction to insist that every Seeker believes that a peaceful resolution must be achieved by peaceful means. While the archetypal Seeker is sequestered in her private stronghold, eternally searching through ancient and once-lost lore, a significant number of this faction are fond of working through other, more directly inclined intermediaries, covertly hiring Solstice mercenaries (through an untraceable trail, of course) to hunt down the truth behind any rumors of lost historical knowledge, or even leading a gathering of mixed-Court fae themselves on such a quest.

It is this much-desired historical lore that serves as the primary reason the Patrons are frequently seen as traitors or dangerous renegades. The fact remains that, despite all the

MISGUIDED FAITH

The fact that the Patrons as a whole (and specifically the Seekers) propose that the Courts share rulership is tantamount to heresy in the minds of many fae. Simply explaining the equality of the shared council situation is all fine and good in a democratically inclined society. In the context of the War of Seasons, however, what the Patrons are suggesting is little different from suggesting to the Christians that Muhammad was actually God’s most beloved prophet, and Jesus was a little drunk on his own importance.

hinting evidence of the mysteries of the past, the majority of fae very much want their own Court to emerge as the victor of the War of Seasons, and the ultimate ruler of both worlds.

Being Sained into a Court means devoting one’s life, existence and soul to an ideal. Shaping a fae’s beliefs to the tenets of this ideal is the natural step to being Sained, followed by, in turn, allowing the ideal to shape their magical and spiritual growth. It stands to reason that such a commitment is only made upon the gravest consideration and the most earnest of desires. Consequently, those fae Sained into a Court — most of fae society — are reluctant to even consider the triumph of another Court as any kind of tolerable event.

The Seekers, as the Patrons’ core, are spreading an ideal that is not only unappealing to a majority of the fae, it is seen as absolute insanity. Worse still, it advocates total *surrender*. Every Court, in the build-up to the renewed declaration of the War of Seasons, believes that it has the potential for ultimate victory. This being the case, why then would any potentially triumphant faction accede to sharing the spoils of such a bitter and hard-fought conflict? The War of Seasons is not a political standoff that occasionally falls into the realm of blade and blood — it’s an epic struggle among world-shaping ideologies that has raged from the beginning of recorded history, and has run the gamut of conflict from hidden intrigues and assassinations to outright war between tens of thousands of fae warriors.

It is easy to understand why the Courts are reluctant to admit that generations of war have been a waste of time and lives, and that their agendas for a perfect world aren’t as important as they believe.

The Seekers, and the lore they uncover, argue this fact explicitly and with convincing substantiation. Hence, the Court elders act with expected determination to stamp out any of this “evidence” before it reaches the ears of too many fae. Ironically, this stifling of dissent gives weight to the Seekers’ claims and drives more young fae into the Patron faction. Still, popular opinion is against the Patrons, despite their steadily climbing influence.

The Vanguard

The Vanguard are the Patrons. At least, they are what the overwhelming majority of fae think of when the Patrons are mentioned. The Vanguard occupies a unique role in the Patron Council, in that its members are the public face of the organization. Rather than a formal and united group, the Vanguard is generally just those fae who vocally and visibly extort the Patrons' virtues and support its cause. Most of the politicians, diplomats, advisors and other social stars of the Patron Council are grouped under the term Vanguard, used without affection by everyone outside of this "faction within a faction." Needless to say, the members of this faction are a diverse breed with as many differing ideologies and agendas as there are fae themselves. Rather than a cohesive collection of fae who agree on the true past of the race, an overwhelming majority of the Vanguard are simply in the game of politics for one thing and one thing alone.

Power.

Proponents of any cause tend to attract attention, and from there it's often a simple step to turn fame (or notoriety) to an advantage. While the Patrons' claims are seen as quirky or downright foolish to many fae, a significant minority are still ready to accept that the War of Seasons is a failure for a variety of reasons, and that a new world order isn't such a terrible option. However, the true lore-masters and historians (the true *idealists*) among the Patron Council are usually found among the reclusive Seekers. The Vanguard, housing those fae who spend their time cultivating political reputations and playing the endless game of social one-upmanship, tends to be somewhat less well-researched.

Essentially, many of this faction are no more than hollow endorsers of the Patrons' ideology — fae who merely use the name of the cause to further their own agendas. It's a sad fact, for the Patron Council at least, that their most famous and influential movers and shakers are more often than not those who secretly hold the least respect for the old ways, and care nothing for the Patrons' true cause.

The Austere Conclave

The Austere Conclave does not exist. Unlike the Seekers, who are hidden by virtue of the delicacy of their task, the Austere Conclave is shielded from the public eye because its members actively desire it that way.

For the Patrons as a whole, the Austere Conclave is dangerous, unpredictable, unreliable, destabilizing... and extremely useful. It is the source of many of the ugly rumors regarding the Patrons — tales of assassinations, ambushes, intercepted couriers, leaked communications between allied courts — all of this and more. When a fae whispers to her friends that the Patrons killed Lady Davina for whatever reason, she is usually unknowingly referring to the unsanctioned actions of the Austere Conclave.

The Conclave's actions create a negative reputation that the majority of the Patron Council would much rather be

without. The scholars of the Seekers dislike the fact that their idealistic social movement is tainted by talk of dark dealings, politically motivated murder and underhanded operations. The members of the Vanguard, likewise, resent the stains on their honor and good names; they represent a breed of Patron that is desperately trying to accrue power and influence in a turbulent time, and the last thing they need are rumors of their political faction working to murder rivals when they are perfectly capable of defeating those rivals in the social arena anyway — at least, so many of them believe.

Of course, it comes down to the fact that the Austere Conclave is *useful*. If a prominent pro-war court noble dies in his sleep, the truth of the matter is that a local, up-and-coming Vanguard politician benefits greatly from this, as long as the evidence doesn't lead anywhere close to him.

The Austere Conclave works with great tenacity and skill to make sure the evidence never leads too near to the truth. They seem to delight in making the Four Courts realize the Patrons are a great threat, but without leaving any significant, definite fact that the Patron Council is behind any of the less-than-reputable acts of violence and sabotage.

Contacting the Austere Conclave is rarely easy, even for other members of the Patrons. No member of the Vanguard or the Seekers can ever be certain if their allies or rivals within the Patron Council are, in fact, Conclave members. This adds yet another level of division and mistrust among the three factions — in an establishment that can barely function with the divisions it already has in ethics, ideology and approach to the cause. The Austere Conclave is cursed more often than not, for while the timely removal of a political opponent is often something to be thankful for, many of the Patron Council dislike the air of suspicion the Conclave leaves in its wake — an air of suspicion that the visible members of the Patrons must usually clear themselves.

A TWO-SIDED COIN

The Patrons' air of mystery works for them as well as against them. Dissent against the Patrons is usually expressed quietly, for fear of attracting the ire of the organization. Little do most fae know that it is a hated and near-rogue element of the greater whole that is the danger, so they view the organization as a whole as threatening and ominous. This fear translates into a grudging respect, or guarded dislike, more often than outright denouncement. Members of the Vanguard occasionally enjoy the air of mystique of this taint to their reputations — it creates an element of mystery and interest that can often be turned to an advantage over other fae who are easily impressed by an aura of power, or subdued by an aura of threat.

By Virtue of Popular Opinion

History itself is unclear on the details that the Patrons have adopted as the truth. For each tale they tell and song they sing of their much-vaunted seasonal rule, just as many conflicting sources of information surface in fae society.

And yet, they have amassed significant notoriety and more than a little influence and power. The majority of fae society is traditionalist to the point of being comfortably entrenched in the life and lore of their chosen Court. The obvious desire of these fae is that their way of life thrives above the other Courts, because they truly believe that their way is the best way. This is a viewpoint that leaves no room for compromise, and is the reason the War of Seasons has, at times, been fought so bitterly.

The Cause

The fae in the Vanguard of the Patron Council hold the torch for their scholarly brethren, and just how much of

THE COTERIE OF DRAIL

While the Patrons are viewed (depending on whom you ask) as the most distrusted and generally disliked faction in fae society, especially venomous tones are reserved for discussion of the near-mythical gathering known as the Coterie of Drail.

It is rumored, although the claims stand largely without evidence or even vaguely credible basis for evaluation, that an elder firstborn of the Solstice fae and his coven of magically adept brethren were responsible for beginning the War of Seasons. Some sources claim that this Solstice alliance disrupted and altered significant messages and correspondences; certainly the Solstice fae, frequently hired as couriers, mercenaries and retainers, would have had ample opportunity to act in this way. Over time, the flood of subtly doctored important letters and orders provoked the War of Seasons among the Courts.

It is worth noting that a significant proportion of the Summer and Winter fae stand by this assertion of guilt, and must overcome a great deal of pride-swallowing when they stoop to hiring Solstice mercenaries. In their hearts, many nobles of these two Courts blame the independent fae for the whole war.

The Patrons especially move quickly to investigate any rumors of the Coterie of Drail surfacing once again. The Philosopher-Queen of the Patrons, Lady Nicnivin, personally blames the Coterie of Drail (and the Solstice fae at large) for the War of Seasons. In fact, she claims to have met, and sincerely disliked, Drail himself in years past. (See Chapter Five for more information on Drail and his machinations.)

the “old ways” they truly speak of in court (or even care about) is up to the individual diplomat. It’s not unusual for a member of the Vanguard to pay lip service to most of the Patrons’ goals, while blithely going about her own political career in any way she sees fit. As mentioned, there is an advantage in hailing from a respected (and sometimes feared) opposition party.

As a society with several hidden layers, however, the Patrons work to achieve many of their goals as best they can from the shadows. Small gatherings of fae, often from a mixture of Courts, are entrusted to deliver messages and correspondences from one Patron elder to another. The oathcircles of fae composed of representatives of each of the Four Courts that the Patrons can employ in their service are one of their greatest strengths. Whereas the Four Courts either have to engage their opponents with their own soldiers, or hire Solstice mercenaries to do the same, the Patrons have the advantage that many of their fae groupings consist of fae from several Courts. This versatility is a great strength, both in physical or magical combat, and in the political and social arenas.

Another favored tactic of the Patrons is to send out teams of scouts and searchers, seeking any “lost” fae enclaves or locales that may have remained out of contact since the Battle of Stone and the following retreat of the fae from the human world. While all the Courts are likewise seeking these lost bastions, the Patrons have an advantage in their multi-Court versatility. Needless to say, not every group in the service of the Patrons contacts these lost fae holdings and freely admits whom they serve. Some do, and win their converts accordingly; but it’s fair to say that the Patrons are nothing if not subtle, and they tend to build and expand their power bases along similar methods.

The State of the World

With the Oath-Truce nearing its end, the Patrons aren’t the only fae taking stock of the various fae kingdoms and strongholds in the Dark Medieval. Scouting parties of all Courts roam the land making contact with powerful fae thought lost to the Mists or destroyed by other, non-fae creatures; and sometimes these scouts band together across Court lines with the understanding that they share all information they gain, even if it means giving their “rivals” advantages they wouldn’t otherwise have.

Below is a brief discussion of the Four Courts and the activities they are undertaking as the Oath-Truce draws to a close, along with two of each Court’s strongholds. More strongholds are described in Chapter Five, but the ones detailed here hew closely to the ideologies of the Courts they represent, while those in Chapter Five are only loosely affiliated with a given Court.

FAE REALMS

Throughout this book, you will find references to “fae lands” and “faerie realms.” Are these lands separate from the world that humans inhabit? Do the fae dwell in a sort of connected reality, different from the one that mortals know?

In a sense, yes. The fae realms have been in existence for thousands of years, always in possession of a fae ruler or a group of allied faeries. These realms are inherently magical, and just as fae perceive time differently than humans do, time passes differently in fae lands. They are not, however, entirely separate worlds — humans can and do stumble into fae lands. The penalty for doing so is often high: Human legend is replete with examples of hapless men who spot a faerie maid bathing in her magical stream or find the fae holding court and are changed into animals or enslaved for centuries for their trouble.

Protecting these fae holdings is one of the driving forces behind Gold and Stone Oaths (see p. 108). Many of the oaths sworn with humanity are very simple affairs, designed to keep humans out of faerie lands. At first, this was done merely from a desire for privacy. Now, the fae can be harmed or even destroyed by humans glimpsing them in their true miens, and protecting the fae realms is more important than ever before.

Spring Court

“Your ignorance is overshadowed only by your stupidity, Winter-kin.”

The creature, hunched and clutching at its head, wheezed a voiceless reply of pained anger. Karen considered using magic to entrap the Winter fae’s hooves in the earth, but thought better of it. Instead, as she regarded the now one-horned soldier of the Winter Court, she shifted her grip on the blade she held in her fists.

“Spring-bitch,” the firstborn grotesque snarled, red-eyed and red-eared. “Your optimism blinds you. We are already irrelevant to the humans. They name us demons and fight us back with white faith. It is you and your kind who are losing for us all the chance to take the world ba—”

The blade cut outward and sliced neatly through thick skin and the sinewy meat of muscle; even bone gave with a snap under the murderous arc. The one-horned head thumped dully into a bed of powdery snow.

“The first sign of stagnation is the fear of change,” Karen said to the cooling corpse.

It is an error to believe the Spring Court is assuming a sedate, peaceful attitude in the final days of the Oath-Truce. As the great treaty comes close to ending, this Court displays a significant lack of Truce-Bearers. While the majority of the faction is unarguably Humanist, many Militants are gearing up for a final strike at the Winter Court. Equally, almost as many Constantinians are frantically scrambling to under-



stand the new world and the strange faiths of humankind — purely in order to either further their own positions of eventual rule over the Four Courts, or to adjust to the new shape of the human realm.

A majority of the Spring Court has no interest in continuing the “suspended hostilities” atmosphere of either the years after the Battle of Stone or the Oath-Truce itself. Both represented a span of static time that did not sit well with the members of this Court. With such a strong ethos of bonds and ties to the human realm, even the most hidebound firstborn and alien-minded inanimes have a perspective of the passing of time that closely resembles the human concept. The fact is that fae of the Spring Court, now that the time for action is soon at hand, are rejecting stagnation and are embracing the potential of change.

Any change.

More overall contact with the humans. Less careless contact with the humans. Move to destroy the Winter Court. Send diplomats and ambassadors to bring the Summer Court more in line with Spring policy. Establish a lasting alliance with the Autumn Court to tie efforts in the human realm more closely. Grasp every facet of the humans’ new faiths. Wean the humans off their poisonous new beliefs. Work quickly to research and understand the frightening marvels of things like vast cathedrals, holy prayer and the horrors of the Crusades.

Quell the rise of the Patrons. Join the Patrons. Seek out and destroy the Patrons entirely.

A CLASH OF IDEALS

The vast majority of the Spring Court is staunchly Humanist, albeit with a myriad of approaches to the Humanist cause. Some fae seek to understand the emergence of Christianity and how such belief has changed the lives of the humans, while other fae are vocal proponents of working to lessen the influence of the new religions on humanity, in order to return the humans to a time when they knew “the truth.” In essence, these fae care not how and why the faiths function as they do, but about how the humans can be brought to forget them.

Approximately three-quarters of the Court fall into the Humanist category in one form or another. Of the remaining quarter, it is broken up unevenly in favor of the Militants and the Constantinians, with an extremely low percentage belonging to the Truce-Bearers faction. As mentioned, the Spring Court are interested in pursuing immediate action, before the entirety of faerie-kind becomes irrelevant to the human realm. This attitude has little to do with those in favor of extending the uneasy peace amongst the fae factions.

All of these possibilities are discussed in the many Spring strongholds, with debate running the gamut from impassioned discussion to honorable duels to dishonorable brawls. Fae of the Spring Court, no matter where they are located, are stirring into action. Sadly, much of this effort is wasted in directionless posturing against other holdings and fruitless diplomacy with factions that have no interest in the proposed relationships or treaties.

A great deal of court intrigue involves planning engagements with Winter and Summer Court forces, either with Spring soldiers or Solstice mercenaries. Other plots revolve around the fact that the Spring Court is eagerly dispatching goodwill ambassadors to the other Courts, for purposes of reconnaissance, intelligence gathering, and, in a few of the local Autumn Court holdings, the sincere hope of alliance.

Holdings of the Spring Court

Court of the Griggling Apple

This court, named for the oath it holds with a local village, is situated in the west of France, several leagues to the south of the much larger township of Bordeaux. The diminutive, horned lord of this large and jovial court, Prince Grale, forged the oath with the local village elder several generations ago. While the village leader is long dead, the oath stretches to cover the settlement itself, and those who dwell there.

The fae ensure a good harvest year after year, with crops free from blight and unwelcome weather, in exchange for a special gift from the village’s famed orchards. When the time comes to pick the fruit at the orchards, the villagers traditionally leave the smallest apples of each tree on the branches where they grow. Eventually, these “griggling” apples fall and ferment on the ground, and the local fae take them and use them to brew an intoxicant. The resulting beverage is used in both the celebrations and functions of the court, as well as being a wonderful trade (or goodwill) item with other fae courts.

Due to the hard-working attitude displayed by this court of Spring fae, it tends to attract a great number of newly Sained changelings and inanimes who are keen to work toward an eventual goal of peace and coexistence with humans. Prince Grale is a kindly elder who welcomes any and all into his community, where each of his subjects and courtiers dwell in a small forest close to the village itself.

A staunch Humanist, Grale hesitantly advocates a return to the War of Seasons simply because he optimistically believes the other Courts will see sense when evidence of his good relations with the humans becomes apparent to all. The Court of the Griggling Apple is one of the more renowned Spring Courts, mostly due to its numerous ambassadors and diplomats who travel to other courts to extol its virtues.

Promise of the Faerie Well

Beloved jewel in the crown of the Spring Court, and especially detested by the Winter Court, the White Lady's Promise of the Faerie Well is an oft-mocked example of sincerely Humanist fae.

The White Lady, a pale-skinned and long-limbed firstborn known by that title alone, has a strong and binding oath with several remote villages across Western Europe. This oath, stretching back generations, offers these remote, often isolated settlements a unique protection. In return for a ban on entering certain local forests where the White Lady's various minor courts are situated, the Lady and her subjects are oath-bound to heal every human infant within the villages struck down with illness or injury, or to grant a peaceful death to those too far gone to heal.

A parent seeking to have his child healed must perform a specific ritual to attract the White Lady's attention. He bends a simple iron nail at an angle, tosses it into the well at the center of the village, and speaks the name of the child to be healed out loud. With the coming of the next dawn, the child will be healed of sickness or injury, if it is possible for the fae to do so. If the infant is too riddled with sickness, or bears too great an injury for even magic to repair, then the fae grant the child a painless, swift passing.

It is obvious that the people of these villages know full well that the fae exist, and act accordingly. Local traditions forbid these folk from ever entering the faerie forests, and the grateful humans are more than willing to uphold their end of the oath. Of course, the mortals have a cautious fear of the mysterious healers, for those few careless (or stupid) folk who have entered the boundaries of the forests over the centuries have never returned. The ritual itself is performed in these villages with unease and trepidation. The villagers know these powerful entities to be merciful, and yet utterly alien, both in act and appearance, from the reports of the few who have seen one of the fae. The White Lady is spoken of by these humans with a mixture of gratitude and terror, for no matter how beneficent the fae are to these mortals, the fact remains that is the fae are an occult, magical presence in their lives that many are less than comfortable with, whether for religious reasons or just plain common sense.

Ambassadors from many other courts travel to one of the locales of the Promise of the Faerie Well, and the White Lady travels to each of these locations at regular intervals. She is renowned for believing in the ultimate balance between human and fae, and seeks to explore the balance between the two worlds. She, along with almost all fae who join the court, believes that the delicate equilibrium is maintained when humans acknowledge the fae, accept them, and both races live co-dependently within oaths that bind the loyalty of one to the other.

Summer Court

The elegantly crafted wand of twisting oak tapped the map that lay spread across the table.

"In two months from today, we shall engage the bandit White and his forces in both of these areas. These are their known encampments. The attack plan will be as we discussed earlier. Questions?"

Although they were visibly nervous, it looked as though not one of the assembled soldiers would say a word. But then... "Highsmith Wayland, that's very close to Red Tree Fortress."

Wayland knew this, and said so.

The questioner elaborated; "Patrons' territory, Highsmith. And not too far from Lord James and his Solstice hirelings. I appreciate that White and his vagabonds must be punished for coming into our land — all humans should be — but this could escalate into a dangerous situation if the other Courts get involved." Again, Wayland nodded.

"Exactly. Once we've ridden down White's pathetic band of human thieves and taught them the lessons they seem to have forgotten, it will be a small matter to attack Red Tree Fortress."

The silence grew thick with tension.

"But Highsmith, what of the Solstice soldiers under Lord James? We'll be flanked."

Wayland laughed and shook his head. "Those Courtless bastards know no loyalty to James, and all of them want for the treasures I can provide. They are what we will use in the siege, dear boy. We'll throw them at the walls to soften up the Patrons for a while."

Laughter came from all present; a sound both unforced and undeniably cruel.

The Summer Court is readying for the coming conflict with a charged atmosphere of grim eagerness. This Court's members are utterly convinced that their victory in the War of Seasons is assured; and unlike the more cautious Autumn and Spring fae, they believe their victory will be a swift and decisive one. A rapid victory need not necessarily be achieved by ranks of Summer soldiers taking to the field, although many plans to take significant holdings currently under the rule of the other Courts are already in progress. The Summer Court intends to beat the other seasons in ways other than the field of war. Negotiation is an option in dealings with enemy strongholds that are currently lacking in military presence or weakened by a power vacuum in the hierarchy of nobles and rulers. Even in this case, negotiation isn't always merely an offer of protection for a weaker holding, or a discussed and agreed truce of fair trade and promises of peace. The Summer Court rarely needs to use these tactics, although it is left to the local lord or ruler in question. "Negotiation" can (and most often does) take the form of effectively installing well-armed and supported ambassadors as regent rulers, for the "protection and stability of the court," then effectively usurping the current ruler of the domain with a campaign of slander, accusations and organized betrayals.

Summer nobles adopt similar plans all over the human realm; ambassadors and diplomats are specifically sent to sow discord and create chaos among many of the stronger

local holdings of the other Courts. Where the opposing domain is too weakly defended or held to require a show of martial superiority or the deployment of a cunning network of lies and backstabbing ploys, it is taken "in regency." Likewise, holdings that are well defended by deeply entrenched soldiers can soon expect to discover that the latest wave of diplomats and "visitors" are actually the outriders for a massed Summer assault. The Summer Court is looking to act quickly and decisively in every enterprise, now that they have the freedom to do so.

The Summer fae are renowned for two special hatreds reserved for the Solstice fae and the Patrons. The former, known as the Courtless by bitter Summer-kin, are often blamed for actually beginning the War of Seasons. Most Summer domains are not welcoming to Solstice fae, and a few are openly hostile. The Patrons are also held in particularly low regard. The swaggering superiority of many of the Summer fae means that their own solid beliefs in eventual victory clash hotly with Patron Council opinion; yet the Court has no fewer Patron members than the other seasonal factions.

Strongholds of the Summer Court

Court of the Valiant Forge

English legends tell of noble-hearted knights wielding magical blades that were crafted specifically to aid them in the cause of righteousness. As ever, this tale has a core of truth surrounded by a shell of lies and imagination.

MILKLINGS

"Changelings. The human-born.

"The proliferation of the milklings and their human parentage does not sit well within my blood. Sucking nourishment from the teat of the human animal is not a practice that I find wholesome, and the sentiment is shared by many of my brothers and sisters within the Summer Court.

"They are still fae, this is apparent to all. They have the magic, and they even have advantages in dealing with the human realm that we lack. But still, call it an irrational dislike if you will, there is something I find unpalatable in the human-born. While the practice of swallowing human milk from birth certainly abhors me, it is not just that aspect of their caste that I find unwholesome.

"Perhaps it is their lack of true balance between the worlds. Perhaps it the fact that a human ritual can indeed strip them of their divine fae heritages once and for always.

"Then again, perhaps it is just that they suck liquid from a human female's breast."

— Razen-Sen, Firstborn of the Ocean of Dust, speaking to a visitor from the Winter Court

Wayland, formally known by the title of Highsmith, is the source of this particular half-myth. Currently, he is the powerful, undisputed leader of the Summer fae in the British Isles, and a renowned warrior who earned fear and respect in the War of Seasons. Local tales tell of a valiant creature who would grant weapons of luck and magical strength to noblemen of good heart and just cause. In truth, Wayland rarely acts out of good intentions.

He delights in appearing to humans and offering them rich rewards in return for sworn oaths. So, while a knight may have a beautifully crafted weapon at his hip — the moment his oath breaks with Wayland, so does the blade. The deal applies to farmers and serfs, and the tools that Wayland bestows upon them, or the jewelry he gifts to some women. He finds great satisfaction in holding himself to difficult oaths, and then punishing the human who fails to hold up her end of the agreement. It is apparent to even the blindest of visitors to the Court of the Valiant Forge that this slightly sadistic streak is a popular attitude among the fae here.

While his court is an eclectic mix of mainly Militant fae, Highsmith Wayland accepts any visitor to his domain, from Lady Nicnivin of the Patrons down to the lowliest Solstice message-bearer. It is even rumored that he and the Philosopher-Queen were once lovers, although that is a rumor none are brave enough to inquire about to Wayland himself. It is also unwise to mention the fact that Wayland was one of the few selected to sign the Oath-Truce on behalf of his Court. It was with bitter trembling in his fingers that ink was set to parchment that day, some ten decades ago.

Accepting visitors is not the same as welcoming them, however. The Patron Council, which has established ambassadors in almost every domain from Ireland to Outremer, are represented in Wayland's holding simply because it is such a powerful and important domain. Their lives are not made easy, for the Highsmith's dislike of the Patrons and their politics is well known. Likewise, the rare few Solstice fae who visit the realm are wise to leave quickly after their affairs are concluded.

The Ocean of Dust

In the vast expanse of desert between and around the great cities of Cairo and Alexandria, the fae have a domain distant from the eyes of most mortals. The Ocean of Dust stretches across many miles of rising and falling sand dunes, and is home to many inanimae and firstborn of the Summer Court.

Tales of strange mirages, lost oases, and the legendary djinn who desire to grant wishes to the lucky traveler — all of these stories and phenomena have their origins in the hidebound fae of the Ocean of Dust. Ruled over by no single leader, or even a council, this court is populated by many fae who are eagerly looking forward to the resumption of the War of Seasons.

It's a rare mortal who approaches a member of this court with any established expectations of friendliness and leaves (or even lives) with them intact. The fae of this domain are notorious for their traditional stances. They are the ones who will steal a man's camel and leave him to die in the middle of the desert simply because he broke a minor oath, or allow him return to his family to find that none of them remember him simply because of the slightly disrespectful manner in which he addressed the fae that he encountered.

This court is also renowned for having a particularly low number of Patrons in their domain, although no one seems certain whether this is by design and intent, or just plain geographic logic.

Autumn Court

The firelight cast flickering slashes of black shadow and amber light over the kneeling man's face. He wheezed and panted, flecks of saliva spattering his lips and chin as he moaned in dumbstruck horror. For a moment, Edward was worried the human's heart had burst.

"Mortal, are you dying?"

The human trembled one more time, then ground his face into the muddy earth with a whimper. "No, good Lord... please, don't hurt me."

Edward narrowed his eyes.

"Never call me that, human. It is not a title I think highly of. And I have no intention of causing you harm, so if you could restrain yourself from such a display, I would be grateful."

The man rose to his knees once more, blinking in fearful confusion, but said nothing. Edward smiled, little realizing how angelic the gesture appeared to the stupefied mortal.

"Now, good sir. I have an errand to run, so we must be brief. I know of your attraction to Helen. And for a small price, I can make sure she will return your desire, Gregory."

"H-how?"

"Go to her now. She will not strike you this time, Gregory. There will be no shame. I have made it so."

Edward read the hunger and hope in the fool's eyes, and knew he had the human exactly where he wanted him.

As the final days of the Oath-Truce draw closer, the Autumn Court is bitterly divided over which direction to move. Many elders of the Court find themselves fascinated (and horrified) by the human Church, and doubts as to the actual worth of the human realm run strong through the halls of local holdings.

The War of Seasons has raged toward the ultimate goal of one Court holding dominance over the others — and in turn, over the human realm. Now, debate revolves around whether the light at the end of the tunnel really burns as brightly as it once did. Should one Court eventually triumph above the others, by means fair or foul, the fact remains that the victorious faction will be severely weakened after the conflict. The triumphant Court, greatly reduced in strength and power from the war, will more than

likely face extreme difficulties in assuming any form of control over the human realm.

The Constantinian agenda is rife among the Autumn fae. A great number of the Court's members consider the War of Seasons an unreliable gamble at best, both in the conflict itself and the turmoil of the aftermath. Many leaders, generals and nobles of the Court are preparing for the end of the Oath-Truce with vastly different methods than their other-Court counterparts. Certainly, the more warlike or cautious among the Autumn fae are readying blades and battle plans, but the actual War of Seasons itself is an event that is beginning to adopt a secondary place in the minds of many of this Court's diplomats, scholars and even soldiers. They are much more focused on what will come *after* the war is won.

The face of the human realm has changed greatly from the days of the fae's openly declared rule. The various faiths of humanity are no longer a minor facet of the whole — they are now the driving forces behind the lives of many men and women. Such ironclad belief in the Divine, and an equally staunch dedication to canceling out the influence of the supernatural elements of the world, means that most humans are losing their tolerance of "unholy" creatures. Many legends about the fae describe them as inhuman, unknowable beings at best, and as unearthly, evil creatures at worst. These tales and stories of creatures in the wilds who deceive and toy with humanity have labeled the fae as undeniably harmful to the people they encounter; and clearly such creatures shy away from God's loving light.

The Autumn Court realizes this single, poignant truth. To humans, the fae are no longer feared, mistrusted and obeyed rulers, nor are they beloved benefactors. They are monsters and outsiders, with no place in the humans' understanding of *their* God's world.

To the majority of the Autumn Court, the solution is crystal clear: Adapt. The War of Seasons will eventually be won and lost, but the end result is worthless if the victors are incapable of enjoying their prize. What use is the human world if the fae have no place within it?

Of course, the process of adapting is neither a rapid nor a necessarily easy one, and therein lies the Autumn Court's bitter divide. For now, many fae content themselves with studying the way the various human faiths work, from scholarly perusal of holy texts to watching the details of the day-to-day life of humans of different faiths and strengths of belief.

A favored method of growing familiar with humanity once more is breeding with them. The Autumn Court has always numbered more changelings than the other Seasonal Courts; the overwhelming number of fae with a fundamental understanding of humankind puts the Autumn Court at a distinct advantage in pursuing their goals.

Another currently favored tactic is in the Court's famed approach to dealing with mortals. The Autumn fae

HIDDEN DEPTHS

It is Autumn tradition (and perceived good sense) to never reveal too much about themselves to humanity; in recent years, the tradition is on the verge of becoming a law. The Autumn Court, akin to the Spring Court, has an eventual hope that the mortals will once again rely on the fae and consider them valued and respected rulers. While the Spring Court's Humanist stance advocates sincerity and honesty in dealing with humans, the Autumn Court's cautious stance is intended to establish an aura of safety around the fae. If the humans do not know the truths of the creatures they are dealing with, then no exploitable weaknesses can be discovered.

have, since time out of mind, preferred to keep an air of uncertainty between themselves and their human servants and pawns — and even their rare allies.

The Autumn fae are not paranoid out of simple fear, they are guarded out of a respectful level of caution. In these turbulent days and nights, the fae are keenly aware of the power (and sheer number) of the mortals. It is best to maintain a healthy distance and level of mystery between the two races if a successful coexistence is to be possible.

Domains of the Autumn Court

The Keshalyi Gatherings

These holdings are the central court for the Eastern European Autumn fae, ruled not by a single Lord or Lady, but rather by the Council of Dusk — a group of equally matched elders who share responsibility and rule over the nine separate domains. The fae who populate these holdings are known as the Keshalyi, as they were named by the wandering peoples of Hungary and Transylvania. Local stories speak of benevolent creatures who live for many years and offer magical aid and kindness to those humans they befriend and admire.

In reality, the fae of this court maintain a loose masquerade over their true selves, due to a policy handed down by the Council of Dusk (and the general attitude of the Autumn Court itself). The fae are careful never to reveal their true selves in their dealings with the humans, instead opting to present façade of approachability and kindness. This

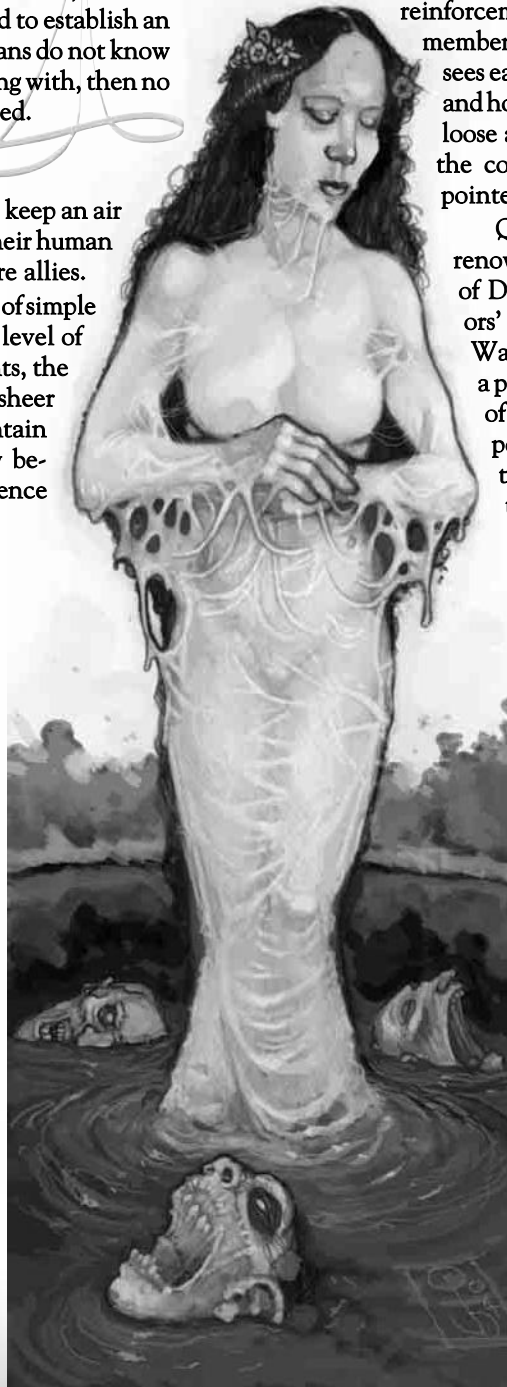
demeanor means that the fae of the Keshalyi Gatherings tend to have very easily maintained (and mutually enforced) oaths with many mortals. In turn, this garners them two main advantages in the War of Seasons: allies and lessened Echoes.

The Keshalyi Gatherings are spread out over a great distance: the nine main holdings spread across the mountainous and wooded lands of Eastern Europe, hidden in the wilderness. Each holding is bonded to the whole by ideology, and provides mutual support and military reinforcements for the others. Although a member of the Council of Dusk oversees each holding, many minor courts and holdings across Europe either owe loose allegiance to a specific elder in the council, or are ruled by an appointed regent.

Queen Ana, one of the more renowned members of the Council of Dusk, shares her fellow councilors' sentiments in regards to the War of Seasons, and the attitude is a popular one among the members of the Gathering. Reveal enough power to the humans to make them respect and value the fae, then exploit their trust as a weapon in the coming war. She, along with Nicnivin, Krode, Wayland and others, was present at the signing of the Oath-Truce. She is understandably reluctant for the treaty to fall.

Chill Court of the Water Wraith

Along the shores of many lakes and rivers in Scotland, the fae of this court are eager to make their presence known to humans once again. Known locally as the Fideal, they have a sinister reputation among travelers of all stripes. Comprised almost solely of changelings and their first-born parents, these graceful, haunting creatures lure wandering humans to a watery death. Most appear as slender men and women, with skin tinted the same hue as the water they dwell



in, and all their body hair made of slimy lake-grass or algae.

The court itself, despite a sinister reputation, adores humankind with great sincerity. It is the lust for human lovers that drives these fae, as the sun rises every day, out to the shores of lakes and rivers, to sing sad and ethereal songs of true love in the hopes of attracting a mate.

It is common for many human lovers to die during, or after, these couplings. The fae of this court are renowned for their fickle lusts, and the bones of many men and women lie at the bottom of several dozen Scottish lakes — the remains of discarded lovers.

While not entirely apathetic to the last days of the Oath-Truce, the members of the Chill Court of the Water Wraith are less than interested in fighting the eternal battle, and much more intrigued with the possibility of forging new oaths of lust and love — and perhaps even the potential for co-dependence with the local humans.

Winter Court

The boy had screamed a for a long time.

Redteeth felt no remorse for silencing the human child, for he was both irritated and hungry, and the still-warm meal he now consumed went a long way toward satisfying both of these. He grinned, baring teeth as dark as blood, and strong enough to crunch through bone. In fact, they just had.

The boy had been brave, at least as a human would measure such a thing — brave and stupid. The oath to keep humans away from the forest had held for centuries, and it always seemed to be the children who were tempted to break it. This time, the temptation had proven too strong, and the oath was broken.

Redteeth looked up from the remains of his meal, licking his gums clean of warm juices. His ears twitched for a second time. A third. A fourth. Footsteps.

"Redteeth." The word was musical; a lilting voice spoke the name with disgust clearly evident in the hauntingly beautiful tones.

The Winter fae turned to face the intruder, and was with the sight of a bright iron blade. He hissed and spat, recognizing Karen, a Spring-bitch. "Leave my lair, or die as the human did."

She smiled at him; and Redteeth launched at her, horned head lowered to strike.

The Winter Court, on the whole, is somewhat nonchalant regarding the fall of the Oath-Truce. Much is made of the Winter-kin's hatred of humanity — an emotion that is only magnified in the current age of faith in the Divine and the dawning irrelevance of the fae. As the Oath-Truce reaches its final days, however, the Winter fae are neither gearing up en masse to make men and women's lives difficult, nor are they raising legions of soldiers to make a final bid to seize the edge in the War of Seasons.

What this means is that the Winter Court is not considering any plans to "take to the battlefield," and that it is up to individual fae whether they wish to retreat to the deep wilds or take up arms against the other Courts once more. Only those

fae who actively wish to pursue their own agendas in either realm are the ones to make names for themselves; consequently, only the fae who *really* hate the humans are visible in the human realm, and only those who *really* want to win the War of Seasons are fighting the good fight. It's fair to say that with such loose leadership and few (or no) mandates on behavior from above, it's the worst of a terribly evil bunch that are noticed by humans and other fae.

Many of the Winter fae who truck with humans are more than content to assume their old roles as the "things that go bump in the night." These are the creatures that humans dread, the monsters that children are warned of. While any fae might be the reason a person goes missing and never returns, where the Winter Court is concerned it's because the human has been bludgeoned to death and then eaten — or simply just eaten. This way of life seems evil to the human mindset, but it has worked perfectly well for the monsters of the Winter Court for a very long time now, and they see no reason to go about changing things. Even more than the Summer Court, in certain areas, the Winter Court generates an air of stasis and resilience to change. Whereas the Summer Court exemplifies an unchanging attitude of tradition and law, the fae of the Winter Court have an unchanging penchant for going about their own business first and foremost, even if the methods by which they do so alter over time.

It is easy to see why no love is lost between the Spring and Winter Courts, for they are true opposites, standing for entirely different ways of existence. With the fractious nature of fae society, the two Courts commonly meet in both war and politics.

Winter Court holdings in the human realm (such as they are) have recently received many ambassadors from the Summer and Autumn Courts. Many smaller courts and Winter domains are attracting the attention of the other fae, largely because the Winter-kin are a rogue element in the War of Seasons. They represent a degree of unpredictability, and as such are being bombarded by offers of alliance and truce. While the Winter Court as a whole has largely undeclared intentions regarding the resumption of war, individual courts are very much active. Many, after receiving or buying information from well-placed Solstice fae, are preparing to repel attacks from the Spring Court, for example. Others are allying with local Autumn or Summer holdings, to either repel attacks from another faction, or strengthen fae influence in a given region.

In the latter case, a new crop of (most likely short-lived) Winter and Autumn alliances are working to establish a level of fear and respect from the local humans. Suffice to say that the fae, initially, tend not to appear overtly in these dealings. If and when relationships sour, the Winter Court fae are keen to make their presence a little more visible — usually signaling the opening of hostilities between the two Courts again, and the breakdown of any alliances.

A RESPONSE

"Possibly, good host, but I take offense at much more than the milkings' eating habits. They represent a bridge between humans and our people — not just a bridge, but a union. Every time I look at a changeling, I know that somewhere, in our far-flung past, a firstborn stooped to rutting with one of those disgusting mortals. It's enough to make me retch.

"Did I mention that in my home stronghold, my lord has forbidden changelings to be Sained? They are turned loose and hunted. If they escape, they are allowed to petition one of the other Courts for membership. I say, the other Courts deserve them.

"No offense intended, Razen-Sen."

— Brenk, a rock inanimae of the Winter Court, visiting the Ocean of Dust

Bastions of the Winter Court

The Black Road

The curiously named Black Road is actually a vast series of underground tunnels and caverns. The original under-earth dwellings of these Winter fae expanded and developed into a network of linked tunnels when human miners in Europe began to carve into the Earth in search of precious gems and commodities such as salt.

The heart of the Black Road is under Scotland, in a silver mine several miles from Edinburgh. The local miners have many legends regarding the so-called "Black Dwarves," ravenous and blood-hungry creatures that eat any miners who get lost in the tunnels under the surface. It's common knowledge that whistling in the presence of these creatures enrages them; and the fae have been known to foretell the fate of a man destined to die by hammering on the door and windows of his house on the night before he will meet his end.

In truth, the fae of the Black Road Court are not as simple as folklore portrays. While the firstborn and the many stone, earth and water inanimae who make up the bulk of the court do indeed have a guarded dislike for humanity, they tolerate the miners' efforts because it broadens the court's domain without faerie effort. Folklore also tells how a miner might hear the tapping of faerie picks leading him to a rich vein of ore or gems — in truth, this is usually a member of the court leading the humans into extending a tunnel in the direction the fae desires.

Whistling does indeed anger many of the Black Road Court, as their oaths are often geared toward creating a silent underground realm. While the clanging and tapping of mining tools is a necessary pain, talking, singing and especially the piercing sounds of whistling do not suit faerie ears at all. The members of this court swore an oath many

years ago that they would only capture or kill humans who whistled when under the earth. In return for leaving the other miners alone, the fae would warn a miner who was destined to die the next day, so he could say his goodbyes to his loved ones.

In regards to the War of Seasons, the fae of this court (and there are a great many under Scotland and in the mines of Western Europe) are mostly ambivalent. Individual fae are free to do as they wish — even the oath shared with the miners applies to only a few dozen firstborn and inanimae under the Scottish mine. The Patrons are often linked with this court (despite having few agents within it), for Lady Nicnivin herself is guarded by seven fearsome "Black Dwarves."

The court currently lacks singular leadership, as Lord Krode was recently slain. Reputedly, the murder was carried out by Spring Court fanatics in violation of the Oath-Truce; cooler heads acknowledge that this scenario is unlikely. Lord Krode's policy of ignoring fae society outside his own domain appeals to many members of this court, and it remains loosely in place. In fact, the domain still holds some renown from Krode's reputation, for he was one of the fae elected to sign the Oath-Truce a century ago.

The Callicantzaroi Court

In villages along the coast of Southern Italy, the fae of this court are both frequently seen and spoken of.

The court is named for Prince Callicantzaroi, a small, slender firstborn whose milky-white eyes have never known sight. He is a renowned general who commanded several thousand soldiers in the Battle of Stone; when the retreat was sounded, he organized a skillful fighting withdrawal that spared many of his troops' lives, while the other Courts lost thousands of soldiers in scattered fleeing.

The blind lord's courtiers and soldiers patrol the land regularly, stirring tales and stories among the local human settlements of magical creatures in the wilderness. Farmers with large herds of livestock are especially wary of these fae, for the court holds regular feasts of raw pork, and many of Callicantzaroi's loyal followers are assigned the duties of preparing these banquets.

The fae of the area are seen to be thieving, troublesome creatures that most humans would prefer to never have any contact with. In fae society, the Callicantzaroi court is renowned for being a hotbed of political backbiting and violence. On the outside, it seems that ambassadors from every Court are welcome here, and the blind lord patiently listens to each and every petition, offer of alliance and general request. In truth, Prince Callicantzaroi detests the other Courts, and is mustering the remains of one of the famed Lost Legions, housing them as a tactical advantage to be deployed when the Oath-Truce fails.

Curious ambassadors (read: spies) from the other Courts, and even Solstice fae, are wise to watch their backs. The blind prince, for all his urbane veneer and patient charm, is not a

benevolent ruler. Most Winter fae of the court are well aware that he has murderous intentions for the many visitors to his domain, and his well-armed and trained soldiers enforce even his 'quiet wishes' with impunity and eagerness.

The other Courts realize that this holding is often something of a death trap for visitors who displease the blind lord—and yet this is one of the most attended Winter domains in Western Europe. Prince Callicantzaroi would ultimately be the ally of choice in the War of Seasons. His soldiers are dedicated, loyal, numerous and well trained, and rumors of Lost Legion activity are only heightening the blind lord's reputation as a dangerous and savvy general — a desired commodity in the days to come.

Accordingly, this court's many coastal (and underwater) cave holdings are frequently filled with diplomats from every Court and many local fae strongholds. Spies have a plethora of information to gather, on the interests of both Callicantzaroi's court and the visitors from rival Seasonal Courts.

The Curious History of the Fae

Humanity doesn't recognize the fae as having anything in common; while the *baobhan sidhe* of the British Isles and the Szepasszony of Hungary might both be fae, humanity sees them as entirely separate beings. Humans have many different explanations for where faerie creatures (by whatever name) came from, most of which the fae find laughable or offensive. Not even the fae themselves, however, are entirely sure of their origins; and like humanity, they must take a great deal on faith.

According to their own beliefs, the fae created the world and everything in it. The firstborn were, as the name suggests, the first to form bodies and personas for themselves out of the chaotic Mists, the energy of magic that came before the world was formed. These creatures took on whatever form suited them, and reshaped the Mists around them to form homes. They created water, fire, air, stone, sand, lightning, darkness, light and all of the myriad combinations of these elements. As the firstborn defined the world, they also further defined themselves. Some of them preferred to live in hot, bright climates while others buried themselves under mountains and lurked in the dark tunnels. Some soared through the air, never deigning to touch solid ground. Firstborn of like mind gravitated to one another, and the lands that they had each created merged. Eventually, most of the raw power of the Mists was formed — Weaved — into the world that the fae and the humans now inhabit.

The Inanimae Arise

The firstborn were the only sentient creatures in this new world, or so they say. But they had not managed to weave all of the Mists into matter, and pockets of raw magic

THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE

Modern fae, changelings especially, often wonder what the true difference is between inanimae and firstborn. After all, if the history of creation that most fae are taught is true, the only obvious difference is that the firstborn wholly sprang out of the Mists while the inanimae sprang out of the Mists combining with the world. That, fae sages patiently explain, is the difference.

Firstborn are creatures born entirely of magic. They are, or should be, completely alien from a human perspective (the fact that most firstborn have some common ground with humanity is a subject of much debate among the fae). Inanimae, on the other hand, are born of the natural world and are therefore much more firmly rooted in it. The firstborn have never really given up the notion that if they wished, they could simply un-create everything in existence, even though this is obviously no longer the case (if indeed it ever were). The inanimae find this notion just as abhorrent as any human being would — they have just as great a stake in keeping the world whole as the mortals do.

still floated about the world. Sometimes, this magic would merge with whatever happened to be around at the time — a mountain, a pond, a bolt of lightning — and that natural phenomenon would gain life. The firstborn called these beings the inanimate; and at first, they were delighted to find other beings in the world besides themselves. After the firstborn discovered that they could not control the inanimae, however, their opinion quickly changed.

The firstborn and the inanimae didn't exactly go to war, but they kept themselves very much separated for a time. The problem was, however, that the inanimae were intrinsically tied to the world that the firstborn had created, and could therefore alter it in ways that the firstborn could not. Before the firstborn could stop them, the inanimae had set the world in motion in predictable ways — the tides of the oceans, the rising and setting of the sun and moon — all of this was the result of the inanimae exercising their control over the natural world. The firstborn responded by Unleashing their magic, perhaps trying to exterminate the inanimae, to break them down into their component parts again. Perhaps the firstborn were simply trying to start the whole process over again, to return the world to its state of pure magic. The truth is unknowable, and fairly irrelevant. What the firstborn accomplished was more fantastic than anything they could have imagined, anyway.

They created life.

THE GREAT UNLEASHING

"It covered the world in magic and power. The firstborn — remember, there were no Courts yet — simply raised their hands and *let go*, and the entire world changed. But they couldn't destroy anything, because everything they had created now had a new master. As long as an inanimae had been formed from a particular thing, the firstborn could not render it into the Mists or even affect it with their full power. It always made me wonder — what was lost in the Great Unleashing? Surely there must have been some things that never formed inanimae....

"The firstborn didn't accomplish this by Weaving, my young friends. They accomplished it by Unleashing, by simply allowing all of the magic they held in check to flow freely. They changed the world in the blink of an eye by opening the floodgates of Creation.

"Could they do it again? Bite your tongue, boy!"

— Manalith, changeling of the Spring Court, regaling Fosterlings with history

The Courts Form

After the Great Unleashing, the firstborn realized that they had not accomplished what they had intended, and collectively decided never to release their combined powers again. Current fae belief holds that many of the firstborn scattered into the Mists during the Great Unleashing; some inanimae tell stories that their ancestors absorbed much of the energy that the firstborn released and used it to further define the world. Whatever the truth, the world now contained life — animals, fish, plants — and the fae who had once found commonality in the domains they formed out of the Mists now huddled close together, trying to make sense of the new things surrounding them. They accepted life into these domains to varying degrees; this response to life — to change — formed the basis of the Four Courts.

In some places, the fae rejected life altogether, barring it from their borders. Their cold, harsh lands, they felt, would never allow life (which these fae saw as messy and vile) to flourish. Over time, however, the hardiest creatures crept into these cold lands, and the fae who lived there grudgingly admitted that if living things had the strength to carve out a place in their lands, they had earned the right to stay. These fae, who hated life and yet had no choice but to let it thrive if it could, would become the Winter Court.

Some fae embraced all life, and made their lands temperate in order to accommodate anything that wished to live there. They were initially horrified to discover that life fed upon life, but as they watched, they realized that

pain and suffering were intrinsic to life. The inanimae, especially, quickly grasped that life moved in cycles (this realization never quite settled with the firstborn, being creatures of magic and chaos), and the fae in these lands allowed life to flourish as it could. The lands grew wild and dangerous, but the fae avoided altering it for fear of disrupting the cycles of life. While these fae — who would eventually because the Spring Court — overcame their fear of harming life, they feel most comfortable surrounded by it to this day.

In the hot, harsh deserts, a few fae met and decided that if life were going to intrude on them and their doings, it was going to follow certain rules. The firstborn drew up long lists of these laws, and the inanimae changed the world to enforce them. These inanimae saw to it that water evaporated at certain temperatures, that rain fell from the sky instead of boiling up from the ground, and that living things needed food to survive. These rules were eventually adopted by the entire world, but the fae who pioneered natural law later become proponents of other codes and standards. Those fae now belong to the Summer Court.

Finally, a group of fae dwelling in the lands where the sun never shone brightly, but yet were never entirely dark, held their own discussions about life. These fae were interested not in what life *was*, but what it could *become*. Could living things wield magic the way fae could? Could animals learn to change the world as the inanimae had? The possibilities were intriguing; these fae allowed life into their lands, but carefully chose the most cunning of what they found in the world. These fae might now regret their decision, but the Autumn Court (as they have become known) still search for possibility and potential in all things.

Language

The fae are unsure what precipitated the formation of the Courtly languages, but they are fairly certain that it happened after the Great Unleashing and the division into prototypical Courts. The separation from other fae might have had something to do with it, but that leaves the fae to wonder how they communicated before the Courtly tongues came about. In any event, over time, the fae lost the ability to communicate with those from other lands, and this lack of communication was a major factor leading to the War of Seasons.

Before outright war, however, the fae had to contend with the strangest turn of events yet.

Humanity

Fae in general have a relationship with time that humans cannot understand. A human century might, to a fae, take the time of a single breath, but one moment to a human might feel like a year to a faerie. Therefore, asking a fae when humanity appeared in relation to the Great Unleashing isn't exactly a fair question. The fae don't know

THE LANGUAGES OF THE FAE

Each of the Seasonal Courts has its own language, with unique speech and script. The common language of the fae consists of relatively inelegant, utilitarian words, almost always bastardized by many regional variations in accent and vocabulary. It is much more common for fae to communicate (when they can) in the languages of their respective Courts, because the "Fostering tongue" (so named because it is most often used between a young fae and his mentor) is seen as extremely limited and unrefined in comparison.

The Spring Court speaks a tonal language, a method of communication that relies as much on intonation and voice pitch as actual words. The language sounds much like singing and humming in addition to graceful-sounding, mellifluous words. When written, the language of the Spring Court looks much like intricately layered spirals and circular spider webs on a page.

The Autumn fae have a whispered language punctuated and inflected with hand gestures. The mood of the speaker is conveyed in the speed and sharpness of the motions, from calm, slow gestures when relaxed or tired, to cutting, jagged gestures when angry; it is actually possible to have entire conversations without uttering a sound. The whispers themselves sound like rushing winds or long, barely voiced sighs. When written, the language appears as slashes of curved lines of varying thickness.

The Winter Court's language sounds like a combination of animal-like grunts, howls, snarls and roars. An overheard conversation between Winter fae can very easily be mistaken for a fight among several large predatory animals, which shows the tongue's extensive vocabulary. The language, when written, consists of a huge variety of pictograms, with many thousands of words each represented by a unique symbol.

The Summer-kin communicate in a tongue that has by far the largest vocabulary in comparison to any human or fae language; it is renowned for having several words for almost every possible object or concept. When spoken, it is a rapidly uttered stream of clipped, sharp syllables. When written, it appears superficially similar to human language (in horizontal lines), although it is obvious after even a cursory glance that the Summer tongue has hundreds of letters and no visible punctuation.

when humanity appeared, but they certainly remember what happened next.

The firstborn were immediately taken with these creatures. They don't like to admit it, even now, but humanity fascinates the fae. Many of the inanimae felt the same, although some (notably the stone and wood inanimae) felt

a strange sense of unease about humans. In fact, as humanity spread throughout each of the four domains, inanimae from all of these lands advocated exterminating them. Some legends state that this slaughter actually happened, and only the Spring lands, with their adamant refusal to interfere with life, allowed humans to flourish. The Spring lands, if this is so, were the cradle of humanity, where the race came into its own and began to spread outwards. Even with the support of the Spring fae, though, the humans might never have survived if not for two important events.

The Gift of Fire

While many inanimae distrusted — even hated — humanity, fire inanimae as a rule did not. The fire-kin were fascinated by the way humans looked at flames, staring into them as though in love, wishing to be near and yet afraid of being burned. At some point, a fire inanimae whose name is lost to time (but whom human legend calls "Prometheus") changed his form to resemble the humans and came among them, explaining how to summon fire as they wished and control it so that they could use it safely.

This decision didn't exactly make Prometheus a hero among the rest of the fae, and it is commonly accepted that he met his death after giving his gift. Modern fae don't even agree what Court Prometheus belonged to, although he is commonly held to have been Autumn-kin. The gift of fire, though, had lasting consequences for the fae, for a number of different reasons. Obviously, now that humans could call and control fire, they had been given a tiny but significant fraction of the power that the fae had to change the world. But just as significantly, a fae had taken on human form and interacted with them, and this fact did not go unnoticed by the firstborn.

Eve

Human legend makes some interesting assertions about the creation of the world and the order of events, including some fables about a mighty Creator fashioning the first woman as a mate and helper to the first man. The fae recognize some truth to the tale of Adam and Eve, however — a woman *did* come to a man and bear him children, but the woman was one of the firstborn. The children, then, were the first changelings. The humans speak of Cain and Abel, and of their enmity and supplication to the Creator. Fae legend holds these events to be primarily human inventions, but does state that these were not Eve's only children, nor was Adam her only mate. Most of the changelings were taken away from humanity, into realms where fae did not allow humans to venture, and raised there. Those first changelings grew up to be something of a disappointment to their fae relatives.

For one thing, changelings could not change their forms as fluidly as firstborn or inanimae. They grew up looking like humans, but as they came into their power (which was an interminably slow process, from the first-

LIES

"I am not one of the firstborn, but I, like them, am sickened to hear tales of the fae rutting with humanity. Our Court has changelings, yes, and did even before the Golden Age — but we had them for a very different reason.

"When a firstborn child was weak, stupid or simply unwanted, that child would be taken to a human settlement and given to human parents. The human baby we would take back to our lands... and I hardly need explain what happened to it then. Certainly, other, weaker Courts would raise their stolen infants and they would become milklings themselves, but we had no part of that.

"And that is the truth — changelings are the weakest of the fae, spared only because we are loath to murder our own children. The other Courts would never admit to this practice, of course... but they exchange children, as well."

— Muriel, wind inanimae of the Winter Court, in a discussion over the merits of changelings

borns' perspective) they gained the ability to exhibit their heritage physically. But the fact that they *were* inherently physical, rather than magical, was enough for the firstborn to consider them second-class citizens at best, and anathema at worst. This did not stop curious firstborn from doing as Eve had done and venturing among humans to sire or birth children, but the changelings that resulted were often left with their human parents to grow up there, and taken into fae society when they finally discovered their control over magic (if even then).

The First Stirrings of War

At this point, the greatest tensions between fae were due to Origin, not Court. The hidebound Summer Court might have looked askance at the lawless and violent Winter Court, of course, but the true strife was between the inanimae and the firstborn (who still couldn't exactly relate); the firstborn and the changelings (the parents were often ashamed of their children, but were unwilling to simply let them perish); and the inanimae and the changelings (the inanimae were sure that humanity was looking for ways to control the other elements as they had fire, and the changelings feared the power of the inanimae to change the world under their feet). But because of the divisions of language, fae of similar Origin could not easily ally across Court lines.

What exactly turned one Court against another for the first time is a matter of conjecture. Each Court has its own stories, but all agree that humanity was at the center of it. Humans had learned how to change the world, up to a

point, when they learned to control fire. Now, terrified as they were of the fae, they understood a little of the beings that had created the world in which they lived, and wished for even more control over their world.

The fire started in the Autumn lands. What group of humans started it, and exactly why, the fae will probably never know. But the fire spread from the Autumn lands with a fierce hunger, encouraged on by the flame inanimae swept up in the passion and beauty of their element unleashed. The blaze spread into the other lands. When it reached the Winter lands, it melted their snow and ice, and the lands flooded. When it reached the Summer lands, it changed the desert sands to glass and blackened the rock of the mountain. When it reached the Spring lands, countless animals (and humans) died in the blaze, and the Spring fae stood helplessly by trying to decide if this fire were part of a cycle or not.

When the blaze finally ended, the world was changed so completely that some inanimae had actually changed in elemental aspect. Ice inanimae from the Winter Court were now water inanimae, while fae of the cold mountain air in the Summer lands now took the form of lightning. But worse yet, the humans now had a point of reference — they could divide time into before this cataclysm and after it, and mark the days and the years thanks to the laws imposed on the world by the inanimae.

The Seasons Begin

To say that the inanimae were humbled by the cataclysm wouldn't be entirely accurate, but they certainly allowed most of their hostility toward the fae of other Origins to cool thereafter. While they still didn't quite understand the firstborn, they knew that the firstborn weren't human and that was a mercy. While they still distrusted the changelings, the inanimae knew that the changelings might be able to help explain the actions of humanity, and perhaps even help to put humanity in its place. With a somewhat solidified sense of purpose, the fae turned their attention to making sure that nothing like the cataclysm ever happened again.

Of course, each Court had a different plan of action. The Winter Court advocated destroying humanity once and for all; the Spring Court decided that the fire *was* natural (since humans had started it) and therefore they deserved no punishment; the Summer Court wished to force humanity into a strict set of rules to make sure it would never grow so destructive again; and the Autumn Court was simply curious to know what the humans had wanted to accomplish in the first place. The Four Courts tried to explain their plans to one another, but many, many fae had perished in the blaze and those remaining were not fluent in the tongues of those outside their own lands. The fae grew frustrated, and finally the Spring Court took action. In a working that rivaled the Great Unleashing, the Spring fae (whose lands and numbers had been least affected by the

fire) changed the world. All over, the Earth began to resemble the Spring lands—game was plentiful and life was allowed to take its course.

The fae of the other Courts weren't able to do anything to stop the Spring fae, but were incensed at what the Spring-kin had done. They used their magic to protect pockets of the world, holding those areas in the states that they most preferred. Many of these "pockets" remain under fae control even today, as the fae realms that humans occasionally stumble into.

The alteration of the world by the Spring Court allowed the humans and the fae to rebuild their populations and regain some of their power. The Summer Court was the fastest to recover, and their most powerful sorcerers Wove a similar working. The land grew hot and parched, and the world became what the Summer fae most desired for a short time.... until the Autumn Court gained enough power to do the same thing. The Winter Court was the last to accomplish this working; their lands had been so radically altered that they had no choice but to wait. By the time the Winter Court was able to cause snow to blanket the Earth, they were livid with the other fae.

Stories vary on how long this "seasonal rule" went on. Some modern fae—the Patrons, especially—assert that it was the norm for thousands of years before the War of Seasons began in earnest. Other fae believe that it lasted only one year, that each Court had its turn to rule the world only once before all fell to chaos. The fae's skewed sense of time doesn't allow for any greater precision in determining this bit of history, although the Patrons are constantly looking for evidence to back up their claims of a long, idyllic (or at least functional) period of seasonal rule.

Solstice Fae

The Courtless fae first appeared after seasonal rule was instituted. Some fae, the story goes, refused to be part of the seasonal rule. They would accept nothing less than true rule. Most fae regarded this attitude with amusement and contempt, and turned such fae out of their Courts. These outcasts wandered from place to place, and eventually began acting as couriers and mercenaries to survive. The Solstice fae, as they became known, still perform those duties today.

War Commences

However long it lasted, seasonal rule didn't sit well with the fae. The notion of only ruling the world for one-quarter of the year was ironically unbearable to creatures with a limited sense of time, especially when for three-quarters of the year a given fae couldn't speak the same language as those in power.

How the war actually began is one of the most hotly debated topics in fae society. The commonly accepted theory is that one of the Courts (and evidence exists to implicate all four of them) grew too greedy and refused to

relinquish its hold on the world. The others went to war, but did not ally with each other (in part because they lacked a common language and in part because they simply wished to rule without interference). Fae scholars state, however, that it wasn't as simple as that, and numerous conspiracies are often cited when discussing the beginnings of the War of Seasons (the Coterie of Drail is one such theory; see p. 31).

The War of Seasons

As the war began, each of the Courts was under the control of a particularly ambitious and powerful fae. Although three of them are known to have fallen in the Battle of Stone (see p. 48) and the fourth has not been seen since that fateful day, all four names are spoken with hushed reverence or a vitriolic spit by modern fae. All four of these fae leaders were firstborn; at the time, changelings were never permitted to assume positions of leadership, and the inanimae, while not specifically forbidden to lead, were rarely afforded the opportunity.

The most powerful of the Spring Court at the time was Dame Sadijah the Firstborn. Most fae could find sanctuary in her realm for the right price; even a few Winter fae took shelter there for a few seasons. Sadijah was tolerant, not only of the other Courts, but also of the various Origins; and although she never allowed changelings to become leaders in their own right, she openly accepted them into her personal court and was probably the first fae leader to stop treating them as if they were only one small step removed from the humans. She is probably the reason that the Spring Court was so reluctant to join the War of Seasons—but then, she was also the faerie who pushed the Spring-kin to seize power so quickly after the Cataclysm, so ambition wasn't completely foreign to her.

A mighty general named Luxcian presided over the Summer Lands. Legend says that he glowed so brightly that no one could even look upon him, and that he punished anyone who broke the rules of the Summer Court extremely harshly. Modern legends speak of Luxcian turning oath-breakers out into the deserts with nothing but a thin shirt, and chaining criminals to sheets of slate to be left out for the sun.

Halostian, one of the shrewdest politicians who ever lived, ruled over the Autumn Lands. He kept his people so busy trying to surpass one other that they never so much as thought about unseating him (which, given the fractious political climate during the Autumn Court's rule, was impressive). The Autumn Courtiers are not known for their magical talents in particular, but he was said to be highly talented in that regard. He is the only fae leader whose death at the Battle of Stone is not recorded as fact; popular opinion among the Autumn Court is that he lives still, waiting for the right moment to reclaim the reins of power.

The Winter Court called their leader Blind Nyx. She wasn't particularly monstrous in comparison to some Winter fae, but was as feral as any. Some stories state that she wasn't blind at all, but liked to toy with her prey by putting on a blindfold and tracking it by the scent of fear. Some fae think that Blind Nyx is nothing more than a myth created to scare the young ones, but the Winter fae swear that her spirit guides them to this day.

As mentioned earlier, modern fae disagree over which Court started the War of Seasons. The War didn't start with one verifiable battle, anyway. It occurred slowly, a skirmish here, an assassination there, until finally Luxcian delivered an address to all fae loyal to the Summer Court. In that address, he stated that his Court would assume the mantle of leadership, with each of the other Courts receiving lands to be held in trust with him as the overlord (in a manner similar to the mortal practice of feudalism). This address, of course, was nothing short of a declaration of war, since none of the other Courts had any intention of bowing before Luxcian. The following day, Luxcian's forces marched on a stronghold belonging to a nephew of Blind Nyx, and stormed it. The fae driven from that fortress, in turn, laid siege to an Autumn Court holding, drawing Halostian into the fray before he had time to adequately prepare his forces (which might have been Luxcian's intent from the start). In a matter of months, all the Courts were fighting a four-way war.

The First Oaths

Almost immediately upon the commencement of the war, the fae realized that their battles would tear the world apart if they simply used all of the Earth as their battlefield. No fae wanted to win the war only to inherit a wasteland, but none of the Courts wished to leave fae, even changelings, behind in care of their lands. What if those fae decided to simply take over? Instead, the fae decided to leave the world in the care of beings who could enact change upon it, but never rule it utterly the way the fae could. Namely, they decided to give the world into the care of humanity. Unwilling to give the world over with no strings attached, however, the fae bound humans in sacred vows. These covenants — now referred to as Gold Oaths — were sworn with all of the humans living in a given Court's lands (for despite that fact that a Court ruled the entire world during its season, some lands still remained the strongholds of certain Courts). The wording of the oaths was never as simple as "You will look after the world for us until the war is over." Instead, the oaths required that humans would perform some task, in return for which the fae would protect them from the war and its effects. The main purpose of the oaths was to remind humanity, subtly, who the masters of the world truly were.

As history would prove, these oaths may have been too subtle.

SACRED OATHS

"Have any of you ever heard of the Sacred Oaths? I've heard a few rumors about them; but despite years of searching, I have never been able to uncover anything specific. I am certain that some of our elders must have some insight into this mystery, but it is difficult, to say the least, to get them to even converse with a lowly changeling, much less share their knowledge with him. But, from what I have been able to gather, the Sacred Oaths were sworn between the firstborn and some kind of elder faerie creature, perhaps the original firstborn, the ones who formed themselves from the Mists. I imagine that these oaths work fairly much the same as the oaths we swear with humans. We swore to the elder creatures that we would watch over the humans, and in return... This is where I falter. What did they give us in return? Peace? Autonomy? The power over our Dominions? It worries me that we no longer remember the Sacred Oaths, since this means that we could easily be breaking them right now, at this very moment. In fact, some might argue that we shirked our duty by abandoning the mortals to the care of the Gold Oaths while we argued and fought like babes. Perhaps our current state of disorganization and relative weakness is only the beginning of our punishment."

— Worren, a changeling of the Autumn Court, in conversation with his fellow Patrons

Major Battles

Fae historians labor over exacting historical descriptions of the War of Seasons, complete with lists of casualties, major turning points and grand battle plans. Giving a complete history of the War of Seasons would require its own book, and so only some of the most important or interesting events of the war are detailed here.

The Blood Peace

The Autumn Court in the Baltic holds power through a ruling body called the Council of Dusk (as mentioned on p. 37). This was not always the case, however.

The land that humans know as Lithuania has always been the province of the Autumn Court. Indeed, Halostian himself had several domains in this area, where he planned his campaigns and retired after protracted battles. But in the early nights of the War of Seasons, the Winter and Spring Courts held some ground there as well. Halostian knew that without a steady power base to fall back upon, any strategy he could devise would ultimately be too much of a gamble. He therefore called together several of the generals of the three Courts (the Summer Court did not have a strong enough presence in the area to be considered) under the pretense of establishing rules of war.

The Winter Court's representatives came expecting an ambush, and were quite prepared for a battle; instead of sending generals or diplomats, they sent their finest warriors. The Spring Court anticipated that Halostian might try to use them; not wishing to lose any power over a land that so closely fit their desired state of the world, they sent a huge force. The Diet of Pines, as it came to be known in the annals of the War of Seasons, was a massive meeting of Winter and Spring warriors, sorcerers and enchanted slaves.

From the Autumn Court, however, there was only Halostian, and he brought only one other being with him. That being was not one of the fae, but a blood-drinker of a lineage long since lost to madness. The leaders of the Spring and Winter Courts didn't know this until it was too late, however. By the time they left, the blood-drinker's chaotic gaze had fallen on each of them, bending their wills to madness and warping their desires so that agreeing to Halostian's proposals seemed quite reasonable.

In the end, the Blood Peace stated the following:

- The Autumn Court would be the authority among the fae in the area.
- A descendant of the vampire, called the Krivê, would act as a representative of his kind and a spiritual guide for the fae. He would decide all disputes between fae and any supernatural beings. Any fae disrespecting his authority would forfeit his own sanity and become Lost.

Both of these precepts worked heavily in Halostian's favor. No fae could bring a dispute against him, either militarily or otherwise, without violating the oath. If another fae attempted to bring a dispute against him without resorting to violence, that dispute would be heard by the Krivê — and the Krivê was not only a blood-sucking corpse but completely mad as well.

The Blood Peace still stands, and a new Krivê was recently appointed. The fae very seldom actually bring disputes before this mad vampire, but it happens occasionally; and then he has to try to understand the fae enough to resolve it. Normally, the rulings the Krivê makes, filtered as they are through the limits of human understanding, the curse of undeath and utter madness, are so strange and counter-productive that the fae would rather leave Lithuania to resolve their disputes.

Two issues dog the area now, however. First, the Summer Court, which was never party to the Diet of Pines, took a few small domains toward the end of the Dim Years; after the Oath-Truce falls, they can attack other fae in the area with impunity. Second, the actions of the Christian knights in the area are forcing the fae and all other pagans out of their traditional homes. Sooner or later, the Blood Peace must be revised or broken.

The War of Silver and Iron

The groundwork for the war between the werewolves and the fae in the British Isles was actually laid some centuries before. Due to canny maneuvering by Blind Nyx

IRON

According to fae historians, the weakness to iron that all faerie beings share has its origin in one of the very first Gold Oaths. Where exactly the oath was sworn isn't clear, although it stands to reason that it was somewhere with a high amount of iron ore ready to be mined.

A fae chieftain, probably of the Summer or Spring Court, fell in love with a human woman and pledged that he would never hurt her kin or indeed any of her race. She loved him back, and would have accepted his word at face value, but she had a cousin who distrusted the fae. Even if the fae never took direct action against humanity, he said, what stopped him from sending his minions, or using his magic to simply make the land so hot as to be intolerable? The firstborn, insulted and blinded by love, asked the cousin what he would have the fae lord swear.

The cousin responded that humanity needed a weapon against the fae, and that it had to be simple enough that any human could use it. The cousin suggested wood and water, but the fae's lover refused to let her love swear to either of these weaknesses. Finally, the cousin suggested iron, and the lover and the fae agreed. The firstborn swore an oath that forever more, his people would fear iron and its bite would take their lives.

This story is simple enough; but although most fae believe that their allergy to iron probably stems from an oath, many feel that the "firstborn lover" tale isn't the whole truth. More specifically, it doesn't address why only pure, cold-wrought iron harms the fae and not steel or any other alloy, nor why iron seems to sap magic from the fae. See p. 88 for systems on iron.

and Luxcian early in the War of Seasons, the British Isles became a battleground for the Summer and Winter Courts exclusively. While the Spring and Autumn Courts had spies and even small holdings, major forces from those Courts didn't arrive until much later in the war, largely because of fear of being caught in the vicious crossfire between Summer and Winter. The fighting was so fierce, in fact, that human legendry in the Isles still speaks of only two Courts of the faeries, the Seelie and the Unseelie (although these are not terms that the fae themselves use, except when it serves to play to human expectations).

The Summer fae and the Winter fae couldn't ignore the presence of the werewolves on the Isle, and neither side was above tricking the savage man-beasts into attacking an enemy encampment. Special manipulators — called "wolf-mothers" or "howl-maidens," for they were almost always

female — became especially skilled at talking with the shapeshifters, telling them what they needed to hear to enter battle, and even soothing their wounds afterwards. Over time, packs and tribes of werewolves began to develop their own names for the beautiful, luminous fae of the Summer Court and the twisted, vicious fae of the Winter Court. These terms even reached human ears, and corruptions of the titles, such as “Tuatha de Danaan” and “Fomorian” are still used in the Isles.

Werewolves might be simple, but they aren’t stupid; and eventually they discovered that the fae were using them and fought back. This was the true beginning of the War of Silver and Iron, in approximately 800 BC by human reckoning. The werewolves slaughtered any fae they could find, and even taught humans about the fae’s traditional allergy to iron. The fae responded in kind, instructing the humans (who had, in centuries past, suffered at the claws of the werewolves) to fashion weapons of silver to bring the beasts low. The war between the two races was brutal and short; it was during this conflict that Spring and Autumn fae arrived in the Isles in any numbers, as the Winter- and Summer-kin were distracted from their usual vigilance by the howls of the wolf-changers.

The War of Silver and Iron ended not because either side won, but because it was proving entirely too costly for the fae. Fighting each other was draining enough, but having to contend with the werewolves (who were and remain tenacious about besting their foes, to say the least) was too much. Slowly, the fae receded into their realms where the werewolves could not follow, and the War of Seasons on the Isles enjoyed a brief lull (approximately one human century) during which fae interacted with humanity more often and formed some of the strongest and longest-lasting oaths anywhere in the world. After most of the werewolves who had been involved in the War of Silver and Iron died, the fae rejoined their own conflicts, being careful not to make the mistake of involving the shapeshifters once again.

The Battle of Ice

The Battle of Ice wasn’t a major turning point in the War of Seasons, but it did mark several important events and remains a common fireside tale among changelings and firstborn both (for very different reasons).

The Summer Court had an interest in a fortress made entirely of crystal located in lands so cold that only the Winter Court had ever held power there. The Crystal Fortress (which is described in more detail on p. 170) contained magical inscriptions of untold power; and all of the Courts coveted it, although only the Summer and Spring fae had encroached enough into Winter territory to be a threat to Blind Nyx’ troops. The two Courts (Summer and Spring) had been fighting around the fortress for some time, with occasional skirmishes against the Winter fae actually holding the fortress, when Dame Sadijah decided to

intervene. An inanimae knight in service to Sadijah, called Kapherah, appeared in Luxcian’s court. Rather than go directly to Luxcian himself, Kapherah approached one of her fellow inanimae with a proposal for alliance. Kapherah took the proposal to a water inanimae who had Luxcian’s ear, who went by the name of Davidian. The two inanimae, quite apart from agreeing on a military and strategic level, also became lovers, according to the more romantic retellings of the War. They cemented their alliance with oaths, but that alliance did not go unnoticed.

Halostian heard about the truce between Summer and Spring, and he took action. First, he went to Blind Nyx and offered a truce of his own. They’d agree not to attack each other until the Spring and Summer Courts were destroyed. After that, they’d go their separate ways. Blind Nyx was a sadistic monster, but she was no fool; and she agreed to the proposition. After that, Halostian sent a courier to Luxcian’s court. The courier was Halostian’s lover, a firstborn named Lady Jazabelle, and her standing was such that Luxcian actually let her in the doors without much argument. Jazabelle told Luxcian about the deal between the two inanimae, and as Halostian expected, Luxcian was furious. Not only had his general overstepped his boundaries and fraternized with the enemy, but the arrangement between Davidian and Kapherah meant that the Spring and Summer armies in the area of the Crystal Fortress could not attack each other. Neither Court had a good enough advantage to take the fortress from the Winter fae, but the last thing Luxcian wanted was to share the fortress with anyone, even Dame Sadijah. He sent a messenger demanding Davidian’s immediate abdication.

In the first century AD, the Four Courts met on the battlefield near the Crystal Fortress. The Battle of Ice was odd in that not a single firstborn was on the field of battle. Inanimae led squads of changelings and enslaved mortal soldiers, but the firstborn did not take the field. This meant that most of the fighting took place with weapons and cantrips, rather than Unleashings, but still the ice turned pink with fae blood that day.

The Four Courts met in a mountain range that offered a tactical advantage for all of them. The Winter Courtiers lined themselves up on the icy peaks. The Autumn Courtiers took the wooded expanses, while the Spring Court hid among the long grasses of the meadows. The Summer Courtiers took the bare expanses of rock, and all four thought they had the advantage over their brethren. The battle took place on neutral ground some distance from that fortress, claimed by none of the Courts. This northern land, sparsely populated by humans (and therefore not of much interest to the fae), made wonderful neutral territory on which the Courts could meet in glorious combat.

The mountains were filled with the clash of battle, the eldritch echoes of magic and the screams of the dying. But the alliances made before the battle held: The Summer

"Shandolyn, dearest, can you enlighten me on something? I am still so puzzled as to why the firstborn did not join the rest of us on the field at the Battle of Ice. You could have turned the tide; you could have stopped the fighting once and for all if you had come out. Why did you all choose to hold back? I find it somewhat suspicious. After all, it was not one Court or two, but firstborn from all Four Courts who failed to appear on the field. Was this planned, do you know? I am proud of my fellow inanimae who stood on the field of battle, although I admit that I do not think fighting is the answer to our problems. But I admit that I worry about what will happen if we seize the reins of power as we plan; what will happen if our enemies choose to fight back? Will the firstborn join our fight, or will they leave us to perish? Please, dear Shandolyn, reassure me that I worry in vain."

— An excerpt from a letter from Carralindra, fire inanimae of the Spring Court, to her fellow Patron and firstborn Shandolyn of the Autumn Court

Courtiers, commanded by Davidian (who had not yet received the order to step down), and the Spring Courtiers, led by Kapherah, didn't fight each other. The Winter and Autumn Courtiers likewise avoided each other.

The battle continued in this fashion for more than a day, without any side gaining a significant advantage, and the missives coming from the firstborn leaders back home were less than complimentary. Then Luxcian's messenger arrived demanding Davidian's immediate abdication, but Davidian failed to follow orders once again. He hoped to bring a victory to his liege in the hopes of appeasing him, but that wasn't to be. News of the letter and of Luxcian's extreme anger lowered the Summer troops' morale considerably, particularly the changelings (who weren't favorites of Luxcian's anyway). One of these changelings, called Tandoor, had served for years in Luxcian's palace and was well aware of the lengths to which his leader would go to punish those who countermanded his orders. Tandoor knew that Luxcian wasn't going to look favorably on their failure to fight against the Spring Court, or on Davidian's continued command of the Summer Regiments. The Summer fae had been ordered to exterminate all of the non-Summer troops, not just the Winter and Autumn folk,

and to take that fortress for the glory of the Summer Court. That was exactly what Tandoor meant to do.

Tandoor quietly gathered together a large group of Summer Court changelings, and the group of them staged a coup and managed to depose Davidian. Davidian and Kapherah fled south (their fate is described on p. 174). Once this upset occurred, all of the fight left the Spring and Summer Courts, and they retired from the field of battle. The Battle of Ice was over, since the Autumn and Winter Courts had agreed not to draw arms against each other.

The Summer Court changelings brought the news of their coup back to Luxcian and demanded that he recognize their contribution to the battle. Reluctantly, Luxcian released the rest of his changeling servants and publicly recognized the status of changelings in his lands as full citizens and valorous fighters. He gave Tandoor the first Medal of the Sun, marking him as a Summer Court hero.

The Battle of Stone

The Battle of Stone came some three mortal centuries after the Battle of Ice, around the time that Constantine I converted to Christianity. Halostian and Blind Nyx wanted to push their advantage against the Spring and Summer Courts, since the Spring-Summer alliance obviously had failed. But each was secretly conspiring against the other. Halostian sent emissaries to Sadiyah, offering assistance in exchange for a peace settlement. Blind Nyx was taking stock of Halostian's forces, and she didn't bother making a secret of it. Clearly, it was only a matter of time before their fragile alliance fell into pieces, and each of the Four Courts saw an opportunity to triumph. The Autumn and Winter folk wanted to strike before their alliance fell apart; and the Summer and Spring Courts both knew that since the alliance might fall at any moment, they had to be ready to strike.

Fae historians note that letters and records surviving from this period of the War of Seasons seem to convey an air of desperation among the fae, as though something terrifying was occurring across their society beyond the War. Certainly, great changes were occurring among mortals, as well, but fae are quick to dismiss these events as mere children's games compared to the awesome machinations of the Courts. Whatever the truth, all four commanders moved their armies slowly toward the Middle East.

While numerous war journals exist from the time, written by changeling soldiers and firstborn commanders alike, no surviving account indicates with any clarity why the foothills of a particular mountain, far away from humanity and yet so close to the center of much of their faith, was so important to all Four Courts. Rumor speaks of an untapped connection to the pure Mists of Creation, a connection that would enable magic on the scale of the Great Unleashing; but these are only rumors. Besides, the fatalistic tone of many soldiers' journals — and the feelings described later by survivors — don't indicate anything so promising.

ENDINGS

"We knew we were going to die. No one said it. We talked of death and glory, or death and loss, but we never discussed the inevitability of it all. Something was on the horizon as we marched further away from our holdings and from the mortals and their lands, as the ground grew harder beneath our feet and we could hear the opposing armies massing miles away. It wasn't just death. It was oblivion. We were marching into nothingness.

"The Battle of Stone didn't decide anything about the War of Seasons. All it did was drive a wedge between all fae and the world."

— Malins, a firstborn of the Spring Court and survivor of the Battle of Stone, in his cups

simply vanished, and hasn't been seen since. Perhaps he knew what was going to happen on that battlefield because he is the one who orchestrated it.

The battle was easily the most brutal of the War. The sky itself grew dark over the battlefield, and the very weather changed with each passing moment. It rained and snowed at one moment, and the sun shone brightly the next. The Four Courts met on the stony ground, and the truce between the Autumn and Winter fae shattered almost immediately. The Berserkers, a regiment of Winter-kin renowned for their frenzied brutality, were the first of their Court on the field of battle; and their leader, a hulking brute named Wallach, tore the head off of a nameless Autumn Court changeling and bathed in his blood. This quite naturally enraged the Autumn fae, since the unfortunate had quite civilly stayed his sword in accordance with the truce sworn by Blind Nyx and




Some fae of the Four Courts place the blame on the Solstice fae, stating that a secret society of the Courtless carefully engineered the slow march toward an out-of-the-way battle site, hoping that the Four Courts would slaughter each other. Another widespread theory implicates Halostian. He is well known to have sent out emissaries to each of the Courts: He parleyed with Blind Nyx and with Sadiah, and he would have done so with Luxcian if he'd been allowed. Halostian is also the only Court leader from the Battle of Stone whose death is assumed, rather than a matter of confirmed record. He

Halostian.

But none of the Autumn fae were inclined to hold to the truce after such a display, and they struck out at the Winter fae with a ferocity surprising for their Court.

The Spring and Summer Courts joined the battle from opposing sides, their warriors mixing with Autumn and Winter combat already in progress. The Spring fae called up ancient beasts from the land, and the sky rained down fury from their magic. The Summer Court's magic, however, gave strength and courage to its soldiers and they pushed



onward, slaughtering their enemies and seeking to avenge old grudges against all of the Courts.

This phase of the battle lasted for weeks, or perhaps even years — time, again, is not consistent for the fae. Each side took and lost territory, and champions and heroes from all Four Courts are toasted and reviled in strongholds the world over even to this day. All war historians agree, however, that the battle reached its fever pitch when the four commanders entered the fray.

Luxcian and Blind Nyx sought each other out on the battlefield, and the fight between the two was amazing to behold. Luxcian had the skills of a warrior beyond compare, and his shining armor served as a beacon to his troops as it flashed in the sunlight. He wielded a broadsword so tremendous that it took the strength of five mortal men to lift it. Luxcian knew no fear, so he challenged Blind Nyx as soon as he laid eyes on her. She turned her white eyes on him and grinned a predatory smile, since she knew she was more than his equal on the battlefield. She carried a frost-tinged war hammer called Avalanche, and she danced around Luxcian's massive sword with capering glee. The two of them darted, feinted and parried; and the battle around them slowed as the combatants turned to watch the two masters at work.

If Blind Nyx had not cheated, things might have turned out differently; but why Luxcian expected honor from her is somewhat of a mystery. Gord, Nyx's changeling toady, struck Luxcian from behind, knocking him off balance, and Nyx moved in for the kill. Her hammer smashed through the splendid breastplate, crushing the Summer King. The gathered Summer fae were so enraged that they charged Blind Nyx all at once, and their numbers were such that she could not fight them off, wounded and fatigued as she was. She fell before them, and a stone inanimae named Braden was later given the Medal of the Sun for striking the blow that killed her.

The Winter fae regrouped under Gord's direction, and he took the Berserkers and ran wild over the field. This turned out to be Dame Sadiah's undoing. She'd watched the fight between Luxcian and Blind Nyx with a mixture of grief and fear. After Nyx fell, she threw down her sword and resolved to leave the field in peace. Surprisingly enough, quite a few of her Spring fae, many of whom belonged to her elite regiment, the Green Blade, followed suit. They left their weapons in a heap near the broken bodies of Luxcian and Blind Nyx, and they began to walk off the field. No one moved to stop them, and not a few of the warriors began to think that perhaps Sadiah was right; perhaps the Courts could peacefully coexist. And then, just as Sadiah and her followers turned to salute their fallen comrades, Gord and the Berserkers fell upon them with teeth and swords; in the resulting chaos, only one or two of the Green Blades made it out alive. Sadiah herself never even tried to run, only held out her empty hands and turned her face to the heavens as Wallach's blade ran her through.

Sometime during the slaughter of Sadiah and her followers, Halostian took his sword and scabbard and set them carefully upon a rock at the center of the battlefield; and he simply disappeared. No one saw him go, and his body was never collected from the battlefield. But his sword, called Ananda, and the matching scabbard, both encrusted with blue sapphires that glitter with the rising moon, still wait there still in the center of the battlefield, waiting for his return; whether it is out of respect for Halostian or out of fear of reprisal, no one dares touch them or move them from their place.

With the death or disappearance of all four of the Court leaders, the battle soon came to an end. The survivors busied themselves with carting off bodies and tending to their wounded. Dirges for the dead wound through the hills, and fae from all Courts retired to their strongholds wearing their mourning cloaks, to put their kin to rest at home. The Battle of Stone was over, and all of the Four Courts had lost.

The Dim Years

The War of Seasons, while far from over, had seen its last great battle. The Courts turned their attention to regrouping. Sainings became more common, since many posts were left empty after the Battle of Stone. Changelings in particular increased in number, and all of the Courts were forced to treat them as equals, since they had suddenly become essential members of society, taking places that were formerly denied to them simply because there was no one else who could.

The fae focused on picking up the pieces, and didn't interact much with mortals, much less with the other Courts. They were too busy selecting new leaders and training militia in the event that an enemy Court might cross their borders, not to mention Saining new fae and initiating them into the ways of the Courts. Surprisingly enough, the fae swore few oaths with humans during this time, and nearly half of the oaths that were sworn involved the Solstice fae (who hadn't been involved in the Battle of Stone in great numbers). Some of the Courts forged oaths designed to increase their numbers or protect their borders (inasmuch as humans could be relied upon to do such a thing), but most of them relied upon the Gold Oaths that had been forged before the War. This would eventually be recognized as a mistake. Many of the elder fae who knew the ways of forging new oaths were dead, or left in search of respite from the War and never returned. By the time the fae realized that the mortals were slowly forgetting the old oaths, the art of oathforging was all but lost. Those who knew how to forge oaths would only practice their art in exchange for patronage from a powerful noble, or something equally as valuable, and these oaths were never as powerful as the ones they replaced.

Further complicating this matter was the spread of Christianity among the mortals. Churches and crosses began to spread across lands formerly dedicated to worshipping the fae, and most of the Courts were too closed off to see it happening. Quite a few of the former fae strongholds fell into disuse, and the humans no longer visited the faerie mounds to dance under the light of the full moon as they had promised. They were too busy attending to the bells calling them to worship. Some of those faerie holds that did not fall to the Church were taken over by other creatures — witches, shapechangers and other things of that sort — and although a few were retaken, it took much effort to do so, and sometimes the fae simply lacked the strength of numbers to make it happen.

The War During the Dim Years

The War of Seasons didn't end with the Battle of Stone. The fae were simply so badly reduced in number and morale that they didn't have the ability or desire to make war anymore. The fae retreated to their strongholds, their villages and their hideaways; they fulfilled their oaths with humanity and met members of their own Court only rarely, and members of others even more rarely.

This is not to say, of course, that conflict did not occur. No formal truce had been called, and the Courts still considered themselves very much at war. They simply didn't pursue it vigorously. None of the Courts had a strong enough leader to rally them, and after the strange gathering that precipitated the Battle of Stone no fae was keen to encroach on another's territory or be caught too far from his own.

It was during this period that fae leaders like Highsmith Wayland and the White Lady seized and held power. Fae realms grew further removed from human lands. Although humans could and sometimes did accidentally enter these realms, by and large they forgot the truth about the fae; forgot that they owed their lives and their world to the Four Courts; and most of all, forgot the promises they had made.

The Glastonbury Compact

One strange and notable thing that happened during the Dim Years was the Glastonbury Compact. A group of mortal witches approached a faerie hold in southern England and respectfully asked for audience with the elder. These witches were somewhat unusual in that they had sworn a Gold Oath in centuries past with the local fae, and the oath still held. This accorded them a certain amount of respect; and the local lord, a Spring Court firstborn named Avallach, granted them an audience. Avallach was one of the most powerful faerie lords, but had not entered the Battle of Stone. He was a reclusive sort, rarely leaving Glastonbury Tor, and rarely receiving visitors (more information on him is presented in Chapter Five, p. 177).

The witches had an interesting proposition. They were having problems with vampires, who were stalking the wilderness and preying on the local mortals. The mortals,

in turn, were blaming the witches and hunting them down. Avallach initially noted that this wasn't any of his concern, but the witches pointed out that the fae were suffering at the hands of the vampires as well. The mortals, they said, were slowly forgetting their awe of the fae, so afraid were they of these blood-drinkers. Avallach did not want to believe this; although some of his underlings reported that the humans were breaking their oaths, he had never left the tor to see it with his own eyes until the witches came. They walked with him around the countryside late one night, and instead of the usual bowls of cream and iron horseshoes that the humans thought would protect them from the faerie folk, there were strings of garlic and holy items. The humans had forgotten their fear of the fae, and Avallach worried about what this meant.

While the two sides were out surveying these developments, another faction approached them. This third faction represented the Church, but its members assured Avallach and the witches that the Isles were big enough for all of them. They felt it was their holy duty to destroy the vampires, but lacked the raw power necessary. Avallach agreed to assist the witches and the priests in their struggle, and the Glastonbury Compact was born. The three sides swore a Stone Oath to not only work to rid the area of the demons, but also to respect each other's boundaries and influences.

The partnership was rather limited in scope, but it was a success. The night demons found themselves beset by faerie Dominions, the magics of the witches and the faith of the priests all at once. The vampires were destroyed, and the three sides went back to their respective homes.

It would not be the last time that warriors of the Church would meddle in the affairs of the fae. The Glastonbury Compact ended in AD 1105, and it made the fae of the Isles take notice of humanity and their surroundings. For most of the rest of the world, however, the fae were isolated and aloof.

Twenty-five years after Glastonbury, however, a man of God brought humanity to the fae's attention again.

Brother Everard de Gascony

Brother Everard was a member of a brotherhood called the Order of St. Theodosius — not that this name meant much to the fae. In an abbey in the Pyrenees, Brother Everard and a group of his fellows enacted a powerful ritual. The effects were similar to an Unleashing gone out of control; their abbey was completely destroyed in an explosion that lit the night and shook buildings for miles around. None of the brothers survived, and the Church doubtless had their own concerns about what had happened.

Fae from each of the Four Courts investigated. They discovered that Brother Everard had discovered an abandoned Spring Court holding near the abbey, and had brought back a stone covered in carvings. Even more

GLASTONBURY, ALLIANCE AGAINST THE DARK

"They are oathbreakers, and nothing more. They came to us, these wizards of the One God, with words of peace and humility, asking us to help them in their struggles against the parasitic vampires. Having no interest in such creatures, my lord Avallach wondered why we should involve ourselves in the troubles of mortals. The night creatures are hardly a threat to any wielding the powers of Day — it is the humans who fear their bite.

The clerics spoke of a new breed of vampire, one that wielded mystic arts and tapped the energy of the earth in corrupt and unholy ways. They stressed this danger to Ynys Witrin, that these new parasites would drain the magic from our very walls and bend it to their will. Avallach was unmoved. Ultimately, a group of pagan mages that had long been our friends beseeched him to reconsider. Yielding to their desperation he forged an oath, agreeing to help destroy these new parasites in exchange for a promise. The mages would not intrude upon the places of faerie power nor tap faerie realms for use in their magics. We were fools to think they would keep that oath.

We emerged from the tor to do battle, alongside pagan and Christian mages alike. The vampires routed, we returned home to find the paths long and difficult, as though Ynys Witrin had begun to pull away from the world. Avallach foresaw the truth — that the humans' faith in the One God turned them away from the fae and their oaths, and their belief created powerful magic that pushed our kingdom away.

The cleric wizards died or moved on, and other sorcerers came who would not honor their predecessors' oath. They have driven off their pagan brethren, and each day find new ways to force us back with their faith and holy magic. They cannot be trusted, and no more alliances will we make. It is time we turned the tides and drove them before us like cattle."

— Gwynn ap Nudd, Defender of Ynys Witrin, taken from a letter to a friend



disturbingly, he had managed to *translate* the carvings and read aloud the name written there. In so doing, he had violated a Gold Oath that the people of that region had sworn centuries before: They had agreed never to speak the name of the fae ruler of that stronghold, lest fiery wrath be visited upon them. The breaking of the oath wasn't so surprising; the humans had broken oaths before. But the amount of cunning necessary to translate the fae's language into a crude human tongue rocked fae society to its foundations. If a human could do that, what else could they do? Could they learn to wield Dominions or forge their own oaths with the fae? Could they invade fae realms and steal faerie children?

The fae panicked. Suddenly, the War of Seasons seemed almost insignificant next to the threat posed by humanity. Fae leaders and nobles from across the land met to discuss the future, and the result of the meeting was the most significant event in fae history in the nearly eight centuries since the Battle of Stone.

The Oath-Truce

The most powerful fae in the world drafted and forged the Oath-Truce. Among those present were Highsmith Wayland of the Summer Court, Lord Krode and Lady Nicnivin of the Winter Court, Queen Ana of the Autumn Court and Garain the Tear-Bringer of the Spring Court. The truce's terms were decided in a remarkably short period of time — but what is time to the fae?

The Oath-Truce was to last for one hundred years, and the following terms were agreed upon:

- No Court shall raise an army against another.
- No fae shall kill another in the name of Court.
- Only in honorable duels shall fae slay fae.
- A fae who violates the Oath-Truce may be killed with impunity.
- In one human century, the Oath-Truce shall end.

Fae scholars have noted that the Oath-Truce does not actually prevent fae from killing each other for any reason, even though such a parameter was probably well within the

power of the fae present. It is unlikely, though, that Krode, Nicnivin and Wayland especially would have allowed a magical prohibition to be placed against the murder of other fae. The social prohibition would only extend as far as individual rulers would enforce it.

The stricture against raising armies, however, *was* magically enforced. The punishment for this action was severe, as an ambitious changeling of the Autumn Court discovered in the last decade of the Oath-Truce. He had brought together a small but potent regiment of Autumn fae for the express purpose of invading a Winter holding on the outskirts of the human settlement of Béziers, but that invasion never happened. Instead, mortal crusaders rampaged through the area, slaughtering the fae along with the human residents. Other “tests” of this tenet of the Oath-Truce had, in the past, met with disaster, but nothing on that scale. Fae scholars who looked into that event noted that the seeds of the massacre at Béziers were planted in human politics and zealotry long before the Autumn Court changeling began his campaign, indicating that the magic of the Oath-Truce pushed the fae to fall victim to the humans, not the humans to slaughter the fae. The magic, it seemed, grew more potent as the end of the Oath-Truce drew near.

The Century of Peace

The last century has been one of discovery for the fae. They have reconnected with humanity, forging new (if less powerful) oaths and forming alliances with members of their own Courts thought lost forever. They are learning about their history, their culture and their place in the world of humanity. And yet, the Oath-Truce's end looms on the horizon, and none of the fae can say what the future may hold.

As for the end of the Oath-Truce, no end point other than “one human century” was ever specified. The authors of the truce might be able to pinpoint exactly when it is likely to fall, but given the fae's relationship with time, even they might not be able to say with absolute certainty what event will herald the fall of the Oath-Truce. They are, however, sure that all the fae will know it when it happens.



"Disgraceful," said Hound.

The sprite had served him and his host a glass of wine, and then slunk away like a whipped dog.

"I'll thank you not to tell me how to run my household, Solstice."

The master of the house was an Autumn firstborn, haughty and fat. Hound drooled just looking at him.

"You can thank me. I'll probably tell you anyway." Hound pretended not to notice the disapproving look. One of his sprites, a serpent-like being with bat wings and a barbed tail, coiled around his arm and glowered at the Autumn fae. "Sprites can become firstborn, isn't that true?"

The Autumn fae looked surprised. "But how—"

"I know." Hound clicked his tongue as if urging a horse on. "I'm both Courtless and a changeling—wait, what do you fat bastards call us? Milkings? Yes. I'm a Courtless milking, and therefore couldn't possibly know anything about magic."

"I beg your pardon?" The ruler was offended now. The torches in the room dimmed and the air took on an autumn-like chill.

Hound noted that the Mists were playing around his host's fingertips; apparently the firstborn was close to Unleashing some magic in his direction. The Solstice mercenary decided to delay this a bit. "I do apologize. I was merely pointing out, in an admittedly roundabout way, that I completed my Fostering and much of my Saining before my unfortunate row with my mentor."

Another of Hound's sprites, an impish creature that he called Knob, leapt down from the mantle and stood by Hound's left arm. The Autumn fae relaxed his magic a bit, but glanced at Hound's companions nervously. "Unfortunate row? I'd heard. . ."

"Yes?" Hound knew what was coming, but wanted to hear the supercilious turd ask.

"Well, that you killed him."

Hound leaned back in a huff. "Never! My mentor was like my father, sir, and no matter how much I may have despised him, I would never have raised a hand against him. I left, true, without completing the Naming, but I bore him no ill will, not then and not now."

The Autumn fae breathed, and did not notice a third sprite, this one in the form of a black rat, skitter in from the next room.

"However," continued Hound, his companions drawing close around him, "when the sprites of the household discovered that I had left, they did put on a spectacular show of loyalty to me before running off to join me."

The Autumn-kin swallowed. "How so?"

Hound set down his glass. "Show him, boys." He was gratified to note that some of his host's own sprites joined in, once it was clear that the master's magic wasn't going to save him. "By the way," said Hound to the bleeding firstborn, "I was offered riches, titles and favors to kill you. By your sister, no less." The fae blinked, but had no lips left and couldn't answer. "I didn't take the riches or the titles, although I confess to falling to temptation where the favors were concerned." The firstborn's eyes widened, and then filled with tears. "No, what I wanted in return was the sprites you employed, if they wished to join me." He glanced around. Every sprite in the household stood in a circle around their former master, malice in their eyes.

Hound glanced at the hearth. The fire was blazing merrily. "Take your time, fellows." The sprites leapt. Somehow the Autumn fae found the strength to scream.

Treat them well, thought the Solstice fae, else they end up running with Hound.



CHAPTER TWO: ORIGINS AND COURTS

On burning mornings often there/He saw the King of
Fairyland/Hunting round him with his band/With dim crying and
blowing sounds/Amid the baying of the hounds.

— “Sir Orfeo”

Although faeries are extremely alien to human perceptions, both humans and fae share two factors that define who and what they are — ancestry and allegiance. For faeries these are reflected in Origin and Court.

While the fae are able to procreate and give birth to new generations, many of the faeries (especially the inanimae) lack mothers and fathers as humans define the terms. While family heritage is extremely important to many firstborn and changelings, they more often refer to themselves as being of an inherited aspect of their creation they characterize as Origin. By common standard, even a faerie with parents considers her Origin to be a defining part of her heritage. Fae come from three different Origins: changelings, inanimae and firstborn.

Every faerie, regardless of Origin, must eventually walk the Path of Saining or disregard this honorary ceremony and become one of fae society's most shunned beings, the Solstice fae. Whenever faeries decide to embark on the long road to being Sained, they must petition one of the four Seasonal Courts for a position. Once the Courts decreed that every Fosterling of every Origin was free to swear his fealty to any of the Courts his heart desired. Then first blood was drawn in the War of Seasons, and very few fae petitioned for Saining into a Court other than the one that raised them. Today only the Winter Court is honest enough to admit that they refuse to let any Fosterlings in their care choose a Court. Occasionally, a Fosterling is allowed to choose a Court, but usually this either signifies a particularly benevolent (or Patron-allied) ruler or a scheme designed to manipulate the young fae.

This chapter explores these concepts and explains what it means to stem from an *Origin*, serve a *Seasonal Court*, or become a *Solstice fae*.

Sprites and Origin

While sprites are explored in Chapter Three: Characters and Drama and Chapter Five: Kingdoms and Quests, it is worth noting that they are minor faerie spirits without access to the magic provided by the Dominions. Nonetheless, a sprite may eventually become true fae if its master grants it freedom and uses the Fostering cantrip (see p. 126). Due to the changelings' “half-breed” natures, only those of firstborn or inanimae Origin are capable of performing this action.



Origin

Origin is without a doubt a defining factor when examining faerie society. Battles have been fought over the rights and status of one Origin over another; and indeed, for many years the dividing lines among fae were drawn due to Origin, not Court. A fae's Origin is arguably the most important part of who she is — after all, Court can change (however uncommon this is). Nonetheless, just as a human cannot choose his parents, faeries never choose their Origins.

In their youth, fae tend to lean on others of the same Origin, but eventually the ideologies and goals of the Courts take precedence above any Origin-related affairs. Once the Saining is complete, the fae have more than the vagaries of birth to tie them together — they have the bonds of their Courts as well.

When push comes to shove, the War of Seasons is not among the Origins but among the Courts. Occasionally, Origins may be the foundation of a joint venture between warring Courts in matters of grave importance. In fact, because Origin is not something that faeries choose as they (ostensibly) do Courts, it is not unheard of that siblings and Fostering friends end up in conflicting Courts, and must find common ground in their Origins to overcome their differences in the War of Seasons.

The following section presents an in-depth examination of the three Origins. Each section is structured as per the following:

Title: The Origin's name.

Quote: A quote indicative of faeries from this Origin.

Overview: A brief description of the Origin.

Mien: A general summary of how members of this Origin assume human forms and how they might appear in faerie mien (but see the Court descriptions later in this chapter).

Birthright: A benefit that all faeries of the Origin enjoy.

Frailty: A weakness that all faeries of the Origin suffer.

Beginning Mists: The Mists rating of beginning characters with this Origin. See Chapter Three for an in-depth description of the Mists.

Beginning Weaving: The Weaving rating of a beginning character of the specific Origin. Again, see Chapter Three for more on Weaving.

Beginning Dominions: Even from birth, faeries exert control over the four Dominions to varying degrees. This number reflects how many points faeries of this Origin have to spend on the Dominions during character creation.

Changeling

I was stolen from my family when I was just a baby,
and I am more thankful for it with each passing day.

Changelings may come into existence in many ways, but the practice of abducting infants and replacing them with firstborn babies is the most common. The firstborn grows up among humans and slowly begins to lose parts of her nature, gaining a human soul instead (provided, of course, that the child is not baptized; see p. 108). Humans growing up among the fae, on the other hand, lose part of their human natures; and while they retain their souls, they also become attuned to the faerie realms and the magical energies that the fae wield. Sometimes changelings are the results of procreation between a human and a faerie, and the practice that is rapidly gaining favor among the Courts so they may strengthen their lines before the War begins again. Rumor has it that the Summer and Winter Courts actually have what they refer to as “stables” of humans whose only purpose is to breed changelings. While changelings are not sterile, they remain unable to give birth to new faeries through sexual procreation. The child of two changelings or a changeling and a mortal is often “fae-touched” in some way, displaying odd-colored eyes or another other fae characteristic, but the child wields no magic and has no true connection to the Mists.

Abducted babies and abandoned firstborn are not the only sources of changelings. The fae sometimes enchant and dominate humans, and these slaves sometimes serve their masters for so long that they distance themselves from their humanity and eventually become changelings. Masters of such human servants often petition to their own Courts about the Fostering and Saining of those exceptional individuals.

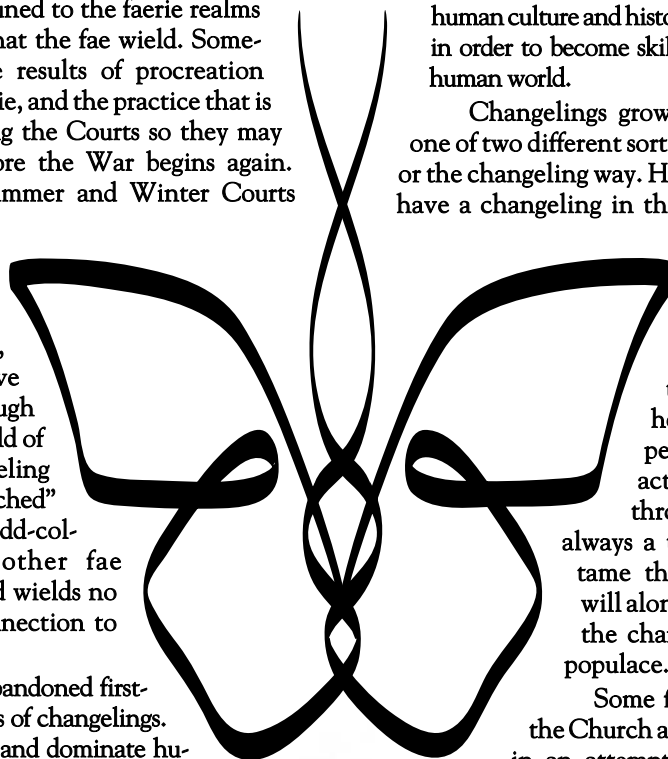
Unlike the firstborn, who often share common elements in their Fosterings, changelings receive their education in different ways depending on where they are brought up and how much they know of their true heritage. Growing up among faeries does not necessarily mean that a changeling has a better life. Traditionalist firstborn families often regard the changelings as illegitimate children and half-breeds, servants valued above sprites at best. Changelings born into such conditions often run

away and end up as Solstice fae, or live in human settlements in disguise. In truth, even traditionalist views vary between holdings, but traditionalist fae rarely consider changelings to belong among them even if they accept the changelings' existence. Liberal fae care for changelings as if the children were their own firstborn offspring, and the changelings receive the same consideration in Fostering as their pure-blooded siblings. In addition to the normal Fostering, they are also taught about human culture and history by abducted human servants in order to become skilled spies and diplomats in the human world.

Changelings growing up among humans face one of two different sorts of upbringing — the human or the changeling way. Humans who don't realize they have a changeling in their midst treat them as they would any other human. Nonetheless, for swapped firstborn children and the direct descendants of a faerie and a human, coming to terms with their powers and heritage is often a horrific experience. The first time they actually wield the Dominions is through Unleashing — almost always a traumatic occurrence. Some tame the magical energies through will alone, but even this often isolates the changeling from the rest of the populace.

Some families bring changelings to the Church and have the children baptized in an attempt to make them part of the human culture and faith. As a result of having human souls, changelings survive the baptizing — but lose their faerie natures forever, becoming completely human. Changelings who avoid this horrific fate eventually come to terms with their true natures and leave their homes, either with faeries they have encountered or alone in search of their “real” families.

For millennia, changelings were prohibited from holding certain positions within the faerie community; but this prohibition has changed over the years, due in part to Tandoor's coup during the Battle of Ice (see p. 48). While it may not be accepted among all inanimae and firstborn, changelings are now allowed to preside over other fae (although tensions often arise among



the Origins in such domains). Although changeling-dominated and -controlled strongholds are fewer in number than those ruled by the firstborn and inanimae, changelings have the same right to assume leadership. Faeries use changelings in dealings that require that no suspicion of faerie involvement, or when they need to infiltrate a human center of power. Indeed, their skills at handling human etiquette and culture are beyond comparison; this is why some believe that the future lies in the hands of changelings and not the firstborn or inanimae.

Mien: The natural state of existence for a changeling before she assumes her first Feature is her human shape. Even after she has assumed a faerie mien, a changeling is able to alternate between her appearances at will. Changing from human form to fae mien requires a Mists roll (difficulty 6); switching back requires a Weaving roll (also difficulty 6). Changing forms in either direction takes one full turn, and possessions and clothing do not change size or shape (meaning that if a changeling's fae mien is considerably larger than his human form, he is advised to wear oversized clothes).

Changelings never become as alien or animalistic as firstborn or inanimae as their faerie natures grow stronger through an increasing number of Features. A changeling, no matter how old she grows or how powerful her magic, is always partially human. Changelings tend to remain within human size ranges, and though their skin, eyes or hair may betray a fae heritage, the sign tends to be an unusual color rather than the obvious supernatural manifestations of the firstborn or inanimae. That's not to say that changelings can't develop Greater Features and look just as otherworldly as other fae; but when they do, the Features tend to take on forms that humans can easily understand — a glowing halo of light, for instance, or bulging, almost oversized muscles.

Birthright: Due to their intimate ties with the mortal world, the devastating effects of Echoes affect changelings less. Echoes influencing changelings are treated as one level lower than the roll would indicate (see p. 110).

Frailty: In the same way that their ties to the mortal world aid in protecting changelings, their distance from the faerie world affects their inherent ability to wield Dominions. Changelings receive one fewer dot in Dominions than firstborn and inanimae during character creation, and are unable to give faerie form to sprites through the use of Dominions. Also, while in human form, changelings cannot perform Unleashings; they are restricted to whatever cantrips they know.

Beginning Mists: 2 **Beginning Weaving:** 4
Beginning Dominions: 2



Firstborn

We are the true children of the Mists and the inheritors of Creation.
If man was made in God's image, then we are God.

The firstborn claim that they ruled — even created — the entire world and that they alone had the right to dictate the laws and decrees of the magical realms. This claim is largely disregarded in the modern age because little evidence exists to support their entitlement. Nonetheless, firstborn are undeniably the most powerful faeries because of their intimate connection to the magical energies that encompass the Dominions. In fact, the other Origins refer to them as “the true fae” even if they disregard the firstborns’ claims of superiority.

While the original firstborn sprang fully formed from the Mists, no new firstborn have appeared this way in living memory. New firstborn are either the children of two firstborn, or are elevated when a firstborn or inanimae Fosters a sprite. Traditionalists sometimes assert that the humans stole the act of conception from the faeries at the dawn of time and made filth of the pure act, while liberals care less about where it comes from and practice it as much as they possibly can without placing any social stigma on it.

Firstborn hierarchy is strict in comparison with those few social structures that exist among other types of faeries. Even a liberal firstborn is strict on matters concerning his heritage and social status, and the most important rule in firstborn families is to obey parents and elders without question. Those who disregard this are often branded as unruly and disrespectful, and without hope of ever becoming a true servant of a Court. Such fae often have to wait an extremely long time before successfully applying for the Saining. Most firstborn learn to handle the pressure of behaving well and protecting their families’ honor above their own lives, but some fall aside early on and end up as Solstice fae. The majority of the firstborn spend their Fostering studying the Dominions and magical lore, warfare and politics, leadership and faerie laws, and

the mysteries of humanity to gain a rudimentary perspective of the world. Among liberal families, firstborn gain their tutelage from teachers of all three Origins, but traditionalists avoid this in order to protect their youngsters from unhealthy worldviews, morals and ethics.

The changes humanity underwent during the Dim Years inflicted a terrible shock on the firstborn. Humans were more self-sufficient and vastly more powerful than they ever were back in the old days. Even their population had exploded beyond imagination; and when a small firstborn expedition ventured into the world shortly after the inception of the Oath-Truce, they never returned. Some say they caught fire and burnt to death, others say they melted as wax; in any event, they were no more. Firstborn secretly tremble with fear that should humans in general learn to focus their faith-based protections against the fae, they would threaten the very existence of faeriekind. In their fear, they look with envy at the changelings, who are able to walk into areas of the world inhabited by humans (which, of course, is most of it) almost without fear.

In spite of everything, the firstborn cannot help but feel awed and attracted by humanity’s talent with architecture and art. When firstborn leave their strongholds without specific purposes in mind, they travel to locations where impressive architecture fills the landscape. Unfortunately, it is not easy to be firstborn and move in a mortal environment, since they are the most vulnerable to Echoes of any of the fae.

Mien: The firstborn are truly the embodiment of the horrifying or astonishing in their appearance. They range from creatures of the darkest and most perverse nightmares to the gentlest or most glamorous of angels. While firstborn are humanoid in shape (normally, although stranger fae creatures such as dragons and other monsters are technically considered firstborn),

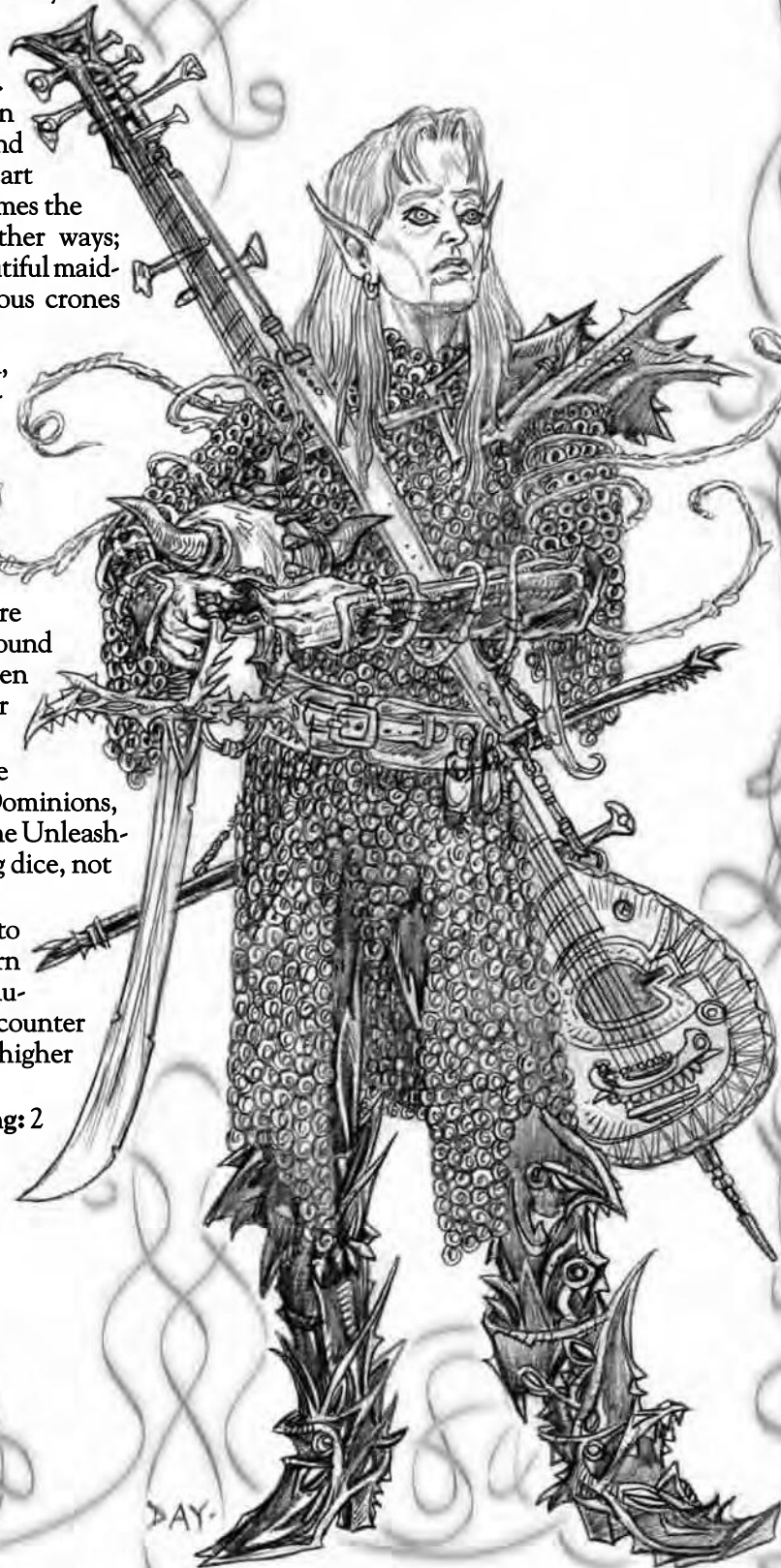
their fae heritage is usually obvious to those who know how to look. A firstborn might have oddly shaped eyes or ears, strangely colored skin, distended teeth or facial features, or even something stranger like a tail. Firstborn more in touch with the Mists change even further, developing horns, fangs, claws, warty or armored skin, and grow or shrink past obvious human parameters. Not all firstborn are so inhuman, however. Some are so beautiful that looking on them strikes humans dumb or mad, and some can coax tears from a mortal's heart with a few well-chosen words. Sometimes the Mists interact with the world in other ways; stories circulate among humans of beautiful maidens whose hair drips gold... or hideous crones who spit frogs when they speak.

Firstborn do not have a human form, and are only able to disguise themselves by using Dominions or allowing the Mists to enshroud them. Before assuming a human shape, a firstborn often kidnaps a human so he can mold his form after the abducted mortal's. Firstborn tend to view this act as a security measure against discovery, but it has more profound effects on the victim's loved ones when they encounter a *very* changed man (or woman).

Birthright: Due to their intimate connection with the powers of the Dominions, firstborn faeries have a much easier time Unleashing. Players only roll three Unleashing dice, not five (see Unleashing on p. 121.).

Frailty: The intimate connection to the faerie world renders the firstborn extremely sensitive to Echoes in the human realms. All Echoes firstborn encounter are immediately treated as one rating higher (see p. 110).

Beginning Mists: 4 **Beginning Weaving:** 2
Beginning Dominions: 3



Inanimae

Today's ripple on the water is tomorrow's thunderstorm.

Contrary to widespread belief, the inanimae are not elemental spirits, but rather faerie spirits that assume the forms of natural phenomena. Inanimae classify themselves under five broad categories: air, earth, fire, water and wood. Within those categories, however, are a myriad of specific types. Air aspects include wind, lightning and smoke. Earth encompasses sand, rock and mud, among many others. Wood inanimae are probably the most varied; any plant could conceivably give birth to an inanimae. Water and fire have fewer variants, but inanimae insist that the difference between seawater and lake-water fae is considerable. All inanimae are extremely colored by their affiliative element. Rock inanimae tend to be dull and slow mentally but possess great strength and stamina. Meanwhile, lightning inanimae act with great force once their minds are made up. Every aspect of an element has its laudable and terrifying traits, and the inanimae inherit them all.

Inanimae reproduce in two ways, and one of them is a secret to all but a few. Ordinarily, inanimae simply spring to life spontaneously. This typically occurs when nature's own forces — such as earthquakes, thunderstorms or wildfires — are active, especially in areas saturated with magic. Most other fae aren't aware that inanimae are born in any other way.

The other manner of reproduction is also the greatest shame and secret of the inanimae, for they believe that it is truly a weakness. If two inanimae of the same elemental aspect mate, the act may result in a short-term pregnancy (lasting only a few days), and the birth of a new inanimae. Should an inanimae make it known that she has parents, others of her Origin often shun her. Many birthed inanimae become Solstice fae out of bitterness.

One of the first acts an inanimae performs after appearing (or birth) is to form her human shape. The human shape is normally based on the first humans the inanimae sees, or simply on an idea she has of what humans look like. An inanimae's human form looks the same each time she assumes it, something that many fae question. It is this consistency, however, that allows the mercurial inanimae to use Weaving (and therefore cantrips); an inanimae without a consistent human form would be at the mercy of the Mists, unable to focus her power or perhaps even remember facts from one moment to the next. Even when in human form, however, some part of the inanimae's elemental aspect bleeds over (see Mien, below).

During the Fostering, an inanimae learns her heritage and the ways of the Court she is going to serve. Young inanimae use this time to indulge their inner chaos while searching for their true places in the world. Elders of the Origin justify this by

claiming that once the youngsters know what they want and who they are, they can perform their duties to the Court without interruptions from impulsive desires. While the elders are generally correct, some inanimae never really adapt to this way of thinking, while others do it long before the Saining.

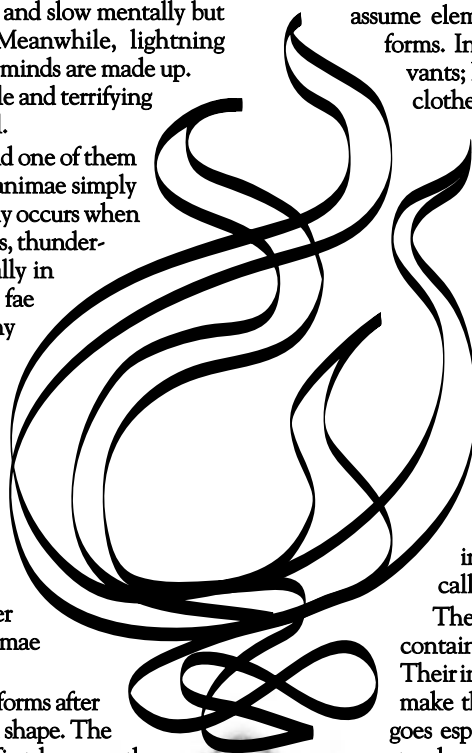
Inanimae, like changelings, had to fight for the privilege to own their own holdings and lead other fae, but that struggle has been over for so long that many inanimae are unaware it ever took place. Inanimae-held realms typically don't have much in the way of built structures (unless they also house good numbers of firstborn or changelings), and most of their sprites tend to assume elemental rather than animal or humanoid forms. Inanimae don't typically keep human servants; humans, they understand, have to be fed, clothed and housed, whereas an inanimae can

simply break down into her elemental components when she feels the need to replenish herself, absorbing sustenance from the very world around her.

This is not to say, though, that inanimae are uncivilized by nature. A wind inanimae might embody song or music, both very civilized concepts, just as easily as the wind over a meadow or a storm gale. An earth inanimae might spring from rocks being quarried to build a cathedral, or a fire inanimae from the cookfires of military camp followers. Inanimae understand society and participate in their own — which includes the looming War — enthusiastically.

The inanimae are not tied to any specific place containing the element from which they sprang. Their inherited abilities to reconstruct their miens make them effective messengers and spies. This goes especially for inanimae of the same natural aspect, who understand each other and can identify with each others' basic needs and frailties regardless of Court. While the inanimae are not as good at understanding humans and their customs as changelings, they are far better at acting human than the firstborn. This is because they, like humans, are creatures inherently of the physical world, whereas firstborn are inherently magical.

Mien: An inanimae's mien owes more to her Origin than to her Court (which is not true of other fae). Inanimae wear their elemental heritage clearly. A water inanimae might appear, in her fae mien, to be made of seawater, or she might simply have skin the color of the ocean and flowing hair the texture of sea-foam. Depending on her Court, her touch might be the frigid caress of northern waters (Winter), the sensual warmth of the Mediterra-



nean (Spring) or even the scalding waters of a hot spring (Summer). A fire inanimae won't necessarily look like a pillar of fire, but is certainly warm to the touch and probably glows with flickering firelight (though he has enough control over his form to keep from igniting everything he touches).

Inanimae in human form are superficially indistinguishable from normal humans; all inanimae are, however, beings of the natural world rather than creatures of flesh. In human form, a water inanimae is likely to be graceful and lithe, but look completely human. Looks can be deceiving, however — if she is cut, she bleeds seawater. Likewise, the fire inanimae is quick witted and brash — and sometimes exhales a cloud of acrid smoke.

Birthright: The inanimae possess incredibly powerful mien-shaping abilities. While an inanimae remains in the vicinity of her chosen element (in the broadest sense; a lightning inanimae can perform this feat anywhere that air exists), she is able to break down and reconstruct her entire body into either faerie mien or human seeming. This reconstruction takes eight hours, but heals all types of damage (even aggravated) that the previous body suffered. The player rolls Weaving (difficulty 6) to enact this reconstruction; if the roll fails, the character is locked in whatever form she currently wears for eight hours. The inanimae drops any clothing or possessions her body is carrying, however, so she is well-advised to make arrangements for objects she wishes to keep before deconstructing her form.

Inanimae begin play with one Greater Feature, accessible only in their fae miens, in addition to any Lesser Features.

Frailty: Echoes don't affect inanimae

to the same degree as the firstborn, but the elemental fae accumulate Echoes more easily. Inanimae characters begin play with one additional Echo; and if an inanimae's elemental nature is clearly revealed during play (for instance, an earth inanimae is cut and "bleeds" mud in full view of human witnesses), the player must check for Echoes normally (see p. 114).

Beginning Mists: 3 **Beginning Weaving:** 3 **Beginning Dominions:** 3



A Shattered Society

Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. The Seasonal Courts are fulcrums, the main factors upon which fae society spins. Ultimately tied to every aspect of a fae's life, the choice of which Court to join can either be a painful, soul-searching quest to attain a personal truth, or an unchanging, crystal-clear goal that must be achieved at all costs.

At the most basic level, each Court has a shared ideology among its members, and the fae belonging to the Court stand to benefit if their chosen faction triumphs in the War of Seasons. More, the choice of Court affects a fae's ability to shape and use magic (their Dominions), and a veritable legion of social factors and issues.

Fae legends speak of ancient times when the Four Courts were in balance, either as a time of shared rule (as the Patrons insist) or a strict regional segregation across the world. No longer. The War of Seasons has raged for time out of mind. In the turmoil and flux of the current age, as the Oath-Truce finally falls, the choice to ascend to the hallowed ranks of a Court is a decision of incredible importance.

Spring

In this new age of both faith and uncertainty, the Spring Court seeks to understand and resolve the wounds created between humanity and the fae. In the War of Seasons, they are keen fighters, eager to achieve

victory once and for all; and in the mortal realm, they seek to regain their mantle of relevance to the humans and be feared and respected once more.

The Court of change and paradox, the Spring fae endeavor to change anything and everything to their advantage, before humanity either forgets them, or banishes the fae forever. Should such an impasse occur, the whole War of Seasons and all other efforts will come to a wasted end.

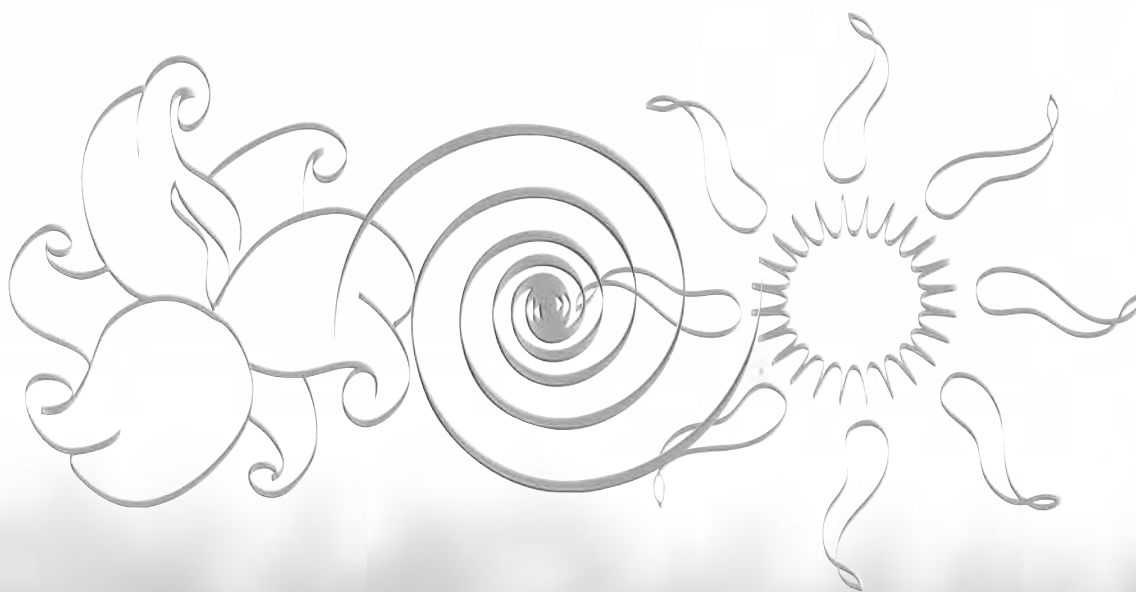
Summer

Consisting mainly of firstborn and inanimae, the Summer Court is a bastion of traditional and self-righteous fae. The members of the Summer Court are alien in their views of humanity; and despite realizing full well that the mortal realm and its inhabitants have utterly changed in the last centuries, these hidebound creatures are unwilling to change alongside them.

For the Summer fae, ignorance of the law is no excuse. Humanity may have forgotten many of its oaths, but that does not mean punishment should be lightened accordingly.

Autumn

The fae of the Autumn Court seek to hide their true selves from the humans, dominating and manipulating them from behind façades of mysterious benefactors. The Autumn fae, like the Spring-kin, realize that the mortals are slowly replacing the pres-



ence of the fae in their lives with incantations to a distant God. Many work to understand humanity's new stance and restore themselves as half-hidden overlords, while others seek to use humanity and the old oaths as weapons in the War of Seasons.

Mortals, for all their frailties and weaknesses, are useful because of the oaths that bind them — useful both as shields against Echoes and as allies in the coming conflict. The fae of the Autumn Court understand these facts implicitly.

Winter

The monsters of human legend, the creatures in the night's shadows — the Winter-kin live to inspire terror in humanity. Largely disdainful of the War of Seasons, the Court has lost much of its drive to eventually triumph over the other factions, now seeing them as almost below notice.

The Winter fae seem incapable of empathizing with humanity, having neither basis nor starting ground to understand the mortals and their lives. Changelings (and Humanists) are rare in this Court.

Solstice

Courtless and scattered, the unSained are the neutral faction in the War of Seasons. While most are ignored, disregarded or simply despised, the Solstice fae can also make mercenaries and diplomats of extraordinary skill and usefulness, due to their unbiased stance in the whole conflict.

A Solstice fae can be either a great boon to an oathcircle, or a great burden, depending on the local fae and their opinions — and the Solstice-kin's personal skills. Many of them ignore fae society completely and exist on the fringes of domains, while others carve out what lives they can as sell-swords and couriers for the high and mighty Courts.

Court Details

The Court descriptions on the following pages are arranged thus:

Season: The season for which the Court is named.

Overview: A brief look at the Origins, beliefs and agendas of the Court.

Saining: The methods by which a fae might be Sained into the Court.

Mien: What the miens of the Court's fae often share, regardless of Origin.

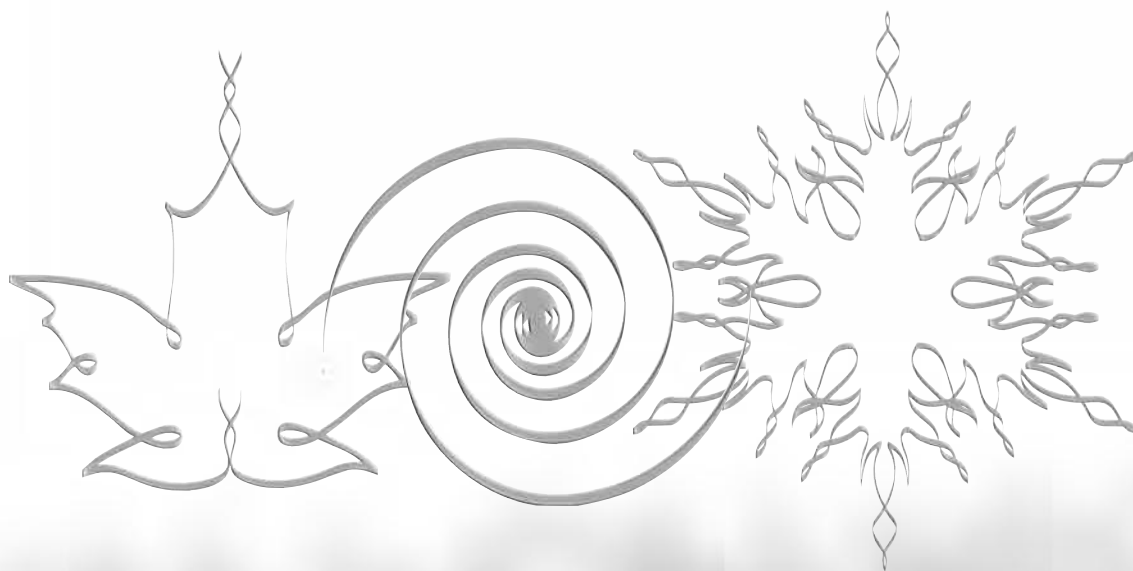
Oaths: The kinds of oaths that fae of the Court might uphold.

Strongholds: Bastions of the Court's strength in the human realm.

Leaders: The fae who are leading the Court in the current age.

Echoes: The kinds of Echoes common to members of the Court.

Favored Dominion: The form of faerie magic in which the Court specializes.



Spring Court

Dawn cracks the pristine shell of day, new life does start,
And the clasp of winter's crippled hand falls apart,
The melt of snow runs down Nature's growing form,
But with the beauty of a blossoming flower,
Comes not the strength to protect it from Her storm.

Overview: Spring is the season of birth — of bloom and growth. It is also the season of unpredictable weather, of storms and tempests, and of irreconcilable change.

The Spring fae embrace change in all things, which is the great strength and great weakness of the Court itself. Change is not always progressive, nor is it always beneficial. Returning to the War of Seasons after centuries of tense “peace” is a significant change, and one that many of the Spring Court are keen to act upon. Other fae, seeing the great conflict as an endeavor in futility, advocate changing tactics entirely, and wish to concentrate work in the human realm to ensure the continued relevance of the fae.

These fae are often seen as the most protective of humanity, although this is by no means necessarily an act of dedicated altruism. The Spring fae realize they must reinforce the mutually beneficial relationship between the two races, lest the fae slip from the minds of the mortals for all time. Consequently, their oaths often involve helping or protecting humans, although such weighty oaths require equally substantial pledges from the oath-bound mortal.

A tempestuous attitude, clashing interests and a lack of cohesive focus are characteristic of the Spring fae — unsurprising considering the relatively equal spread of the three Origins in this Court. Undeniably mighty, with their strength waxing as their seasonal bias would suggest, the Spring Court is ever split by the myriad differing approaches within their ranks.

Changelings suffer no negative Courtly bias, although some rare bigotry does exist in a few individuals. Over time, the Spring Court's changeling population has slowly increased to meet the numbers of firstborn and inanimae, and continues to swell in the current age. Most Spring firstborn prefer to create new changelings in a labor of love or lust, rather than steal a human family's beloved infant. Children treated with particular cruelty are often prized additions to the Court, however, rescued as they are from a life of abuse. Spring fae, while rarely kind in the human sense of the word, often have sympathy for downtrodden or helpless mortals, especially children. Such luckless humans are fertile ground for oaths and alliances.

The tactics of the Spring Court are, as is to be expected, a clashing mix of action and intent. While the majority of the Court is of the Humanist agenda, Militants and Constantinians are hardly rare. Complicating the matter further, many Humanists are all too

happy to spend time throwing their skills into the War of Seasons, and many Militants advocate discussing the issues of the human realm in-between hostile engagements with the other Courts.

Currently, the Court is like a nest of ants that has been kicked over. Diplomats and ambassadors race to other local courts, both Spring holdings and hostile, other-Court domains. Other areas boast the presence of assembled companies of soldiers, who, although a hollow reflection of the grand armies of the Battle of Stone, are still formidable for their skill and their dedication.

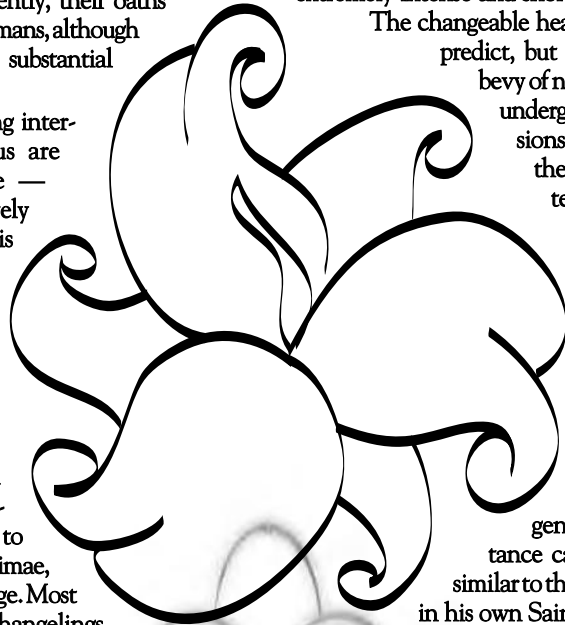
Interestingly, the Patrons are also seeing a great increase in Spring fae joining their ranks. Most Spring fae who join the ranks of the Patrons tend to find themselves among the hidden enclaves of the Seekers or the bold and visible Vanguard.

Saining: Fae Sained into the Spring Court often develop extremely intense and short-lived bonds with their ritemasters.

The changeable hearts of the Spring fae are not easy to predict, but a repeating pattern is the veritable bevy of nurturing, loving Sainings that the fae undergo, frequently followed by rising tensions then righteous indignation between the new fae and ritemaster as the Court's tempestuous philosophies and agendas take hold. Disagreements, arguments and even impassioned disgust with mentors can be commonplace as the aspirant-no-longer seeks to make a name for herself in the shifting ranks of the local domain and the Court at large.

The Saining ritual itself is often a variation on a central theme that the Court has enjoyed for many generations. The Cleansing and Acceptance can take many forms, and are often similar to the rituals undertaken by the ritemaster in his own Saining. Domain lords are notorious for setting loose boundaries for aspirants to achieve — the Saining is something to be enjoyed and savored in the Spring Court, not endlessly exhausting and worried over for months.

The Naming is of principal importance in any Saining rite, and the Spring fae are no exception. These few short hours, always before, during and after the rise of the sun, are spent in tremendous physical effort, soulful meditation and furious magical Unleashing — in that order. These three workings, known by the Spring ritemasters as the Trials, are of supreme ritual significance to the Court. The ritemaster informs the gathered members of the local court of the aspirant's performance in the three Trials, and many



opinions are formed about the newly-Sained fae on this basis alone. A fae with prodigious skill in the First Trial, but who shows little originality and flair in the Third Trial, will be judged accordingly and assigned duties to match her perceived skills during her Acceptance.

At first this can seem unfair, but the Spring Court provides many opportunities for a fae to develop and advance in both position and power — purely by virtue of the ever-shifting nature of the Court's members.

Oaths: From the hulking guardian who vigilantly watches over a small settlement, to the chirpy, seemingly minor creature who keeps a mortal family's home free of dust, the Spring Court's oaths are almost all geared toward assisting humankind for help (or merely privacy) in return. An oath might involve protecting many generations of a family line, or merely one beloved child. Another oath might concern the immediate healing of a mortal, and a continued reign of good health.

In return, the fae expects grateful compliance from her oath-bound human allies. Indeed, the Spring fae are often the most severe when punishing an oath-breaker, depending on the manner in which the oath was broken. A young, honest farmer tricked into breaking his oath is merely pitied, while a calculating occultist seeking to turn things further to his own advantage might well find himself in a world of varied suffering for the rest of his life, usually in the form of mental and emotional torture. A human who willfully violated an oath will certainly have the time to regret it after he finds everyone he once knew now irrationally despises him, he can never fall asleep naturally, or he loses the ability to understand any spoken language.

Strongholds: Western Europe holds many Spring domains, the most powerful of which is undeniably the scattered holdings of the Promise of the Faerie Well (with holdings across Britain, France and Germany). The Court of the Griggling Apple is another example of a strong Western European Spring domain, with deeply binding ties to the local mortals.

Many Spring holdings exemplify a spirit of mutual obligation and shared reward for both the fae and the hu-

mans who live nearby, although some prefer to stay shielded from human eyes entirely.

Leaders: The White Lady, famed ruler of the Promise of the Faerie Well, is an ancient and lovely creature with an unswerving dedication to bettering (and stabilizing) relations with the human realm.

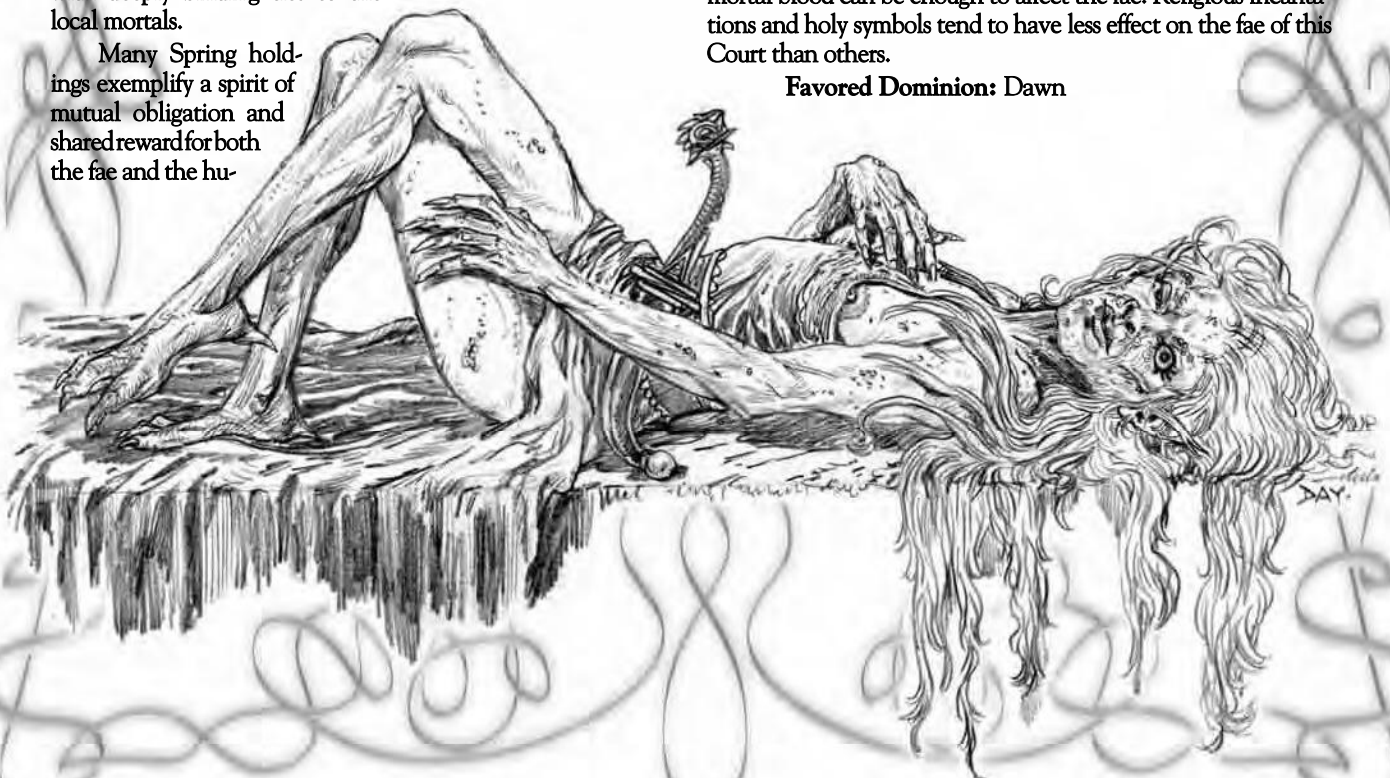
Opposed to her agenda and representing the die-hard Militants of the Court, Captain Siegfried Hein of the Green Blade stands as a polar opposite in interest, instead focusing his (mostly military) attentions entirely on fae society. His Lost Legion readies for a series of grueling assaults on the Winter Court in the months after the Oath-Truce finally falls (since his Legion was already formed before the Oath-Truce, he avoids magical repercussions). In years past, Hein fought at the side of Kapherah, the last true General of the Green Blade, and he remains desperate to restore the company back to its former strength.

Mien: Fae of the Spring Court are renowned for unassuming, disarming appearances that belie the potentially stormy truths inside their hearts. Deep, sparkling eyes of natural mortal hue are common, as is long, lustrous hair of earthy color. Looking into a Spring fae's eyes for long can sometimes reveal faint, dark swirls of color shifting in the iris, akin to the roiling of storm clouds. Many are slightly elfin in appearance, with curled or tipped, lobe-less ears and very white teeth. Some members of the Spring Court are more monstrous in appearance: hairy, muscular bodies; horns; warty skin; and padded hands and feet can be indicative of a feral disposition, or belie the gentleness of a Humanist.

Echoes: Common Echoes to repel Spring fae are usually related to folklore of Western Europe, from singing children's rhymes to physically brandishing fire. In many cases, even something as simple as ordering the faerie away has been known to affect a particularly weak-willed (or unlucky) individuals as a personal Echo.

Screaming, shouting, crying and sometimes even the sight of mortal blood can be enough to affect the fae. Religious incantations and holy symbols tend to have less effect on the fae of this Court than others.

Favored Dominion: Dawn



Summer Court

The pinnacle of Nature's fruits swell with the warmth of the midday,
The fullest time of the turning year and darkness furthest away,
A sedating calm claims beast and man,
As the laze of summer weaves its terrible sheath,
Shrouding the weak in a lack of will, allowing the sly to bare their teeth.

Overview: Wrapped in the traditional roles of the fae, the Summer Court is populated by living reflections of faerie-kind's fading might. The very core of this Court is the literal embodiment of unchanging stasis; and in the pillars of tradition and history, the Summer fae find a unique strength.

The other Courts can scramble to change and shift to fit in with the mortal realm — that is their prerogative. The dignified Summer fae are aware of the same changes, but have made a conscious choice to resist them. Humankind has forgotten the old ways. The Summer fae have not. For these traditionalists, is time to remind the mortals of the way things once were: renewing all of their faded ties, reminding them of all the lost customs, and restoring the upstarts to their proper place in the world.

The Summer fae are not preparing to invade the human realm en masse, of course. Even to their alien views of humanity, it is clear that such a course would be a failure at best, and a disastrous failure at worst. Rather, they intend to renew their old ties to the mortals and strengthen the bonds that remain. Oath-bound humans are to be prized and rewarded for acting in accord with their place in the drama of the world, while oath-breakers are to be punished swiftly and definitively to the full extent of the oath's tenets. To the Summer fae, humans are strange, beguiling and intelligent creatures, but creatures nonetheless. Many of this Court believe the time for retraining the creatures has come.

As the Oath-Truce moves into its final days, the faeries of the Summer Court are preparing for the resumption of conflict with gladdened hearts and sharpened blades. The War of Seasons is *their* battle, for despite the setbacks of the Battle of Stone, the Summer fae have ever believed they would emerge as the ultimate victors. Indeed, it is the rare Summer holding that lacks a traditional (and utterly ostentatious) show of military influence. Be it war banners hanging from the rafters of a palace's throne room, or a collection of tunnels under the Earth filled with the pipes, flutes and harp-notes of an ancient war song, many of the Summer fae prize the tools of war and are fierce advocates of the Militant agenda. Truce-Bearers are almost unheard of, and those who do pursue that agenda usually do so with the single intention of allowing their own domains

more time to prepare for the eventual recommencement of battle.

This is not to say that the Summer fae are bloodthirsty savages. In most cases, nothing could be further from the truth. In fae circles, they are often witty and urbane; and though frequently aloof, they are considered correct to a fault. Mortal eyes do not share these views, however. To humans, the Summer fae are no less than awe-inspiring creatures of legend that can bring tears of joy or fear to mortal eyes.

Changelings are few in number compared to the firstborn and inanimae, which goes a long way toward explaining the Court's alien perceptions of humanity. Even the changelings of this hidebound faction, most often stolen from families rather than born of firstborn and human couplings, tend to follow almost chivalric codes of conduct and respectability.

The Court bears a passionate hatred of the Patrons, which stands to reason considering the Summer fae's ardent assurance that they will triumph in the War of Seasons. Also, the Solstice fae are particularly sneered at — in public, at least. In private, the Summer fae stoop to hiring the neutral fae as often as any other faction (and perhaps more than some). Publicly, the Court at large detests the Solstice-kin, mainly because of the rumors that the Courtless began the War of Seasons.

Saining: A Summer Saining frequently takes the form of tutoring lessons and a training regimen combined. Ritemasters make great efforts to craft the Saining process as an interactive experience, with the aspirant working toward her goals alongside, and with the guidance of, the ritemaster.

A Summer aspirant is often the subject of a great deal of advice and constructive criticism in the Cleansing, in regards to what others feel she should confess. It is considered honorable and wise to calmly state those actions in the past that the aspirant is ashamed of, without embellishment. The months of the Cleansing are also spent studying local domain politics and relations with the mortals of the region.

A Summer Naming is often a loud affair, where the aspirant and ritemaster retreat to deep wilderness. Here, in a frenzy of Unleashing that follows solemn vows to the Summer

Court's ideologies, the aspirant has her personal oath formed in the magical ritual between herself and the ritemaster. Once the oath is created, it is tradition for the ritemaster to offer a gift to the aspirant-no more, before leaving the student for the three months of the Acceptance. The gift can be material, such as a weapon or a treasured item, or merely heartfelt advice and words of wisdom, depending on the relationship between ritemaster and aspirant.

The Acceptance is rarely a pleasurable experience for Summer fae. They are frequently made to prove themselves as soldiers or menial workers under the command of higher-ranking fae. Lucky Summer-kin have an Acceptance influenced by a powerful ritemaster, who arranges for his former pupil to receive beneficial treatment. Most fae however, are merely made to endure three months of servitude, cloaked in a thin veneer of "lesson-learning."

Oaths: Typical Summer oaths involve rewards for oath-bound mortals who behave and strict punishment for those who do not. Frequently, the mortal must live with some kind of temptation to uphold his end of the deal. For example, a long life and good health can only come at the price of never leaving a certain city, and protection for a human family might come at the cost of never spending a special, valuable silver coin. Oath-bound humans can expect their fae allies to uphold their end of the agreement with unfailing tenacity and judgment. Oath-bound fae expect the same treatment in return, and react with swift justice should the oath be broken in any way, by any means.

Strongholds: The Summer fae hold domains that are almost always powerful, but are few in number. The edges of Africa and East Asia are home to several spread-out domains, such as the expansive Ocean of Dust and the Plains of Silent Waves. In Europe, the eastern part of the continent is home to several mountain fortresses and forest settlements all but invisible to the humans of the region. Most Summer holdings are readying for a return to the War of Seasons, by means fair or foul, in battle or in covert operations. In England, the famed Court of the Valiant Forge is the noted "capital domain" of the Summer fae, and sees visitors from many Courts and factions.

Leaders: Summer lords and ladies like to believe themselves power-players in the Court. In truth, in a Court that values respect and success like no other, those that emerge as leaders are usually deserving of their status.

Highsmith Wayland, lord of the Court of the Valiant Forge, is a classic example of a mighty Summer leader. His domain is open to the other Courts and factions, even the Patrons and the Courtless, yet his boundaries are patrolled by dedicated soldiers, hidden from mortal view. In a domain flooded with ambassadors, Wayland aggressively pursues Summer Court interests in every deal, every false handshake that will lead to later battle, and every planned engagement in the months to come. No matter what a Summer ruler desires, she acquires it by fair and honest means more often than not, even if those means are ruthless beyond belief.

Mien: Summer fae are beautiful — *devastatingly* beautiful. It is not uncommon for mortals to weep in the presence of such magnificence. Many Summer fae have eyes of obviously supernatural hue, bright red or shining blue, with an otherworldly glow. Skin is almost always uniformly pale yellow or golden bronze, with

hair of a strikingly contrasting color. Summer fae have been known to display the attractive and noble features that other-Court fae sometimes possess, but above all, Summer fae are almost always unmistakable in their appearance. This beauty can inspire fear or love, lust or terror — and in the case of other fae, even jealousy.

Echoes: Lengthy pagan rituals (usually named in local folklore) which involve several esoteric spell components are known to keep a family safe from the Summer fae for a certain amount of time. Many of these rites and practices are pre-Christian in origin, and most are the somber incantations and banishments that local wise men and women are all too happy to share with a frightened family besieged by the attentions of the fae.

Also known to repel Summer-kin are the holy symbols of Christianity and other faiths. Sadly for the fae in the current age, this is hardly a rare Echo for fae of any Court.

Favored Dominion: Day



Autumn Court

The falling colors of dusk descend with the waning leaves,
Just as a butterfly's wings are a warning; their beauty deceives,
For as their color spills like ink; they are dying,
Sure as the season's mists whisper it so,
The vibrancy is a façade, as Autumn persists in lying.

Overview: As the Oath-Truce nears its end, the Autumn fae set their attentions upon two factors that they believe will change everything. The Spring Court suffers under the pull of too many directions, while the Summer Court ruthlessly pursues a singular goal, and the Winter Court remains largely ambivalent. Many of the Autumn Court like to see themselves as more composed than their other-season kin in these times; and to a great extent, they are correct. The fae of the Autumn Court excel at seeing the larger picture and working toward their goals with this in mind.

The War of Seasons has always been fought over the grand prize of the world itself, and the other Courts ready themselves in varying degrees to return to the fray with eyes narrowed and blades bared. The Autumn fae have opened their eyes and lowered their swords, because something is very, very wrong.

The War of Seasons is a fool's gamble: Nigh-impossible to win, and crippling to the victors, for the Court that eventually achieves victory will be so weakened from the War that any triumph will be rendered pointless. Over and above the fae conflict, the Autumn Court's fae are directing their attentions to the fact that the world is no longer theirs in truth. The humans have bred and spawned in their many thousands across the realm, and they bring with them the alien powers and magic of their mysterious faith.

The Autumn fae realize that no matter which faction conquers all in the War of Seasons, what comes *after* the conflict is the truly important aspect in this day and age. The humans have magic from their invented Divine overseer, which makes many fae wonder if the One Above is indeed a mortal invention or not. Since the age of openly declared fae rule, the face of the world has altered too significantly to simply reveal themselves to the humans and expect fear, adoration and respect. Now, different methods must be employed if the fae wish to achieve their goals. The War of Seasons can wait. Now is the time to take stock of the world and see what the great war is actually being fought for.

Humanity can be a great weapon for the fae. The Autumn Court, comprised almost entirely of changelings who excel at this kind of deception and bargaining, offers Faustian deals and oaths to needy (or greedy) mortals. A shield against Echoes and a source of both religious lore and allies and contacts, the Autumn fae view humanity as a useful commodity indeed. In addition, as a vast majority of the Court's fae are changelings, they also view humanity as the principal source of "recruitment." Many Autumn fae, protective of their true natures and their desires for humanity to never understand the fae entirely, prefer to steal human children and raise them as changelings rather than take mortal lovers.

The Autumn Court is flooded with Constantinians, who make tentative contacts with select mortals in their immense undertaking to comprehend the complexities and power of human faith. The power of baptism terrifies the Autumn fae more than any other Court, both because the Court largely consists of changelings, and because they have learned the most about the intricacies of human faith. Baptism itself is unanimously regarded with horror, for a ritual that can immediately counteract a Saining and wash a fae clean of his mystical powers is seen as nothing less than a fate worse than death. The Autumn-kin are pragmatic, however. Rather than seeing the Church as an enemy to be opposed and halted, they view it as a mystery to be revealed, opened and studied. Once the power of the mortals' beliefs is understood, perhaps even the Mists will return to their more benevolent balance.

Currently, many Constantinians are finding new allies among the Humanists of the Spring Court; and although the Autumn Court's Truce-Bearers and Militants are mostly interesting rarities, they do exist and are acting on their own agendas.

The Patrons appear to lack Autumn members, purely because the majority of the Vanguard, visible to society, are not from this Court. The Seekers and Austere Conclave, however, boast more than their share of Autumn fae, drawn as they are to the inner workings of both the fae and human realms.

Saining: Autumn Sainings are often somber, reflective and introspective affairs, throughout all three steps of the path. The ritemaster of an Autumn Saining is much more likely to observe and occasionally offer advice or criticism than become deeply involved with the aspirant during the Saining process. For the Cleansing, it is customary for the aspirant to seek absolution for any times he might have revealed any significant truths to mortals; but other than such instances, the Acceptance is the focal point of an Autumn Saining.

The Naming is still regarded as the core of the ritual, and one of the few instances when an Autumn ritemaster truly connects emotionally with the aspirant; but the Acceptance holds a symbolic place for this Court. The aspirant spends his chosen month in rigorous study and tutelage under a number of teachers and elders, discussing and formulating ideas and potential factors that affect both the human and fae societies. Most Autumn fae are lucky and well-placed; they are put under the care of skilled mentors and dignitaries or diplomats of various import. The Autumn fae have little respect for the Winter and Summer Court's rumored policies of using newly Sained fae as couriers, errand-runners and even arrow-fodder.

The relationship between Autumn aspirants and their ritemasters is often relatively distant, and only should the two mutually respect each other does the association continue after the Saining is com-

plete. It is Autumn tradition for the aspirant to prove himself worthy with as little assistance as possible, and most fae undergoing the Saining appreciate the freedom with which to work, rather than some heavy-handed approach to mentoring that a teacher might take in other Courts.

Oaths: Faustian pacts and the metaphorical deal with the Devil—the Autumn fae excel at offering mortals their heart's desires... for a price. Deals might involve causing another mortal to fall in love (or lust) with the oath-bound human, or even bringing down eternal bad luck on her enemies. The Autumn Court's ideal oaths are very much geared toward faerie gain, above any other factor.

In contrast, Autumn fae are usually unscrupulously honest and forthright in regards to their oaths. No fae wants his oaths to be broken, so the Autumn fae make sure that the mortal in question is both extremely tempted and fully aware of all the details in the deal. An oath that is

soon broken
through ig-
norance

is no use at all, but an oath bound in mutual trust and honesty can be stronger than iron. The consequences of a broken oath might enslave the mortal for a certain amount of time, or force her to perform some other grueling, unpleasant task.

Strongholds: The Keshalyi Gatherings are spread far and wide across Eastern Europe, with each of the nine major domains overseen by a member of the Council of Dusk. These larger holdings are the quintessential Autumn domains: Receptive to fae visitors who don't create waves, and with a visible element that humanity believes it understands implicitly. In fact, the larger domains reveal very little of the true side of the fae to mortals, and the domains house many who claim membership in the Patrons.

The Autumn Court also holds influence in the region around the Islamic holy cities of Eastern Asia. Broken into many smaller domains by conflict with the Summer Court in nights past, these loosely bound holdings are populated by fae who are responsible for the legends of wishes granted and illnesses healed among the impoverished folk of the land.

Leaders: Queen Ana of the Keshalyi Gatherings is but one of the members of the Council of Dusk, but she is a prominent figure in the current age. She works to secure relations with humanity, balancing the truths of the fae with the details mortals are allowed to know. Once the balance is established and stable, the magic to create oaths can be rediscovered through experimentation; and Queen Ana fully intends to deploy the resulting knowledge as a weapon.

Mien: The Autumn fae, as a predominantly changing Court, are only slightly odd in appearance to normal humans. Many of the Court are extremely pale, to the point where very faint lines of blue veins are seen cobwebbing under the skin of their forearms, chests and cheeks. Many human imperfections (such as acne and freckles) fade to nothing after the Saining, and some fae even become albino. A significant minority of Autumn fae are hairless, even as children. Also, they are frequently taller than average. Overall, Autumn miens often create an air of uneasiness and eeriness in those who see them. Long, spidery fingers are also common in fae with more alien miens.

Echoes: Many of the Autumn Court have Echoes that relate to scent or sound. In some cases, it is the smell of a certain herb or incense, such as patchouli, and in others it could be a child's rhyme repeated over and over. The Autumn fae are unsurprisingly often vulnerable to Christian, Jewish or Islamic rites to banish evil spirits. Be it the Lord's Prayer muttered by a cowering farmer or a traveling merchant's benedictions to Allah as he kneels on his prayer mat, many such rituals are baneful to the Autumn fae.

Favored Dominion:

Dusk



Winter Court

Sun hides low in her sky; fearful of the shadow she creates,
As Night sits in his dank hollow and awaits,
For her to sink deep beneath the iced barren lands,
Allowing the frosts to eat warmth from the blooded,
And free the hunting creatures of the forest once again.

Overview: Humans have always feared the things that live in the shadows.

The Winter Court understands very little about humanity, and cares about them even less. In the darkest forests in the dead of night, these are the creatures that eat lost children and bathe their caps in the blood that remains. These are the creatures that chase anyone in their domains, running mortals to terrified exhaustion. These creatures are the reasons that humanity fears the hours after sunset.

The Winter fae have a hatred of the other Courts that goes beyond the (mostly) rational dislike and disagreements among the Summer, Spring and Autumn factions. The Winter fae feel the Spring-kin are almost universally blinded by their obsession with humanity, the Summer fae are locked in the past and are suffering for their ignorance, and the Autumn Court deals with strange, foul human powers that are best left untouched. As for the Solstice fae — well, they are too spineless to even join the pathetic, rules-bound Summer Court.

As the Oath-Truce enters its last hours, the Winter fae are hardly slaving for a fight with sharpened fangs and claws. Most members of this Court are actually somewhat apathetic about the War of Seasons. In many cases, they are too removed from fae politics to keep up to speed with the latest shifting tide of alliances and betrayals; and to limit their involvement further, they often just don't care who is stabbing whom in the back over some petty local treaty.

Many Winter fae are realists, and can see clearly that the War of Seasons is something of an unending trial. Most are more concerned with saving their own skins and protecting their domains against any human influence. It's unsurprising that their oaths with humans tend to be blunt, simple and extremely serious. To break a Winter oath usually means death, and death usually means evisceration under the claws of a savage monster.

That said, there have been noted differences in Winter Court opinions in recent years. The Spring Court, ever seen by the Winter-kin as the most spineless, weakest collection of fools that ever called itself a Court, is gearing up for many serious engagements when the Oath-Truce falls. In particular, Seigfried Hein's Green Blade is viewed with particular unease, as are the other Lost Legions. The Winter Court's fighters and soldiers (such as they are) are finally realizing that the Spring-kin are hardly the toothless milksops that they once were perceived to be. In fact, Spring military activity rivals

even that of the Summer Court — in intensity and ferocity, if not in size.

Also, tentative alliances with smaller Autumn holdings have been attempted and have met with some success. The Winter fae are not universally mindless killers and monsters — they too have a vested interest in the changes within the human realm. Of course, while the Autumn Court seeks ways to examine humanity and bend the mortals into a wieldable advantage, the Winter Court is more concerned with bringing the mortals to heel and ending the sudden emergences of these powerful faiths, and with the boom of changing populations in the other Courts.

The Winter Court, unsurprisingly, consists of mainly firstborn and inanimae. It is the rare changeling who even survives the Saining, as such rituals are often doctored to

make sure the milking fails. Conversely, it is

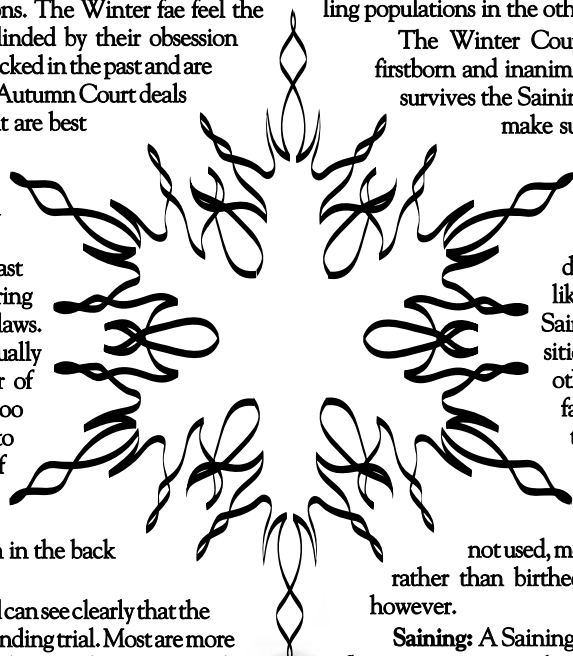
also rumored that many of the changelings in the Court were actually forced into being Sained. The exact mechanics behind such an accusation are not difficult to comprehend; the threats most likely run along the lines of, "Take the Saining, or be eaten." While such a proposition is anathema to the proud fae of the other Courts (and terrifying to a Solstice fae in Winter territory), it seems likely that once such a "forced" Saining has occurred, the new Winter-kin is more than delighted with her new position and powers. When this approach is

not used, most changelings are stolen from families, rather than birthed. Both practices are extremely rare, however.

Saining: A Saining under a Winter ritemaster is an orgy of inflicting terror, an exploration of gluttony, and an introspective journey into the truths behind the superiority of the fae over humans.

The Cleansing usually involves little more than an informal promise to spend the year acting in the interests of the Winter Court, and vague apologies for times the aspirant has let enemies escape or been merciful to mortals. Unsurprisingly, this is not a lengthy diatribe.

The Naming commonly involves dedicated Unleashing until exhaustion ensues, followed by three drops of the ritemaster's icy blood on the tongue and in the eyes of the aspirant after his magical efforts. This last rite symbolizes the chill that runs down the spines of mortals when the Winter fae are near — a point of pride for the Winter-kin.



The Acceptance is occasionally the core of a Winter Saining, although not as often as the Naming itself. This step of the Saining is usually devoted to studying any local humans and keeping them away from the Winter domain. Mortality rates in human settlements tend to rise slightly when a fae is newly Sained in the Winter Court.

Oaths: Winter oaths tend to be blunt and difficult to forget — if only because they are often preventions against being eaten alive. It's most common that Winter oaths involve keeping away from a certain area, never singing a certain song or never wearing a particular item of clothing. In return, the oath-bound human can enjoy his continued lifespan.

Strongholds: Winter domains, unlike most fae strongholds, are usually not ruled over by a single lord, lady or council of respected fae. Often, Winterfae live alone, or in very small groups. What domains they do possess are defended fiercely by the savage and monstrous creatures that dwell there, rather than organized defenders under the direction of a recognized strategist or local ruler.

There are exceptions to the “deep, dark, lawless wilderness” rule, however, and these courts are dangerous places indeed. The Black Road, many hundreds of miles of tunnels under the dark soil of Scotland and Western Europe, is known to accept visitors and oathcircles from all Courts, even the Solstice fae. This vast network of caverns, mineshafts and burrows was until recently ruled by Lord Krode, a stunted, red-eyed, black-skinned creature who lived on a diet of precious metals. The domain is fast descending into chaos in the wake of his assassination, and all Spring Court diplomats are being heavily watched.

Leaders: Several of the late Lord Krode's lieutenants are vying for his empty throne, each amassing their own power factions across Europe. Some of these underlings advocate rallying the domain's Winter-kin together in order to repel any potential assaults in the days to come, while others demand that the Court itself organize and return to the War of Seasons en masse. These warring lieutenants are currently the closest comparison the Winter Court can make to organized leadership in Western Europe, beyond the individual monsters that rule over their territories with effective brutality.

Lady Nicnivin, a pillar of the Patron Council, is a firstborn of the Winter Court; but her allegiance is utterly to her own faction. Rumors abound that a recent assassination attempt on the beautiful Philosopher-Queen was nearly successful, and Lady Nicnivin has retired to her hidden mixed-Court domain to recover.

Mien: Winter fae are uniquely alien in some way, running the gamut from eerie and otherworldly to outright monstrous. Some might appear as diminutive humans with rows of sharp teeth, while others appear as red-eared, red-eyed men with pure-white hair. The average Winter fae can probably pass for human — at a distance. Black teeth and fingernails, unblinking eyes and serpentine tongues are common traits among the miens of Winter-kin. Also, hissing speech, throaty gurgles in the middle of sentences in place of words, and hair that feels and looks more like animal fur are common aspects in Winter miens.

Echoes: As with Winter oaths, the Echoes to repel and banish Winter fae can be very simple, although not always easy to stumble



upon for the untrained researcher.

Many of the Winter Court suffer Echoes in the form of religious icons and brandished trappings of faith, such as a crucifix or Star of David. In other cases, merely displaying the holy symbol has no effect, but touching the fae's skin with the item can cause the Echo.

Paradoxically, even seemingly minor actions such as whistling, singing or clapping hands repeatedly have been known to negatively affect these fae. Fae with these sorts of Echoes are often the ones who hate humanity the most; they feel nothing short of homicidal rage that pathetic mortals can thwart them so easily.

Favored Dominion: Night

Solstice

We have no great song. No poem. No words. And yet, we are beholden to none; slaves to neither the seasons' turning nor destiny's wheel.

Overview: They are pitied by the Spring Court, disregarded by the Autumn Courtiers, hated by the Winter-kin, and publicly despised by the Summerfae. The main accusation aimed at the Solstice fae, however, is one of stupidity. The fact is that a fae who remains unSained and unallied with a chosen Court has no claim to the human realm once the War of Seasons is won.

Every Sained fae, even if they are not fighters or soldiers, believes that their Court's ideology is the truest and best plan for the new world order. In the face of such dedication and fanaticism, the Solstice fae simply shrug and declare no interest, no allegiance and no desire to partake of the final prize — the world itself.

The fact that most Solstice fae don't even hold oaths with humanity adds another layer of disadvantage to their situations. Oaths, in their most basic form, are shields against Echoes. Solstice fae, lacking even this basic defense for their unSained souls, are accordingly vulnerable in the human realm.

The reputation of this faction is tattered further by the slander of the Winter and Summer Courts, for both have inner factions that hold vague legends claiming the entire War of Seasons was started by a faction of Solstice fae known as the Coterie of Drail to be true. A few fae alive today claim to have met Drail, even though their meetings with him would have dated many years after the commencement of the War of Seasons. His is not a name spoken with kindness.

For all their perceived vulnerabilities, Solstice mercenaries are the hirelings of choice in the War of Seasons. It is safer to acquire the services of the Solstice fae over any Sained fae, because the Courtless have no predetermined or pre-sworn loyalties. As soldiers, diplomats, message-bearers, spies and ambassadors, the Solstice fae are in their element.

Of course, everyone has a price. The Solstice fae are no exception, and it's possible that a hireling will defect or betray secret information. This is always a risk for the employer, but many Solstice fae have earned their reputations for reliability through years of diligence, effort and conflict.

With such chaotic roots, it is hardly surprising that the Solstice fae are not divided equally among the three Origins. Firstborn are by far the most numerous, followed by inanimae and changelings. While not specifically rare, changelings are certainly outnumbered by the other Origins due to the Solstice fae's lack of oaths and associated relations with humans. Solstice firstborn are notoriously proud and difficult to deal with unless a respectful attitude is shown. Many of this creed of Solstice-kin see themselves as the elite of the elite — they are true-blooded fae, above the limitations that Court-bound fae must endure. In fact, it is these fae in particular who are eager for the Oath-Truce to finally fall, so that they can begin accepting military contracts in addition to the negotiations and diplomacy. These tend to be the Solstice-kin that make the most desirable and keen hirelings.

With the War of Seasons close to breaking out once more, and the Courts, factions and agendas swelling with conflicting tensions and ideologies, it goes almost without saying that the Solstice fae will see a great deal of action before too long — either as instigators and mercenaries if they are shrewd and careful... or merely arrow-fodder if they are not.

Saining: For whatever reason, the Solstice fae are unSained. A Solstice character might be undecided on which Court to join, or might have been expelled from his previous Court. Some fae choose to remain unSained to act as neutral go-betweens, serving as diplomats, couriers or mercenaries. Other fae are merely Solstice fae because none of the Courts will accept them, although such a creature must be pathetic indeed to merit such rejection.

Unofficial (and powerless) faux-Saining rituals do exist among the Solstice fae, however. These frequently take the form of pledges and oaths to protect and work with other Solstice-kin. Depending on the local domain or the "ritemaster" in question, extra addendums on the rite might involve declaring a promise to work against a certain Court or faction, or laying down one's life before betraying the names of one's allies if captured.

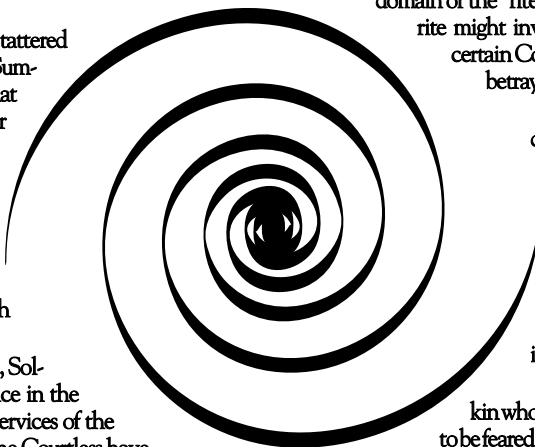
These mock-Sainings are usually only undertaken or performed by fae who sincerely dedicate themselves to remaining free of Courtly influence. In such cases, despite the lack of supernatural power to the ritual, they are seen as utterly serious declarations of allegiance. Among Solstice fae who are aware of such things, these "unSainings" are known as pledges or promises.

Oaths: As mentioned, it is the rare Solstice-kin who has his own oaths. Those who do are creatures to be feared and respected, for they are notable in that they are powerful enough to have forged those oaths on their own, unSained and untutored — or else they pre-date the Oath-Truce and possibly even the Battle of Stone, and are therefore dangerous because of their ages. Despite their power, most of these self-forged oaths are relatively narrow in scope, involving simple deals of protection, privacy or mutual cooperation. They are rarely sworn with more than one person or family.

Strongholds: Scattered pockets of Solstice holdings do exist, although these are usually only the domains of a few minor, weak oathcircles. Most Solstice fae gather in the domains of other Courts (when they are accepted) and on the fringes of other-Court domains (when they are not).

Most holdings that are open to ambassadors and visitors from other Seasonal Courts are also open to Solstice fae, and a few that are closed to the other Courts are still open to the Courtless. Depending on the whims of both the local lord or lady and the domain's citizens, a Solstice fae can either find great demand as a hireling, or great abuse.

Strongholds that are under Patron control, which are steadily increasing in number all over the mortal realm, are always open and welcoming to Solstice fae. Indeed, the reason so many Solstice fae ally with the Patrons is because the seasonal members of the Patron Council do not tend to hold the same bias against the Courtless that is usually displayed in



mainstream society. In a system of balance, the Solstice hold a unique place, and the Patron strongholds value the unSained for their devotion to the middle path — the wisdom of the neutral way. That itself is balance of a kind.

Leaders: Currently, the many scattered and divided patches of Solstice strength are united (if at all) under minor leaders, hired diplomats and unit sergeants. As a whole, the Solstice-kin have no candidates who stand out

as strong leaders. The other Courts are used to seeing a strong-willed individual among the unSained emerge every once in a while to attempt to gather the Courtless into a cohesive alliance, but no attempt in recent memory has been even remotely successful. Some of the most ancient elders of the Courts are currently enduring their seventh or eighth “Drail returned” uprising; and the latest of these is interesting only for its timing. Anyone allied with the latest incarnation of Drail is wise not to declare such an association, for Lady Nicnivin is but one of many powerful fae who have ordered this newest Drail’s death.

Mien: The Solstice fae tend to draw almost all of their mien attributes from their Origins, for with no Court Saining, they lack the Features acquired from such an endeavor. Some Courtless possess one or more of the aspects common to one of the other Courts, but it’s rare for a Solstice-kin to appear too similar to any Sained fae. Essentially, when a fae forms his mien, his choices depend almost entirely on Origin and his perceptions of his surroundings. A Solstice fae in the Scottish Highlands might manifest bushy red hair and freckles, and skin with a hint of the deep gray of the surrounding stony land, should he happen to come across such a human in such a location when he chooses to form his mien.

Echoes: The Echoes that affect the Solstice fae are often a bastardization of those that repel the Sained fae. In addition, local warding prayers or customs are known to repel some Solstice fae, such as garlic hanging on a door to prevent psychic attacks, or herbs sprinkled on a pillow to prevent bad

dreams. Such folk remedies are often more than enough to affect the Courtless as Echoes, although it naturally depends on each individual.

Favored Dominion: None.





"Are you afraid?"

The one speaking was taller and older but still his voice cracked a bit.

"No," answered the shorter. They were brothers, and they lied to each other like this often. A pause. "Were you afraid? When the m—"

"Don't say her name, you idiot!" The younger brother shied back. "Did you want to make her angry? You know she comes to you ugly if she's angry? Warty and ragged like our aunt, you know."

The younger brother made a face. "But were you afraid?"

"I remembered the stories," said the older brother. "I remembered how father said that the m—" he caught himself and continued, "that she came to boys and bound up their bodies and tongue so they couldn't speak or even move, and how she had her way with them until morning and chewed on their skin." The younger brother whimpered. "But it's not all true. She doesn't want to hurt you."

"What does she want, then?"

The older brother just smiled. "You'll find out tonight, I suppose. Happy birthday." The two of them kept walking toward home, their baskets balanced carefully on their shoulders. "Just remember, don't say her name."

"What happens if you do?"

The older brother looked ahead to their house, and tried to look wise. "No one knows. Some people say she eats your heart." The younger boy gasped. "Some say she just leaves and never comes back and some say she'll turn to stone."

"So it might get rid of her." The younger brother sounded hopeful. The elder boy laughed.

"It might. Or she might kill you. And besides, she didn't hurt *me*." He puffed up with pride.

Mara was walking behind them, clothed in the Mists, just another peasant. The boys, had they stopped and looked around, might have noticed a warm fog about their ankles but they were young, and didn't look. Mara remembered the older brother, remembered his horror at her true face, as ugly as he'd said, when she had crept into his bed two years ago. But he had understood — once she stilled his body and silenced his tongue, he had understood what she wanted, and he had agreed. He had come under the Mists and run with her, laid with her, loved her for that night.

Would his brother do the same? Would he refuse her? Would he say her name and drive her off?

She pulled the Mists around her like a cloak and followed them home. She was excited. Tonight she might find love.



CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTERS AND DRAMA

By three methods we learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.

— Confucius

This chapter details the methods and techniques for character creation, new and revised traits, and an examination of Oaths, Echoes, Mists, and Weaving. Both players and Storytellers should read through Chapter Two: Origin and Courts as well as this chapter before undertaking the task of character creation. The overall progression is the same as in **Dark Ages: Vampire**, pp.122–167, but the details are very different.

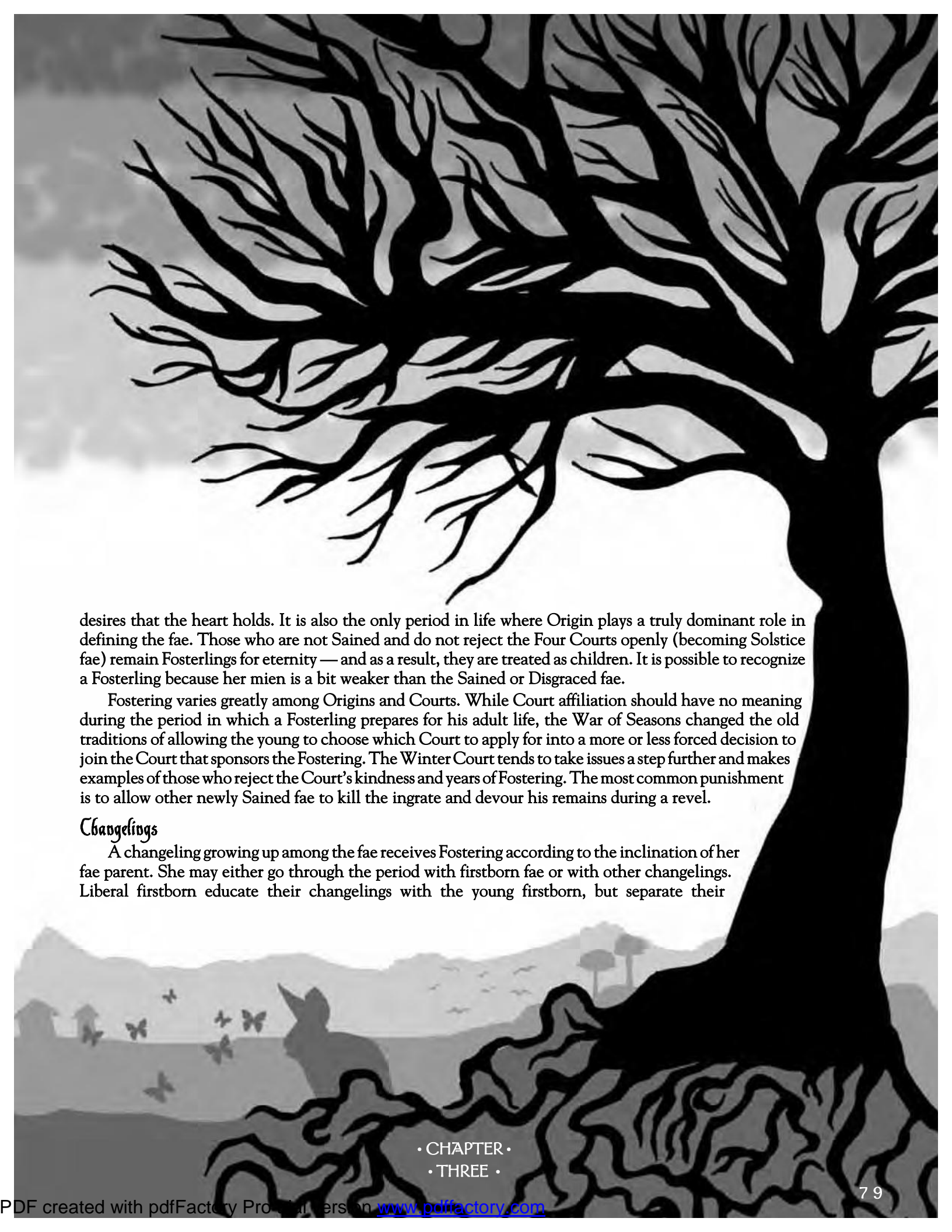
Players who have decided to create fae characters from one of the Four Courts should read and consider the following sections: My Fostering, My Saining, My Service, and My War. Then, as an aid for both themselves and the Storyteller, players should consider writing down a summary of their characters' histories with those four divisions as a framework.

My Fostering

As mentioned briefly in previous chapters, the fae refer to the time between their births (or when they first assume true miens) and their Sainings as *Fostering*.

Fostering indicates that a fae is in the process of learning about the surrounding world (both human and faerie), and fae and court history, in addition to honing her own magical prowess.

To begin the Fostering period is to embark on a journey to uncover the hidden passions and




desires that the heart holds. It is also the only period in life where Origin plays a truly dominant role in defining the fae. Those who are not Sained and do not reject the Four Courts openly (becoming Solstice fae) remain Fosterlings for eternity — and as a result, they are treated as children. It is possible to recognize a Fosterling because her mien is a bit weaker than the Sained or Disgraced fae.

Fostering varies greatly among Origins and Courts. While Court affiliation should have no meaning during the period in which a Fosterling prepares for his adult life, the War of Seasons changed the old traditions of allowing the young to choose which Court to apply for into a more or less forced decision to join the Court that sponsors the Fostering. The Winter Court tends to take issues a step further and makes examples of those who reject the Court's kindness and years of Fostering. The most common punishment is to allow other newly Sained fae to kill the ingrate and devour his remains during a revel.

Changelings

A changeling growing up among the fae receives Fostering according to the inclination of her fae parent. She may either go through the period with firstborn fae or with other changelings. Liberal firstborn educate their changelings with the young firstborn, but separate their



educations later in life when the firstborn study the art of leadership. During this time, changelings are free to study whatever they desire.

Humans abducted past infancy are never Fostered through the same procedure as others. Instead, they learn the ways and means of the Court through serving their masters. Eventually, after decades of duty, humanity slowly slips away and they assume their first signs of real miens. Tradition requires that their masters must allow the changelings to apply for Saining and act as their sponsors during the process. Nonetheless, while the application undergoes treatment, the changelings must endure a swift period of Fostering to learn the laws of the Court and the history of the fae.

Changelings growing up among humans tend to fall into two common situations. The first occurrence is that the changeling ends up in a pagan, or occasionally even non-pagan, family that treats its suspected changeling with care and love until it may guide him home to faerie lands. The second (and most common) scenario is that the faerie half of the changeling dies when the human parents baptize him. Of course, it is worth considering the fact that exchanging a fae child for an already baptized infant reduces this risk (though the family might have the baptism performed again if the parents have reason to suspect their child is fae-touched). While the fae have a hard time grasping this, most of these changelings do not survive in the mortal world. Surviving changelings develop tendencies toward a faerie mien around the age of five. These tendencies aren't even as noticeable as a level-one Feature; a slight change in height, eye color or length of fingers might be the only alteration.

In technical terms, players and storytellers should consider this minor change to be an indication of the first feature a character will possess. While that only comes into consideration when writing down the back story, it might be useful to consider during game play should the characters encounter a future changeling. The change usually occurs just a few days before the young changeling accidentally Unleashes one of the Dominions (although the effects are extremely limited). From this point, changelings may come to undergo a Fostering in two ways: Either the changeling leaves home and locates a court to take her in, or other fae recognize her true nature and bring her to safety.

Firstborn

The so-called "true fae" grow up with little exposure to the human world. A young firstborn is little more than a sprite, so full of the magic of the Mists that humans don't even see her, and therefore can't affect her with Echoes. As the firstborn reaches maturity and the Fostering, however, her magic and soul become more rooted in the human world, and part of her education must then concern humans and the care of oaths.

Firstborn live in a strict hierarchy where the elders' words are law, and respect and personal honor are as much resources as virtues. Tradition requires firstborn to proceed with studies in the art of diplomacy and war, and art and sciences, in addition to basic Gramarye knowledge and the control (and Unleashing) of Dominions. Fostering also includes a pre-path to Saining, but the process varies depending on what sort of court the faerie grows up in. Some fae later consider it to be the best time of their lives; others view it as a painful experience that they would rather forget.

Inanimae

Compared to changelings, inanimae Fosterlings lead carefree lives. They regard Fostering as a period of learning and play. As beings that spring to life from nature itself, part of them retains a small amount of the primordial energy that is noticeable during earthquakes, wildfires or thunderstorms. Instead of attempting to coerce them into order and force them to undergo regular faerie education from a young age, inanimae teachers allow their pupils to unleash their inner energies and to gradually fit themselves into faerie society. Fire inanimae are famous for being nearly impossible to tame during their first years, while lightning inanimae suffer from intense mood swings that eventually erupt in a great show of force. As time progresses they calm down and become more interested in learning about what the world has to offer. Regardless of aspect, the natural energies never leave them completely; and this is why their element always colors them to some degree. An inanimae learns from a young age to use his elemental affinity as a compass in his search for passions and future paths. Fire inanimae often end up as generals or rulers, while lightning aspects tend to be excellent warriors and elite guards.

My Saining

The Saining is both an exciting and wonderful journey and a trying and tiring trial. Though the Fostering is a lengthy process, the Saining is divided into three steps that occur over the course of a single human year. When fae are Sained, they often leave everything else behind, even Fosterling friends of other Courts. It is with this change in life that Origin slowly shifts into the background, and the Courts and their ideologies take precedence. Changelings, first-born and inanimae all walk the same path, all make the same journey, and in the end, all have the same hopes and dreams of being allowed to join the Court they desire to serve. Saining is a time when fae surrender their very Origins to merge with something greater, something that provides them with purpose and common goals in life.

Cleansing is the harshest period of the Saining, since the faerie must prove her resilience to unexpected change and her understanding of the Court's ideology, ways and means. What opposition did the character face? Did she encounter problems with humans? How did she solve them? Did she live a reclusive life? Did the local Court arrange obstacles along the way to ensure her loyalty and devotion? What made her succeed? Did she gain allies that furthered her cause? Did she gain a standing among humans as a famous or infamous creature? Did she forge strong bonds with her ritemaster or did their time together lead to quarrels? Did she manage to make a lot of human friends, and above all, how much understanding did she acquire of human culture? For many firstborn the Cleansing is the only time in their lives that they willingly decide to spend in the human world.

The Naming ceremony and the Acceptance are two important issues that require more in-depth consideration during character creation. What bond did the character finally forge with his ritemaster? What is his courtly name? How did the magical forces involved in unlocking the secrets of his soul make him feel? In the end, what was his overall experience of the Naming? Remember that this is always a powerful experience whether the faerie felt uncomfortable, relieved or joyful at the prospect of finally being allowed into the Court. While it is rare, some fae change their minds about joining the Court after they have successfully undergone the Cleansing. Because they are too afraid of becoming Solstice, they continue on and do their best within their new Courts even if they have doubts.

Eventually the Acceptance approaches, and the fae must untie the bonds they have with their ritemasters and learn how to deal with the daily problems of the Court on their own. While this is the time that truly defines the character's initial standing with a Court, it is also very short and intense. Determine what the character did to prove his worthiness to the Court and his peers. Make no mistake; once fae are accepted into a Court, it has profound effects on their lives.

My Service

The renewal of the War of Seasons draws closer; every Court has its issues to deal with, whether they work towards peace or all-out war. What the Court expects from its servants varies, but everyone has at least one duty to fulfill. It is a chaotic time among the fae. Everyone knows that this is the defining moment of the faerie race, and whoever emerges victorious will rule the world until the end. Talk to the Storyteller and work this part out together. The essence of this section is to detail in which way a character has served her Court and how well she has done so. Does she have friends, or even enemies, within the Court? Purchasing the Status Background means that she has performed some extraordinary service for the Court. What was it? It is also imperative to take a moment and reflect upon what the character may want to do next. What long-term goals does she have, and how does she intend to fulfill them? Whatever you decide on, remember that this section details the near-future in terms of the life-stages of your character.

Solstice Fae

While they are similar in Origins, Solstice fae often have a history dissimilar to those of members of the Four Courts. If you are playing a Solstice character, use the following information instead. Players of faeries who were exiled from a Court should write up their stories in the following order: My Fostering, My Saining, My Service, My Disgrace and My War.

My Disgrace

To be Solstice is to be outcast; these are individuals whose lives are worth nothing to the courtly faeries. It is not easy to walk the lonely path. Friends from Fostering and family reject the Solstice-kin and regard them as dead. On the other hand, life is not all dark and gloomy. They are free, and act on their own beliefs rather than a Court's — and they can switch sides to whoever rewards them the most.

Why did your faerie character become Solstice, knowing the life he must lead? Did someone maneuver him out, or was it by choice? How did it feel when his friends and family rejected him? Does he have contact with any of them? Think carefully about these issues and decide whether your character is suited to be a Solstice fae.

For an examination of the branding of the Solstice fae, see p. 84.

My War

Branded as social outcasts, Solstice fae not only have to find positions in the War of Seasons, but they also have to fight the prejudice of the courtly fae. Just being of the fae carries great honor with it, even if the Courts despise the Solstice-kin. In fact, the only way to overcome prejudice is to ally with an oathcircle and demonstrate the value an outcast may have when push comes to shove.

Players of Solstice fae must remember that most oathcircles are not comprised of outcasts but rather of courtly faeries. Because of this, any Solstice character must be willing to work with members of the Courts regardless of their prejudices; and at the same time, Storytellers should attempt to regulate any excessive hatred of Solstice fae that the “normal” characters may have. While conflict between characters is fine, this sort of conflict should never reach the point of actively detracting from the chronicle as a whole.

Factors to Consider: The Basics

Much of this book details the existence and behavior of the fae through descriptions of history, minor factions, Courts and Origins; but it goes very seldom into details of their daily lives. This is not because a faerie’s everyday existence is unimportant, but rather because it is in fact very much like that of any citizen of relatively high stature in the Dark Medieval.

Make sure to read “Thinking Medieval” (p. 126) in **Dark Ages: Vampire**.

Worldview of the Fae

Portraying a changeling who has led her life among humans before gaining acceptance among the fae should prove no difficulty to players. The character’s view of the surrounding world may be a bit out of date, but she grasps the fundamental concepts of being human and living in a human world. This is, unfortunately, not the case for the other fae. The fae mind is

different from the human mind. Origin plays an important part in how fae think, and this is something that every player should take into consideration.

Throughout this book the fae are described as alien to humans, and this is true. How is a player supposed to portray something that is completely alien to him? Exchange the word “alien” for “exotic” and play with that idea for a while. Imagine being completely isolated for fifteen years. Suddenly the isolation ends when you stumble across a kindergarten class playing outside. Why do the children act this way? How did they build that sand castle without making it fall to pieces? Why do they dress that way? Factors that we encounter on a daily basis become alien if we have no context for them. This is how it is for the fae, and especially the firstborn, when they venture out into the human realms. They are not completely clueless regarding humans, but neither are they up to date with the culture and behavior of the current generation. Newfound changelings are precious in the upcoming war for all the Courts, whether they realize it or not, for they know what it means to be human in this day and age.

Age

Faeries are immortal — they never die unless they perish as the result of Echoes or are consciously murdered or slain by another being. They lack a sense of human perspective on time, and they remain young and (often) beautiful forever. How then do they count their age? Firstborn and inanimae age at a rate equal to humans for the first seven years; after their seventh birthday the rate decreases to one year per five human years. Saining often occurs around the faerie’s 13th birthday, which means that a normal firstborn or inanimae undergoes Fostering during a time equal to 37 human years. Once fae go through Saining they age even more slowly, and around their 50th birthdays they stop aging altogether.

Changelings are very different from their cousins. While they lead their lives in the human realm, they age at the rate of normal human children. Once they are brought into the faerie realms and embark on their Fostering, the rate at which they age slows to one year per three human years; and physical aging stops after their Saining.

Humans (some of whom later become changelings) who enter the faerie realm at an adult age (thirteen or more) cease aging after five years among the fae. Why this is so remains a mystery. Some scholars believe that the human adult form is more

susceptible to the magical energies of the Dominions that surround mortals in faerie lands. Nonetheless, this cessation of physical aging serves to explain the legends where humans disappear into the fae realms one day and return a century later without having aged much at all.

The fae rarely refer to each other by their ages in years. In fact, before the Battle of Stone, faeries did not measure age at all. Instead, they simply referred to an aged individual by her status (*Madrim, the Autumn Sorceress*); by the position within her given court (*Madrim, Autumn Seatholder of the Eastern Glen*); or simply with a tone of respect (*Honored Madrim of the Autumn Court*). Today, this has changed due to the influence of mortal society as the fae adapt to the Dark Medieval era. Traditionalists refuse to apply the measurement of eras (except for decorative purposes) and continue using the old ways, since they see it as a disgrace to measure age instead of actions. It has never been important before, they reason, so why should it be now simply because human society is becoming more than a mere footnote in faerie history?

Birth Era	Term	Application
Before the Golden Age	None	... of Legend
Before the Battle of Stone	Gold	... of Golden Heritage
Between Battle of Stone and the Oath-Truce	Stone	... of Stone Heritage
After the Oath-Truce	Iron	... of Iron Heritage

Applying age as a descriptive function among younger fae is done by adding the era after the name, but before any epithets. If Madrim was born during the Golden age, her full name when presented with age would be: *Madrim of Golden Heritage, Autumn Sorceress and Eastern Glen Seatholder*.

A Note on Titles

Feudalistic titles are modern additions in faerie society, and are now more or less accepted even by traditionalists. While elder fae tend to speak to individuals in tones of respect to indicate the others' higher status, younger fae instead adopted the titles of the mortal world. Texts written by elder fae regarding the contemporary kings and queens refer to them as either (*Name of the fae*) *lord (or lady) of (location)* or (*Name of the fae*), *master (or mistress) of (household or Court)*; titles are never put before names. The Spring Court was the quickest to adapt to the feudalistic titles. The Winter and Summer Courts are still struggling with this change, and the Autumn Court uses a mix of titles and the old ways depending on the benefits in a given situation.

Traditionalist Vs. Liberal

Traditionalists and liberals are not organized political factions within fae society. The terms are merely used to describe certain views. Traditionalists tend to follow ancient scriptures to the letter. They rarely consider changelings to be fully fae. This results in a majority of changelings who were brought up under traditionalists leaving for other Courts, or becoming Solstice fae. Traditionalists only acknowledge first-born and inanimae as rightful rulers of strongholds and hold places of power, and would rather see the changelings as "master servants" above sprites and humans than among the rest of the fae.

Liberal views are partly traditional and partly modern. They accept changelings for who they are and treat them as they would any other fae. They also consider the birth of a changeling to be a beautiful act and not an act of dishonor and frailty (as the traditionalists see it).

Oathcircles

A band of fae working together is known as an oathcircle. While oathcircles rarely have a name, some do. For example, the Spring elite troops known as the Green Blade are in fact an oathcircle and not just an army with a name. Becoming an oathcircle requires no recognition from anyone else; but in order to make an oathcircle official and recognized in the eyes of a court, the circle must appear before the court and plead its case before the ruler who then decides if the oathcircle will be an official one. It is commonly believed that official oathcircles are representations of the courts that approved them, and this makes it sometimes hard to gain recognition for a circle. Sometimes courts define an oathcircle for a specific purpose before selecting its members. No one is forced to become a member of an oathcircle, but it is an honor to be offered membership. A fae may belong to more than one oathcircle.

So how is it possible to combine characters into an oathcircle? Although **Dark Ages: Vampire** discusses coteries and Cainite characters (see p. 125–126), the discussion of why a group assembles and works together is just as valid in **Dark Ages: Fae**. Now, if there is such animosity among the Courts, why then should a troupe consist of members from different Courts?

Chapters One and Two present several different agendas and factions which characters may identify with. Truce-Bearers and Patrons who gather to form an oathcircle may come from different Courts. Hu-

manists may collaborate across Courtly boundaries to achieve the best results in their studies, while even the Militant factions can cooperate on a unified strike against a larger threat. It is important to provide a logical reason for the characters to come together during the first sessions; and the players and Storyteller share the responsibility of making sure this reason is satisfactory. After the game has continued for a while, characters often come together despite their Court affiliations, bound together by the unique experiences they have shared. Read more about the Storytelling techniques for **Dark Ages: Fae** in Chapter Six.

Branded Solstice

This chapter previously examined the possible back story of a Solstice fae. Here we detail how a character actually becomes one, and how others recognize him for who he is.

If a fae is sentenced into exile for crimes against the Court, the ritemaster who performed the fae's Saining performs a ritual similar to the Naming — only this time the entire local court and surrounding rulers are invited to witness. The fae is shackled to the floor, stripped naked and gagged. The ritemaster cuts open one of the subject's veins and fills a bowl with his blood. Using her fingers and the blood, the ritemaster draws arcane symbols over the bound faerie's entire body. To onlookers, the symbols appear as both beautiful and horrifying tattoos. Eventually, the ritemaster removes the gag and magically forces the unSained fae to speak a name out loud. That becomes the name the fae is known by. The ritemaster then ends the Solstice ritual by whispering a Disgraced name to the fae. That name becomes his true name. After this, all that remains is to unshackle the fae and escort him without any belongings across the realm border and forbid his return. Returning to the realm from which the fae was exiled means a death sentence.

Faeries who *desire* to become Solstice fae may undergo a similar ritual, usually alone, but sometimes among other Solstice-kin. In the most common ritual, the faerie makes a minor arcane symbol on her forehead with her own blood and then widely announces that she rejects the Courts and their ideologies, and that her future lies among the Solstice. Many of those who conduct this ritual for themselves claim that they heard their Disgraced names whispered in the wind, or felt them appear in their minds.

The third type of Solstice fae is the rarest. They are fae who suffered major backlash during their Naming

ceremonies and were magically branded as outcasts (see sidebar on p. 92 for game mechanics of the actual ceremony). Legend has it that such fae are fated to do important things, but that their lives are always fraught with tragedy. They are still Solstice, but they gain some small recognition from their "destined" status. (Note that recognition does not mean respect: these fae are considered walking ill omens; and while they don't draw the same contempt as exiled or voluntary Solstice, they are sometimes actually treated worse.) The magical backlash takes the form of self-opening wounds from which blood flows to form the Solstice tattoos on its own. It is an incredibly painful experience for both the Solstice fae and the ritemaster, and the Disgraced fae's true name echoes in both of their minds. Eventually the pain passes; instead of being shackled and escorted out of the realm, the faerie is escorted away from home by her ritemaster with her belongings intact. Such Solstice fae often retain a secret bond with their ritemasters after their exiles due to the closeness they shared even in failure.

Recognizing the Solstice fae as unSained requires a successful Perception + Kenning roll (difficulty 7). If the player succeeds on the roll, the character is able to see shimmering, ghostlike tattoos (images of those the ritemaster drew during the Solstice ritual) or the marking on the forehead. Three or more successes on the roll reveals what (if any) Court the Solstice fae previously belonged to. Five successes also reveals the identity of the ritemaster, due to recognizable signs in the tattoos.

Weddings

During their long existences, faeries may take many lovers and even commit to several relationships. Their hearts are not limited to one love, for their lives are so long that wherever their paths take them they may find another person who awakens their passions as much as the lover in the last kingdom did. When fae truly fall in love, however, they profess their love for one another through an oath in presence of the local court's ruler.

The oath is very simple and varies among courts, but it always contains a few key elements. The oath dedicates its initial lines to how the lovers met and who (if anyone) brought them together; the second part details how they fell in love and any emotions the parties wish to openly profess to those present; and the third and closing section of the oath shares their hopes for the future. The oath is not magical, but it is sacred to the fae; and even fae who normally

cannot be trusted are raised to believe in the sanctity of the marriage. While it is indeed possible to use weddings to further agendas, fae are taught to only commit to marriage when they fall truly in love. Once both read their oaths aloud, the ruler sanctifies the wedding by giving the couple an enchanted item (ranging from sexually enhancing potions to a pair of swords, but seldom something that constitutes a higher Treasure rating than 2). The couple also exchanges items of their choice that they wear at all times for as long as they remain married.

Nourishment

What happens when humans eat the food of the Fair Folk? Can faeries die from malnutrition? Do they have to eat? These are questions that sometimes arise during games and even during character creation.

Numerous tales and legends warn about eating the food and drinking the magnificent brews that faeries serve on their feast tables. While the fae do not have to worry about losing themselves to some magical potion by just eating regular faerie food, humans who eat meat from faerie animals or sip faerie drinks deduct one success from any Willpower rolls made to resist faerie wiles during the next day. Enchanting humans through food and drink to truly weaken their spirits and wills requires the use of the Dawn cantrip Brew and Bread (see

p. 148) or similar Dominion magic.

Fae do need to eat and can suffer from malnutrition, but outside of fae realms they need only eat the human equivalent of one meal a day. It bears noting, too, that while humans tell stories of their fellows being enchanted or changed by faerie food, the fae say much the same things about human fare. While changelings don't normally have any problems eating human meals, firstborn and (especially) inanimae sometimes have Echoes bound up in eating certain types of human foods (specific meats, breads, wine and so on).

While in faerie realms, fae must eat normally.

Faerie food is always in great supply there, however, so no fae goes hungry in her own realm.



Character Creation Summary

Step One: Determine Concept

Choose the character's Origin, Court, Nature and Demeanor. Develop these into a character concept.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Select primary, secondary, and tertiary categories of Attributes. Begin with 1 dot in all Attributes. Divide 7 dots in your primary Attribute category; 5 dots in your secondary; and 3 dots in the tertiary.

Physical Attributes: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Social Attributes: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Mental Attributes: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

See pp. 140–142 of **Dark Ages: Vampire** for detailed descriptions of Attributes.

Step Three: Select Abilities

Select primary, secondary and tertiary categories of Abilities. Divide 13 dots among your primary Abilities; 9 among your secondary; and 5 among the tertiary. No Ability may be rated above 3 at this stage.

Talents: Innate aptitudes

Skills: Learned aptitudes

Knowledges: Academic and intellectual lore

See p. 90 of **Dark Ages: Fae** and pp. 143–153 of **Dark Ages: Vampire** for detailed descriptions of Abilities.

Step Four: Advantages

Record Origin, Birthright and Frailty. Divide 5 dots among Backgrounds. Record starting Willpower (4), and Mists and Weaving as determined by Origin. Record the character's favored Dominion (decided by Court) and spend a number of Dominion dots as dictated by Origin. Select cantrips. Each point in Weaving supplies a character with one cantrip in each Dominion. Players can only purchase cantrips in Dominions their characters possess.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Spend 15 bonus points to enhance the character. Purchase Merits and Flaws (optional). Abilities can be raised above 3 at this stage. Beginning characters may not have more than 3 dots in a single Dominion. Select or create one Echo. Record the character's Feature rating (one Lesser Feature per dot in Mists, plus one Greater Feature for inanimae characters) and construct her mien accordingly. Players may also take additional Echoes in exchange for Features; see p. 90 for more information.

Origins

- **Changeling:** Changelings embody a synthesis between humanity and faeriekind. They are either humans who grew up among the fae or who have learned to master the Dominions through enchantment; children of firstborn and humans; or faeries left as replacements for abducted human children and left to discover their true nature in the midst of harsh upbringings.

Beginning Mists: 2 Beginning Weaving: 4 Beginning Dominions: 2

- **Inanimae:** Inanimae are elemental fae born to special aspects of nature that color their views of their environment. Their intimate connections to their elements also provide them with the ability to reconstruct their miens at will while in the vicinity of the element.

Beginning Mists: 3 Beginning Weaving: 3 Beginning Dominions: 3

- **Firstborn:** Often known as the true fae, the firstborn are the embodiment of the magical wonders and horrors that human legends often detail. They wield the Dominions far better than other fae, and their control over Unleashing is incomparable.

Beginning Mists: 4 Beginning Weaving: 2 Beginning Dominions: 3

Courts

- **Spring:** Often liberal faeries who prefer new, modern ways and spend their time watching or punishing humans in order to protect them.

Favored Dominion: Dawn

- **Summer:** Hidebound and traditionalist faeries who adhere to the old ways. They often subscribe to views of chivalry and knightly conduct.

Favored Dominion: Day

- **Autumn:** Treacherous faeries of the dying year who seduce, manipulate and use those they decide have something of value.

Favored Dominion: Dusk

- **Winter:** Predatory, inhumane and violent, Winter faeries care little for the welfare of others.

Favored Dominion: Night

- **Solstice:** Rejects and outcasts whom others disregard, but who retain their freedom and are not governed by Court ideologies.

Favored Dominion: None

Dominions

- **Day:** Power over light, faith and thought. Used to inspire and lead others in addition to creating temporary mortal guises.

- **Dawn:** Power over senses, body and time. Used for healing and shielding the mind from domination.

- **Dusk:** Power over spirits, magical travels and gateways. Used for reading minds, controlling air and viewing past events.

- **Night:** Power over darkness, nightmares, cold and misery. Used to instill fear; it is the most offensive of the Dominions.

Backgrounds

In addition to the Backgrounds Allies, Contacts, Influence, Mentor, Resources and Status (detailed on pp. 153–157 of **Dark Ages: Vampire**), players may purchase the following Backgrounds for **Dark Ages: Fae** characters.

- **Holdings:** Faerie strongholds or realms.

- **Library:** A wealth of sources on occult- or Gramarye-related subjects. Library may be used to reduce the experience point cost of raising Dominions as well as to locate lost knowledge.

- **Oaths:** Pre-established relationships of duty and responsibility between humans and fae that negate the effects of Echoes.

- **Retinue:** Mortal servants tied to the faerie through oaths.

- **Sprites:** Fae servants whose minor oaths protect against Echoes, and whose magical energy can be tapped.

- **Treasures:** Magically enhanced or crafted items and potions.

Bonus Point Cost

Attributes: 5 points per dot

Abilities: 2 points per dot

Ability Specialties: 1 point (maximum 3 specializations per Ability)

Backgrounds: 1 point per dot

Dominions: 7 points per dot

Willpower: 2 points per dot

Weaving/Mists: 4 points per dot

Inanimae are a special case. As creatures of nature and the elements, they don't eat normally, but replenish themselves through contact with their elements. While wearing a human guise, however, they can eat and take nourishment from human food.

Iron

Pure iron is extremely harmful to the fae. Weapons made of iron inflict aggravated damage to fae in all forms (they may soak this damage, however). Worse yet, whenever a fae is damaged by a pure iron weapon, she loses a temporary Mists point. Only pure iron causes aggravated damage and the magic-sapping effect; iron that has been mixed with other metals has no special power against the fae.

Concept

Concepts in **Dark Ages: Fae** regulate and aid in determining what Origin and Court to pick, which faerie Features to purchase, and what Dominions the fae wields. A lot hinges on the actual concept. This is often a stage of character creation that Storytellers and players might overlook simply because it has no meaning in-game except as an aid in determining what Abilities the persona has. In **Dark Ages: Fae**, however, concept also helps determine the Features and mien of a character, which has direct mechanical bearing on the game (not to mention the fact that the concept is still far and away the most important part of character creation). The following factors may aid you in determining a concept.

Profession Concepts: The greatest advantage of building a character around his profession is that such concepts are universal. It is possible to portray a character from any type of occupation common to humans without disrupting any sensation of playing someone from "another world." Despite this, you may not want to play a character who can easily locate a counterpart in the human world. If that is the case, then you should simply add some twist to the concept. Consider: Instead of a regular blacksmith, a "bone smith" who forges weapons from human and animal bones and empowers them with Dominions to make them as strong as steel; or a faerie seamstress who weaves exotic clothing from human hair. Adding the exotic theme allows you to

use your own familiarity with real-life culture and history while playing out the fictive elements added to the occupation.

Thematic Concepts: Another way to proceed with creating a faerie character is to build her around a basic theme. These are often very descriptive but loosely defined. *Monster of the dark woods* and *Witch of the glen* are examples of thematic concepts. This makes the concept much more workable for the Storyteller during his game planning, while also telling you how to construct your character further on. Storytellers should consider informing players of the chronicle's theme during character creation, since that aids players in focusing their thoughts on suitable concepts.

Literature Concepts: Occasionally, neither theme nor occupation is enough to successfully develop a concept for a character. In that case you can rely on the absolute best resource for **Dark Ages: Fae** — literature. Due to the fact that the mechanical systems for Features and Dominions allow a vast amount of fluidity within concise boundaries, it is possible to take elements of characters in your favorite myth or story and create a faerie persona. You can easily take Achilles and make a changeling out of him, or transform Black Annis into a firstborn. With luck you can find what you need in the Feature section (p. 105), but with the guidance of this book and a little help from your Storyteller, it is easy to create Features according to your needs.

Character Creation

With some variations, creating a fae character follows a procedure similar to that described in **Dark Ages: Vampire**. This is an examination of the complete character creation system for **Dark Ages: Fae**.

Step One: Determine Concept

Think about the answers to My Fostering, My Saining, My Service and My War (or My Fostering, My Saining, My Service, My Disgrace and My War), and attempt to discern the character's place within the game. Select her Nature and Demeanor (see Chapter Five: Character and Traits of **Dark Ages: Vampire**). Select a suitable Origin and Court, and note down the actual Concept for your character.

Nature and Demeanor

Any Nature and Demeanor in **Dark Ages: Vampire** is suitable for fae characters. Fae regain Willpower according to normal rules.

Origin

Fae come from three different Origins. In addition to providing the fae with a heritage, Origin also determines the character's initial Mists and Weaving scores. Changelings are humans who were brought up among the fae, or children of a faerie and a human. Inanimae are aspects of nature given faerie form. Firstborn are often known as true fae, and they possess a great bond with the magical world and the Dominions.

Each Origin has a positive and negative aspect called a Birthright and a Frailty, respectively. Birthright and Frailties are detailed in the examination of each Origin in Chapter Two: Origins and Courts.

Court

When a fae undergoes Saining she swears an oath to a Court. The Courts are the factions in the War of Seasons, and each Court imposes specific ideologies on its members. Besides the four Seasonal Courts (Summer, Spring, Autumn and Winter), players make take the roles of the Courtless Solstice fae.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Select primary, secondary and tertiary categories for Attributes. Divide 7 dots in the primary category, 5 in the secondary, and 3 in the tertiary. See **Dark Ages: Vampire**, pp. 140–142, for further information.

Step Three: Select Abilities

Abilities are divided into three categories: Talents, Skills and Knowledges. Just as with Attributes, select a primary, secondary and tertiary category and divide the assigned dots within them. The primary category receives 13 dots, the secondary receives 9, and the tertiary has 5 dots. No Ability may surpass rating 3 at this point.

Step Four: Advantages

The fourth step in character creation focuses on bringing out the special gifts and talents of a fae character.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds represent benefits that the character begins the game with. Divide 5 dots among Backgrounds. Allies, Contacts, Influence, Mentor, Resources and Status from **Dark Ages: Vampire** (pp. 153–157) are available to faerie characters. Fae characters also have access to exclusive Backgrounds as well.

Mists and Weaving

A character's Origin determines her initial ratings in Mists and Weaving. The Mists rating reflects the character's connection to the faerie realm and the mystical chaos he commands. Weaving aids in grounding magical effects in the mortal realm, and lower the risks of Unleashing the Dominions. A character must maintain a balance between the two Traits or suffer from imbalance.

Dominions

Divide a number of points determined by Origin among the Dominions. Dominions are the magical forces that the fae wield to accomplish astonishing (and horrifying) feats. The Dominions are: Dawn, Day, Dusk and Night. Each Court has an affinity for one of the Dominions, which in mechanical terms is called favored Dominion. Using favored Dominions lowers the difficulty on cantrips or Unleashing by –1. Keep in mind that players are *not* required to purchase a dot in their characters' favored Dominions.

Cantrips

Cantrips are concrete applications — spells, if you will — stemming from the four Dominions. The total number of cantrips a character wields is determined by her Weaving rating. Each dot of Weaving provides one cantrip in *each* of the four Dominions. Players can only select cantrips from Dominions that the character knows. The rating of the Dominion also dictates the maximum cantrip level the player can choose. This means that a character with a Weaving rating of 10 possesses 10 cantrips within each Dominion she knows (thus making an extreme maximum of 40 for a faerie with a dot in all four Dominions). Players may select as many cantrips as they wish during character creation, and may save unassigned cantrips for later increases of Dominion knowledge.

Example: Daniel is creating his character Lindolen, a firstborn Autumn Court thief, and has selected two Dominions (Night 1, Dusk 3.) He needs to decide which

cantrips Lindolen might find useful. Since Lindolen has a Weaving rating of 4, she has a total of eight cantrips, (four in each Dominion). Daniel reads through the Dominions in Chapter Four and comes to the conclusion that the Night Dominion works best for his concept from the outset, and decides to purchase all four Night cantrips during character creation. Meanwhile, he decides to select only three Dusk cantrips during character creation, since he desires to save the remaining one for when he may select level four Dusk cantrips. Right now he may only purchase level one Night cantrips and up to level three Dusk cantrips. Daniel purchases Gloom, Hush, Mindveil and Still of the Night from the Night Dominion and Speed of the Wind (level one) and Evening Mantle (level two) from the Dusk Dominion. Lindolen therefore knows no level three Dusk cantrips, but can access those effects (albeit at slightly greater risk) through Unleashing.

See Chapter Four for more on cantrips.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Spend 15 bonus points to enhance the character. Purchase Merits and Flaws (optional). Costs are detailed in the chart on p. 87. It is possible to raise Abilities above 3 at this stage.

Specialties

Specializations follow the rules detailed on p. 142 of **Dark Ages: Vampire**.

Willpower

All fae characters begin the game with a Willpower rating of 4.

Oaths and Echoes

Oaths and Echoes are important factors to any character. Three different sorts of oaths exist: Gold, Stone and Iron.

Gold Oaths were forged during the early days of the War of Seasons, and up until the Battle of Stone. They are the rarest type of oaths that fae may possess, and are forged with humanity at large. The forging of Stone Oaths occurred between the Battle of Stone and the Oath-Truce; these oaths are rare due to the fact that the fae had very little direct presence among the humans during this time. These oaths generally involve an entire town, or a population of similar size. Iron Oaths, the most common sort, are forged with individuals, and are the oaths forged after the Oath-Truce and today. The knowledge of how to forge both Gold and Stone Oaths is lost to most fae of the Dark Medieval. A player may roll her character's Oaths

rating (a Background) when facing Echoes to reduce or negate their effects on the character.

Echoes symbolize remedies or faith that repel or harm the fae. If a fae encounters truly potent Echoes, she might even perish immediately. All characters begin with one Echo. Players may choose to take additional Echoes for their characters in order to purchase additional Features.

Faerie Mien

Mien is a term describing how the fae appear in their natural states. Every character is assumed to have a body formed in a humanoid shape; and as such, the default appearance is that of an adult human man or woman. Fae then add Features, which provide the character with a mien. Lesser Features are cosmetic enhancements, while Greater Features symbolize truly alien appearances. Greater Features provide special benefits (ranging from lowering the difficulty of certain rolls, to additional Attribute or Ability dots), while Lesser Features are purely cosmetic.

Characters begin with a number of Lesser Features equal to their Mists rating (the starting rating determined by Origin plus any purchased with bonus points). Inanimae characters also begin with one Greater Feature. Players may purchase extra Features for their characters by accepting additional Echoes; each additional Echo grants the character two Lesser Features or one Greater Feature.

Traits

While fae rely on all the basic traits such as Attributes and Abilities, several new Abilities and Backgrounds are exclusive to them.

Abilities

Fae use the Abilities listed in **Dark Ages: Vampire**, with the following exceptions and notes:

Excluded Abilities: Due to the fact that they are rare to the majority of fae characters, the Theology and Academics Knowledges do not appear on the character sheet for **Dark Ages: Fae**. Players may still select them for fae characters. Also, Empathy has been replaced by Kenning, as most fae do not understand (and therefore do not empathize with) humans. Kenning, described in this chapter, functions as an equivalent to Empathy among fae. Fae characters, especially changelings, may still possess the Empathy Talent, however.

Linguistics: Firstborn and inanimae can automatically speak and write their Court's language and the "Fostering tongue," the common language of all fae. Additional dots in Linguistics are required to speak to humans or to members of other Courts in their own languages. A changeling may choose her Court language, the Fostering tongue or a human language as her native tongue, but must purchase any additional languages as usual.

Occult: While the Occult Knowledge works in the same way as in **Dark Ages: Vampire**, what would be considered occult about the fae from a vampire perspective falls under the domain of Gramarye (a new Knowledge described below). For the fae, Occult concerns all other supernatural presences (vampires, werewolves and mages). Demons and ghosts remain in this category as well, as do all spirits that are unrelated to sprites.

New Talent: Kenning

Kenning allows the fae to see traces of faerie magic and its effects on the world. Firstborn and inanimae are the most proficient, but all possess the gift to some degree. Storytellers should keep in mind that faerie sight is *always* active and that players may call on a Kenning roll at any time. Because Kenning is a Talent, characters may use it whether or not they actually have any dots in the Ability. Kenning can also be used in place of Empathy when dealing with other fae characters.

- **Novice:** Your inborn talent of faerie sight is active and allows you to see the most basic magical traces.
- **Practiced:** Your faerie sight is sharp; it allows you to see the energy flows of Dominions being used, and even sense traces of them afterwards.
- **Competent:** Your eyes are sharp and even concealed magic does not elude them.
- **Expert:** Once you had to work to view the magical energies that surround you; now you see them wherever you turn. You are a valuable resource in tracking down lost fae.
- **Master:** Even Dominions cannot shield others from your sharp sight.

Possessed by: Fae, Certain sensitive mortals

Specialties: (Specific) Dominion, Treasures, Changelings, Illusions

New Knowledge: Enigmas

Humans know that fae have a knack for enigmas; while the stories are sometimes exaggerated, the fae

undoubtedly are great riddlers and puzzle solvers. Enigmas were also a required knowledge in the early days of the War of Seasons, since all Courts decreed that sorcerers, scholars, generals and seers had to note everything down in cryptic sentences and codes in order to prevent their texts from causing damage to the Court if they fell into enemy hands. While this is no longer a rule, elderly fae tend to speak and even write in riddles so no one may understand what they truly know.

- **Dabbler:** You know how to pose and decrypt simple riddles.
- **Student:** You understand enough to impress the yokels, but many things lie maddeningly beyond your understanding.
- **Learned:** Most mysteries are but distractions to you. Now you hunger for more challenges.
- **Scholar:** You can puzzle out languages from exotic lands simply by looking for the patterns therein.
- **Master:** The only way to keep something secret from you is to kill you.

Possessed by: Scholars, Tricksters, Prophets, Oracles, Sprites

Specialties: Spirits, Riddles, Deduction, Quick Solutions, Codes

New Knowledge: Gramarye

This Knowledge represents insight into the four Dominions, as well as the recognition and use of magical plants and the identification and taming of magical beasts. Gramarye is required when brewing potions, forging treasures, and developing new cantrips. In combination with Kenning, Gramarye allows a faerie to recognize hidden magic and discern the active Dominion. Gramarye also provides information on how to perform rituals (including the Naming) and forge oaths. When selecting Gramarye you must choose your character's field of expertise.

- **Dabbler:** You are capable of discerning what sort of Dominion affected the victim within 48 hours from the spell's end, what plants might have poisoned the diplomat, and what magical beast leaves such markings on trees. You can also assist in creating level-one Treasures.
- **Student:** You can identify a cantrip by hearing of the effects, you know how to counteract the poison that the diplomat consumed, and you know what the magical beast eats. You can also assist in creating level-two Treasures.
- **Learned:** You know what Dominion and cantrip affected the victim and how to cure her through

THE NAMING CEREMONY: MECHANICS

While a Saining is really strictly a Storytelling affair, the actual Naming requires a special roll. Ritemasters performing the Saining *must* have at least Gramarye 4 to perform the ritual. In order to understand exactly how to use the Saining cantrip on *that* specific individual, the ritemaster's player must successfully roll Intelligence + Gramarye (difficulty 6). Each *failed* die adds to a separate pool. This is a Solstice pool that may cause the Saining to backfire on the participants (Weaving points can be spent as if this were an Unleashing roll to prevent this). When the ritemaster performs the actual Saining cantrip, the Storyteller secretly rolls the Solstice pool (difficulty 9). If the number of successes on the cantrip are fewer than the successes in the Solstice pool, the Saining backlashes and the fae being Sained (as well as the ritemaster) suffers the effect described on p. 84.

potions and powders that you are able to manufacture. You know the magical beast's anatomy and where to strike to cause the most damage. You can also assist in creating level-three Treasures.

•••• **Expert:** You can identify past magical effects at a glance and manufacture love-potions and similarly powerful powders. You know how to take control over a magical beast through knowledge alone (no Animal Ken required). You can also assist in creating level-four Treasures and Stone Oaths.

••••• **Master:** Only the greatest magical enigmas, which have baffled the greatest sages for millennia, continue to elude you. You can, given time and extensive research, forge Gold Oaths. You are capable of the creation of level-five Treasures.

Possessed by: Sorcerers, Ritemasters, Scholars, Zoologists, Assassins

Fields of Expertise: Cantrips, Dominions, Flora, Fauna, Magical Beasts, Oaths, Powders and Potions, Treasures

Backgrounds

Faerie glens and fortresses, mystical treasures, spirit servants and humans under faerie control: All of these are new and exclusive Backgrounds for **Dark Ages: Fae**.

Allowed Backgrounds

Dark Ages: Vampire details several different Backgrounds for purchase during character creation, although most of them are adapted to suit vampires and not faeries. Nonetheless, it is still possible to purchase the following Backgrounds (with full descriptions in **Dark Ages: Vampire**): Allies, Contacts, Influence, Mentor, Resources and Status. The Backgrounds detailed in this chapter are exclusive to **Dark Ages: Fae**.

The Status Background is the same in **Dark Ages: Fae** as in **Dark Ages: Vampire**, save that it applies to the character's local court (and possibly Seasonal Court) and political agenda. Very old and powerful fae might have high Status ratings applicable no matter what their location or situation. Solstice fae may not take the Status Background.

Holdings

The War of Seasons looms; secret inquisitors wield horrifying, faith-based powers; werewolves stalk the fae forests without regard to sacred oaths; and Echoes spread across the world like wildfires, bringing pain and discomfort to the fae. These are dark times; and while not all fae are lucky enough to have a place to call their own, some are.

Holdings represent a physical area, whether it is in the heart of a faerie realm or hidden in plain sight among humans, to which the fae can withdraw for safety. They vary from hidden realms to abandoned temples and abbeys in the wilderness, as well as magical castles and strongholds.

Holdings are similar to Domains in **Dark Ages: Vampire** in many aspects, but differ in just as many. The main difference between the Backgrounds is that a vampire's grants him a safe place to hunt, and therefore always includes human residents. A fae's Holding, however, is considered a faerie realm, and therefore usually doesn't play host to human inhabitants. Because of its nature as a place to gather for safety, Holdings makes an ideal Anchor for a Background pool.

The rating constitutes the number of points that you (or the troupe, if pooled) have to divide among the attributes that make up a holding. The specified sections are: Size, Defense, Magical Effect and Surroundings. You also need to specify a favored Dominion for the holding itself. You may spend further Background points to purchase additional favored Dominions for the holding as well. Remember that it is possible to purchase this

Background with Size only, but if that is the case, the holding lacks internal defenses or surrounding areas to preside over in the beginning.

Each dot spent on Defense increases the difficulty of intruding upon the holding and reduces the difficulty of tracking intruders, exactly as the Domain Background (see p. 155 of *Dark Ages: Vampire*).

Each dot spent on Magical Effects allows you to select one of the following options for your holding.

- Any use of the holding's favored Dominion magic within its boundaries of receives an additional -1 difficulty, making fae magic even more potent.

- The holding restores 1 temporary Mists or Weaving point per hour of rest.

- The holding includes a household sprite that performs menial tasks. It cannot fight and cannot shield the fae from Echoes, but is in all other ways identical to a level-two sprite (see the Sprites Background).

- The holding indefinitely extends the duration of any cantrip used to keep a human servile. Eventually this may lead to a synthesis between the human soul and the faerie world, resulting in a changeling (this effect takes place at the Storyteller's discretion).

- The holding reduces the difficulty of all Kenning rolls and all Gramarye rolls that involve handling magical beasts by -2.

- The holding reduces all Unleashing pools by one die while within its borders. (Even firstborn gain this advantage, and thus their Unleashing pool is only two dice while they remain within the holding.)

- The holding prevents others from discovering its location unless they know exactly what they are looking for, although wanderers may accidentally stumble into the holding. In essence, holdings remain undetectable unless a special condition is fulfilled. (Discuss what the conditions are with the Storyteller.)

Each dot spent on Size or Surroundings enhances the holding according to the following:

- The holding is of the size of a small cottage (Size); the area around the holding is only a few acres (Surroundings).

- The holding is at the size of a small house (Size); the area around the holding is about 20 acres (Surroundings).

- The holding is the size of a merchant house (Size); the holding has a vast land tied to it, a maximum of 40 acres (Surroundings).

- The holding is the size of an abandoned temple, abbey or stronghold (Size); the land covers about 60 acres (Surroundings).

- The holding is the size of a large castle (Size); the land stretches over 80 acres (Surroundings).

Library

Cost: 2 Background points or 2 bonus points per dot

Library grants the fae a number of physical sources from which she can draw knowledge. To the fae this often means scrolls and books, but it can also include imprisoned spirits and special treasures. Much of this sort of material was lost prior to the Battle of Ice; and after the legendary Battle of Stone, even more sources of knowledge vanished. By purchasing this Background, character possesses a piece of lost lore.

Owning a library has its risks. Others may seek the information the fae possesses, and the information itself may prove dangerous. Nonetheless, it is a real treasure for those who are interested in lost lore. Players and Storytellers must work together during character creation to decide what information the library holds.

A player may roll Intelligence + Library (difficulty 8) in order to locate information concerning lost occult or Gramarye lore. Succeeding on a basic Library roll decreases the cost of raising a Dominion by 1 experience point. Failing this roll only indicates that there was no information relating to the Dominion that could help the character. Botching this Library roll means that not only did the character not locate any useful information, but the information she found confused her so much that the experience point cost of the Dominion is increased by 1. The character may not use the Library again for that particular Dominion until the Storyteller rules that she comes to some new conceptual understanding of that Dominion.

- A box of scrolls within the given field, or a minor treasure that provides clues to the answers you seek.

- A handwritten account by a knowledgeable person, or access to an oracle who can aid you in your search.

- A book concerning the chosen field, or a magical mirror that answers your questions in riddles.

- A collection of scrolls and a few books, or an intelligent magical beast that has lived for millennia and may provide information on a variety of subjects.

••••• A complete lost library of a stronghold, or an ancient and wise being (such as Mimir's head).

Oaths

Oaths are agreements between humans and fae that protect against the effects of Echoes as long as they are kept active. Oaths must detail parameters that determine how the fae and human may break the oath. Since the oath is magically enforced, every oath also details the punishment the oath-breaker suffers. See p. 107 for more on the mechanics of oaths.

Iron Oaths are the most common oaths in the Dark Medieval; they are sworn between one fae (or a small group of fae) and a human (or a small group of humans). Stone Oaths are rare, and were forged in the time between the Battle of Stone and the Oath-Truce. Rarest of all oaths are the Gold Oaths, forged during the Golden Age until the Battle of Stone where that knowledge was lost. Because they were sworn between fae and entire nations, these are the most powerful sort of oaths there are. Gold Oaths always have a rating of 4 or 5.

Players may purchase the Oaths Background more than once for their characters; this indicates that the character benefits from multiple oaths. The Oaths Background can be pooled, or it may even serve as an Anchor for a Background pool when maintaining an oath provides the characters with Resources, Contacts or other suitable advantages. Anchor Oaths should be even more carefully maintained — if the oath is broken, the advantages that depend on it will certainly be affected.

In addition to their effects in mitigating Echoes, oaths can also help fae regain Weaving points (see p. 102).

- Iron Oath
- Iron Oath
- Iron Oath or Stone Oath
- Stone Oath or Gold Oath
- Stone Oath or Gold Oath

Retinue

Faeries do not only have sprites to serve and tend to their needs. Some humans came willingly to the Good Folk for aid, and remained in servitude as payment or because they sought something they could never gain in the human lands. Others were abducted at an adult age and subjected to magic that weakened their wills. Regardless of how they came there, serving fae is a difficult job that involves great risks (and often

proves fatal). In the War of Seasons, humans were sometimes used as warriors, but this practice fell out of favor during the Oath-Truce. As the end of the truce approaches, some courts are once again training their human slaves to fight; but normal servitude is still the most common use for human retainues.

Humans who survive their service with fae masters may eventually turn into changelings (although this dramatic change is left to the discretion of the Storyteller). The Retinue Background provides the fae with human servants who were either abducted or broke an oath that resulted in enslavement.

A member of a retinue must succeed on a Willpower roll (difficulty 10) to attempt to betray his master, and he is unable to cause his lady physical harm. Any attempt to do so results in intense pain — the human vomits blood and takes aggravated damage equal to the master's Mists rating. In order to avoid discontent, the fae master must also look after her humans. If they are not fed or clothed, they are bound to revolt sooner or later, despite the consequences.

If a member of a retinue under some sort of enchantment leaves the faerie realms, he must succeed on a Willpower roll with a difficulty equal to his master's Mists +3 or increase the difficulty of all Wits- and Perception-related rolls by +3 for a full month. They must do this every month for as long as they were in servitude to the fae (that is, a man who toiled under a faerie for five years must make this roll each month for five years). For some servants, this means that they never recover. Most of these humans miss the fae so much that they willingly return to their masters.

As with the Retainers Background, higher levels in Retinue can indicate a larger number of average servants, or a few highly competent servants. Retinue members who are able to fight are always considered competent servants.

- One human
- Two average humans, or one competent human
- Four average humans, two competent humans, or one exceptional human
- Eight average humans, four competent humans, or two exceptional humans
- Sixteen average humans, eight competent humans, four exceptional humans

Sprites

Sprites are faerie spirits made up of unfulfilled faerie essence. They could have become firstborn or

inanimae, but never gained enough strength. Instead, they remain insubstantial.

Although they are faerie spirits, sprites do not possess fae miens; instead they are extremely small (between one and three feet tall), and lack rigid bone structures and discernable facial features. They affect the physical world just as fae do as long as they remain within a holding, but outside faerie lands they may only affect their surroundings if their faerie masters permit them to. Also, outside faerie realms, sprites are invisible to all but the fae without the use of some sort of supernatural sight enhancement, such as Kenning.

Sprites do have an internal social hierarchy even if they are always subordinate to the faerie community. The more powerful a sprite is (the higher the rating, in mechanical terms), the more Charms it can wield; in addition it becomes more "solid" in appearance. Such sprites lead the lesser ones, and those who are truly powerful may eventually undergo Fostering and become true fae if their masters provide them with the extra magic that allows them to assume a mien.

As creatures that are neither fae nor human, the sprites are completely alien to both oaths and Echoes; this is what makes them so valuable to the fae. Sprite masters may call upon their servants when they encounter Echoes and allow the sprites to shield them from harm. The player may choose to add the character's Sprites rating to an oath roll, but may only use each dot once per session (if the character has a Sprites rating of 3, the player may choose to add three dice to an Oaths roll or one die to three different Oaths rolls, but only has access to three Sprites dice each session). Characters lacking the Oaths Background can still use Sprites in

this manner. The sprites do not have to be with the fae in order to provide this benefit.

Sprites can also lend their masters extra Mists points when needed (although they must be in the same place to do this). The fae may call upon 1 Mists point per dot of Sprites. Sprites regain Mists in the same ways as fae.

It is possible to invest Background dots in either a large number of servants, or into one specific and special sprite.

- A generic sprite servant with 2 Charms
- A capable sprite with 4 Charms (or two generic sprites)
- A distinguished sprite with 6 Charms (or four generic sprites)
- A powerful sprite with 8 Charms (or six generic sprites)
- A near-fae sprite with 10 Charms (or eight generic sprites)

Treasures

Treasures are items, weapons, armory, powders, potions or anything else imbued with faerie magic. There are two types of treasures. The most common sort are simply referred to as Faerie Treasures; and while they are powerful, they are without a doubt weaker than Oathcrafted Treasures.



SPRITES

Although they are not normal spirits, the game mechanics for sprites work in the same way. **Dark Ages: Vampire** provides full descriptions of spirit traits on p. 293. Sprites are considered to be dematerialized when moving outside fae realms, but those with the Materialize Charm may make themselves visible to anyone.

Keep in mind that all sprites have personalities of their own, and those not tied by the Background may very well constitute allies or antagonists if they are truly powerful.

The following are examples that Storytellers can use for quick reference.

- **Sprite Servant** (generic sprite)
Rage: 1, **Gnosis:** 2, **Willpower:** 2, **Essence:** 5
Charms: Animate Tools, Swift Flight
- **Messenger Sprite** (capable sprite)
Rage: 2, **Gnosis:** 4, **Willpower:** 4, **Essence:** 10
Charms: Animate Tools, Blast, Swift Flight
- **Squire Sprite** (distinguished sprite)
Rage: 4, **Gnosis:** 6, **Willpower:** 5, **Essence:** 15
Charms: Animate Tools, Blast, Exclamation (as Presence 1), Reform, Speech, Swift Flight
- **Scholar Sprite** (powerful sprite)
Rage: 6, **Gnosis:** 9, **Willpower:** 7, **Essence:** 21
Charms: Animate Tools, Blast, Healing, Reform, Speech, Swift Flight
- **Master Sprite** (near-fae sprite)
Rage: 9, **Gnosis:** 10, **Willpower:** 8, **Essence:** 28
Charms: All of the Charms detailed below.

SPRITE MAGIC: CHARMS

The magical powers that the sprites wield are known as Charms. Players who are familiar with **Dark Ages: Werewolf** or **Dark Ages: Mage** may assign the Charms described in those books to sprites with Storyteller approval. Sprites regain spent Essence at 4 points per hour by resting within fae realms.

- **Animate Tools:** Sprites may animate household tools or weapons, but none requiring Strength 3 or more to use. A sprite may not animate more items than its Gnosis rating. If it attacks with the animated items, the damage is halved before the defender's soak roll (one level of lethal damage becomes one level of bashing damage) and attack rolls are made as normal. **Essence Cost:** 2 per item and hour

- **Blast:** The sprite is able to attack others by sending a forceful magical blast that takes an appearance related to its master's Court. A Winter sprite might fling shards of ice or a frigid blast of air, while a Spring sprite hurls black, curled thorns at its master's foes. The sprite spends 1 point of Essence per level of bashing damage; 3 per lethal level; and 6 per aggravated level. It is possible to soak this damage as normal. The player of the sprite's master, or the Storyteller, must determine the damage of the attack *before* rolling to see if the sprite succeeds. Roll the sprite's Willpower to determine if the victim is hit. The Essence assigned to the attack is spent even if the attack misses. Extra successes on the Willpower roll do not add to damage. **Essence Cost:** Varies

- **Healing:** In the same way that sprites channel magic to inflict damage on others, they may also heal those in need. Sprites buy health levels for healing in the same way they buy damage dice with Blast, but at twice the cost. Healing bashing damage costs 2 points of Essence per level; lethal costs 6; and aggravated damage costs 12. **Essence Cost:** Varies

- **Paralyzing Stare:** This Charm paralyzes a single target. Roll Gnosis (difficulty is victim's Stamina + 3, or Rage if the target is another sprite or spirit) to determine success. Victims are unable to act for a number of turns equal to successes. **Essence Cost:** 1 for non-supernatural beings; 2 for spirits; 3 for vampires, werewolves, mages and fae

- **Reform:** When endangered, the sprite may take a turn to magically break itself down and transport itself to its dwelling. Usually this is the common room of the holding it serves, or its master's home. No rolls required. **Essence Cost:** 15

- **Speech:** Unless the sprite possesses this Charm, it is only able to communicate with its master (through a mental connection) and other sprites. When the sprite uses this power, it gains the ability to vocalize its speech into the desired language. This makes sprites invaluable travel companions when visiting foreign courts and nations. This Charm is rare; only some sprites possess it (Sprite rating 3 or more). **Essence Cost:** 3 per hour

- **Swift Flight:** Sprites with this Charm can easily avoid being caught by non-supernatural creatures. Once activated, the sprite moves at triple its normal speed, while its maximum speed becomes $[60 + (\text{Willpower} \times 3)]$ yards per turn. **Essence Cost:** 1

Craftsmen must possess sufficient levels of the Gramarye Knowledge as well as the correct cantrips to create treasures. Even today new treasures are forged, but none of them measures up to those created in the time before the Battles of Ice and Stone. When purchasing this Background, work with the Storyteller to determine the treasure's magical effects.

Chapter Five: Kingdoms and Quests provides descriptions of the different types of Treasures and examples of what fae might get when purchasing this Background. It is possible to divide dots up in to several different treasures.

- One level of Treasures
- Two levels of Treasures
- Three levels of Treasures
- Four levels of Treasures
- Five levels of Treasures

Merits and Flaws

In addition to Merits and Flaws from *Dark Ages: Vampire*, fae characters may select among those listed here as well.

Disallowed Merits and Flaws

Although *Dark Ages: Vampire* details many interesting Merits and Flaws, not all of them are suited for *Dark Ages: Fae*. Players may not select the following: Eat Food, Blush of Health, Efficient Digestion, Huge Size, Short, Smell of the Grave, 13th Generation, Ragged Bite, Leper, Lame, Monstrous, Child, Flesh of the Corpse, Celestial Attunement, Prey Exclusion, Religious Prohibition, Flesh Eater, Crusader, Oathbreaker (fae have a different version of this Flaw), Outspoken Pagan/Heretic, Initiate to the Road, Cannot Embrace, Cast No Reflection, Blood Madness, Grip of the Damned, Weak Blood, Weak Aura and Potent Aura.

All Merits and Flaws involving Sires involve Mentors for fae. The Flaw Apostate indicates that a fae changed Court.

Physical

Angelic (3-pt. Merit)

Your Features fall within human expectations for what an angel or servant of Heaven might look like. When humans see you in your fae mien, they react less severely, with amazement and supplication rather than fear and violence. Also, you are less likely

to gain Echoes in these situations. Multiple humans present no additional penalty.

Demonic (3-pt. Flaw)

Your Features fall within human expectations of what a demon or servant of Satan might look like. When humans see you in your fae mien, they react with fear and violence, and often attempt to banish you from the area using prayer, holy symbols and religious incantations. Because of this, your starting Echo must have some connection to religion (typically Christianity), and you lose an additional die from your roll to resist gaining new Echoes if a priest or other holy person is present.

Frailty of the Flesh (3-pt. Flaw)

You are susceptible to mortal illness and suffer the full effects as if you were a regular human. Illnesses that normally are lethal cause you to enter a deep coma until cured.

Unearthly Mien (4-pt. Flaw)

Your mien is unusually strong. Hiding the mien from humans and other onlookers requires 2 additional Mist points or two additional successes on the Day Dominion roll involved to create the illusion of a human form. Even if you hide or disguise yourself successfully, humans with a Willpower rating above 6 can sense that there is something odd about you, and therefore you suffer a +2 difficulty penalty on social interactions with them.

Social

Cherished and Feared (1-pt. Merit/Flaw)

You are known to the local folk, or a particular class of people (travelers, knights, shepherds, etc.), as a helpful creature; and while they might still be frightened of you, chances are they won't immediately seek to drive you off either. Tales of your exploits helping people are well known, and some may even seek you out on matters you are known for from time to time. This does not mean either side is expected to work for free or help without question, however — just that the mortals who know of you are significantly less likely to run to the local Inquisition or throw Echoes at you right away. You receive an additional die on all Social rolls and add one die to rolls against gaining new Echoes when dealing with mortals who know of your legend.

Feared is the precise opposite — you are well known by a wide range of local folk, but considered a sincere nuisance or pest. Once a mortal recognizes you, you are hard-pressed to make a good impression on her, work with her or get her to strike up a serious conversation without resorting to cantrips. It may be possible to change this reputation over time, but it'll be difficult to say the least. You lose one die on all Social rolls and subtract one die on rolls against gaining new Echoes when dealing with mortals who are aware of your reputation.

Prodigal Changeling (2-pt. Merit)

Long thought lost or dead by your firstborn parents, you have finally realized your fae nature and returned to the fold. Having had extensive experience with humans and prestigious parentage, your insight into both fae and human affairs is highly valued. All rolls involving knowledge of fae/human interactions are made at a -2 difficulty.

Child of Inanimae (1-pt. Flaw)

You are the product of a union between two inanimae, both of whom have rejected you and actively seek to avoid you. While your parents bear the brunt of the shame, other fae see your existence as somehow unnatural. You suffer a +1 difficulty to all Social rolls involving fae who know the circumstances of your birth. Only inanimae may take this Flaw.

Inanimae Parent (2-pt. Flaw)

You are an inanimae who has sired a child with another inanimae. This may be the result of a secret love with another of your Origin, or an accidental byproduct of a moment's passion. Regardless, your actions have caused a new inanimae to be born, and your deeds have become known. You suffer a +3 difficulty on all Social rolls involving fae with any knowledge of your transgression. Only inanimae may take this Flaw.

Known Echo (2 to 5-pt. Flaw)

One or more of your Echoes is well known to mortal folk, perhaps related in a popular tale or sung by children at play. This obviously means that you aren't safe, as any scabby peasant might know the key to your undoing. The point value of this Flaw relies on two factors: How widespread knowledge of your Echo has become, and how easily recognizable you are to people who know about it. If everyone in the village knows your Echo but can't easily recognize you, the Flaw is worth 2 points. If only a few people know the Echo

(children sing it as a rhyme, a certain profession trades stories of you) and can recognize you easily, the Flaw is worth 3 points. If the Inquisition or the Church is among those who know your Echo, add 2 points to the Flaw's value.

Fosterling (3-pt. Flaw)

You have not yet completed your Saining and have yet to join a Court. You are probably in the midst of the Cleansing, but you may begin play at any point in the process with Storyteller approval (see Chapter One for a discussion of the Saining). You are not considered a member of a Court and have no favored Dominion, but do not suffer the stigma of being a Solstice fae. You are still learning your Courtly language and must succeed on an Intelligence + Linguistics roll to understand or read anything in that tongue (you speak the Fostering tongue well enough to get by, though). Since you have not joined a Court, other fae might try to sway you to their banner, making you a potentially valuable commodity.

Oathbreaker (1, 3 or 5-pt. Flaw)

One of the most vile epithets that can be applied to a fae is *Oathbreaker*. Oaths are vital to the continued survival of the fae, and every oath that breaks enables mortals to hold a little more power over faeriekind. You, unfortunately, have broken an oath, and now wear your shame visibly. This Flaw is worth 1 point if the evidence of your crime is not easily visible (detected only with prolonged Kenning, for instance, or covered by clothes). It is worth 3 points if the evidence is clearly visible to other fae. If you broke the Oath-Truce and were punished for it, your shame is literally written across your face or otherwise immediately visible to any fae looking at you, but you may collect 5 bonus points for this Flaw. All oathbreakers suffer a +3 difficulty penalty on interactions with other fae. You may not start the game with any dots in the Oaths Background.

Mental

Gift of the Bard (1-pt. Merit)

You are a storehouse of all manner of legends and tales, and can often recall a variety of details about items and places you've never actually seen before just by searching your vast repertoire of stories. You have a -2 difficulty on any Academics, Hearth Wisdom or Gramarye rolls related to recognizing or recalling information about a particular object or location, provided you could have conceivably heard some-

thing about it in the past (at the Storyteller's discretion).

Gifted Teacher (2-pt. Merit)

You have some insights into the Dominions that you're willing to share, and you're superb at making those insights clear to others. When teaching a fae how to wield a higher level in a Dominion, that fae may purchase that level for 1 fewer experience point.

Riddlemaster (2-pt. Merit)

You were born to create and solve enigmas, and your Court often requires your expertise in interpreting codes and ancient scrolls. All rolls involving the Enigma Knowledge are at -2 difficulty.

Mind of the Mists (4-pt. Merit)

Your mind is more highly attuned to the chaotic patterns of faerie thought than most, making it difficult for other fae to pry into your thoughts — and highly risky for non-fae. Any time your mind is targeted by supernatural powers that attempt to read, alter or control your thoughts (not your emotions), you may roll your Mists rating (difficulty 7). Each success on this roll subtracts one success from the opponent's total; if all successes are removed, the

power is considered to have been negated. If the attack is negated and opponent is not one of the fae, she must immediately make a Willpower roll (difficulty equal to the character's Mists rating). A failure on this roll causes the opponent to lose a Willpower point from the chaotic tangle of the fae's thoughts; a botch indicates that the attacker acquires a temporary but intense derangement for the rest of the scene.

Free Thinker (5-pt. Merit)

Your mind is highly resistant to the numbing calcification of becoming Locked, whether due to a deep understanding of faerie ways or simply because your thoughts are too fluid and evanescent to be so readily contained. At any rate, you can sustain a higher level of Weaving without becoming imbalanced — you are considered imbalanced when your Weaving rises to 4 points higher than your Mists rating, as opposed to 3. Additionally, you receive two additional dice on any rolls related to resisting becoming Locked, though if you should fall victim to this condition you must recover normally.

Stable Mind (5-pt. Merit)

As Free Thinker, save that it applies to Mists instead of Weaving.



Undereducated (2 or 3-pt. Flaw)

Either your education was cut short or you just weren't paying attention, but you don't have a firm grasp on reading or even speaking your Court's language. You begin play able to speak and read the Fostering tongue, but any other languages must be purchased with dots of Linguistics. For 3 points, you can only speak the Fostering tongue and cannot read at all. Changelings may not take this Flaw unless they also take the Fosterling Flaw.

Chattel Appetites (3-pt. Flaw)

You are addicted to some human pleasure such as sex, human food or human games. You regularly return to human society to fulfill your desires without consideration of others. Some humans have come to understand your weakness and may use it against you, but that does not matter as long as you satisfy your needs.

Delicate Soul (6-pt. Flaw)

You more prone to imbalance than most fae, and must keep a careful watch on your relative ratings of Mists and Weaving if you wish to avoid becoming Lost or Locked. You are considered imbalanced if either rating rises 2 points higher than the other; you may even begin play imbalanced. This Flaw is far more insidious than it might first appear, and players are encouraged to choose it carefully.

Iron Tongue (6-pt. Flaw)

Your words of fealty and pledges are never spoken fleetingly or in haste, for you suffer from the curse of an ancient Oath-Breaking that forces you to adhere to all such declarations or suffer horrifying consequences. If you choose to ignore a pledge you made, you suffer one health level of unsoakable lethal damage every day until the mistake is rectified and the subject of your pledge forgives you. If it is impossible to rectify the choice, the damage continues until you die.

Supernatural

Cantrip Affinity (2-pt. Merit)

You can weave magic in your favored Dominion more easily than other fae. You may take an additional cantrip in your favored Dominion, for a total of one higher than your Weaving rating. Solstice fae may not take this Merit.

Attuned (3-pt. Merit)

While Dominions are more easily cast during the hour of their corresponding juncture (see p. 119), your attunement to the movement of the sun allows you to more greatly enjoy the benefits of these periods. You gain the benefits of each juncture for twice the standard time period, for a total of two hours instead of one.

Kenning Affinity (3-pt. Merit)

Your faerie sight is much sharper than most others'. You might well find work as a bloodhound, hunting down enemies of your Court or tracking lost changelings. Tasks that require Kenning 1 to accomplish automatically succeed; while dice rolls demanding Kenning 2 are at a -1 difficulty.

Unleashing Control (4-pt. Merit)

Firstborn may not select this merit. Despite your inanimae or changeling Origin, you are just as equipped to handle Unleashing as the pure bloods. Whether this stems from a magical gift provided by another fae, or is due to the interference of something else with the power to affect the very nature of the fae you have no idea; but you are special. Reduce the Unleashing pool to three dice.

Echo Intolerant (2-pt. Flaw)

Echoes pain you more than other fae. You are not sure why, but it may be the result of a broken oath or a curse. You fear the humans' newfound strength against you and will act to quench the source if it ever becomes possible. When determining Echo effects, add an additional die to the Echo roll.

Unseasonal (2-pt. Flaw)

One of your most prominent features is of a season different than your chosen Court. Summer-kin may have icy skin or frosty breath, while Spring fae may have a scent of fallen leaves or other aspect of the Autumn Court. This difference increases the difficulty of all social interactions with your Court by +2, though it may be an asset when dealing with members of the Court that corresponds to your odd feature.

Crafted (4-pt. Flaw)

You are an inanimae born not of some spontaneous natural phenomenon, but of the efforts of man. You may be a water inanimae born during the damming of a river, or a stone inanimae born under a

sculptor's hands, but your origins provide a physical link to the world of men. Because of this, you do not possess a Greater Feature at character creation, instead having two additional Lesser Features. Only inanimae may take the Flaw.

Dominion Loepitude (6-pt. Flaw)

For whatever reason, you are barred from using one of the Dominions. This may be the result of oath-breaking or merely heritage. In any event, you can never gain a rating in the Dominion or select Features of the Court with its seasonal affinity. This may not be your Court's favored Dominion. Decide during character creation which Dominion your character is barred from and why.

Mists

Imagine standing at the edge of a mist-covered moor, attempting to spot a figure trying to cross from the other side. Images blur and your vision is extremely limited. In a sense this describes the Mists of the fae. The Mists is a chaotic aspect of their magical powers. Each faerie has an inborn connection to the Mists, and it allows him to hide or strengthen his magic.

Where the fae once were free to act without consideration of humans or other supernatural beings, that time is long past. Even the Winter Court is not brave enough to reveal its true nature to others. While the fae have remained on Earth, they overlooked much of it — as if the human realms were covered in mists as well. Then Brother Everard de Gascony's ritual accidentally shattered those mists with a single blow, and the fae were once more able to see the world for what it was.

Threats to the fae are at an all-time high; and with the end of the Oath-Truce, the fae will not avoid discovery much longer. That is unless they turn to their magical souls and suppress them — but not even that is without risk. Relying on Mists protection for too long can push a fae into imbalance, and eventually cause her to become Lost (see p. 103).

As a trait, Mists measures the character's ability to wield the chaos of the Dominions. Like Willpower, Mists ranges from 1–10 on the character sheet. The circles represent the character's permanent Mists rating, while the boxes symbolize the temporary rating. When making Mists rolls, always roll a dice pool equal to the *permanent* rating.

Spending points of Mists reduces the temporary rating. Upon recovering Mists points, it is always the temporary rating that rises. The temporary rating may never exceed the permanent rating.

Benefits and Dangers of Mists

- **Mists Imbalance:** If the character's permanent Mists rating is higher than her permanent Weaving rating, the fae may become imbalanced. This occurs if a character's Mists rating is 3 dots higher than her Weaving rating. See p. 103 for more information.

- **Bestow Kenning:** By spending 1 Mists point, a fae can temporarily grant a human Kenning 1 for one day. Bestowing this ability upon a supernatural being costs 2 points. If the victim is unwilling, the Storyteller (or the target's player) rolls Willpower (difficulty 6) in an resisted roll against the fae's Mists rating (also difficulty 6). If the subject wins, he is not affected.

- **Cloaking Cantrips:** A fae may call upon the Mists to hide the use of Dominions from onlookers. Even those with Kenning can barely see what is truly going on, and only if they succeed at a Perception + Kenning roll (difficulty 8). Spend 1 Mists point to cover the use of a cantrip. Unleashings cannot be cloaked in this manner.

- **Countering Dominions:** Fae can call upon their control of the chaos of the Mists to scatter other fae's cantrips and even Unleashings. The system for this can be found on p. 130.

- **Enhance Mien:** A player may spend 2 Mists points to enhance the character's mien temporarily. For the remainder of a scene, treat a Lesser Feature of the player's choice as a Greater Feature. This means that the character becomes obviously inhuman and runs the risk of gaining Echoes if seen (see p. 114), but also that the Feature in question grants some mechanical bonuses. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of what bonuses a temporarily enhanced Feature grants.

- **Hiding from Mortals:** A player may roll Mists (difficulty 7) to hide his character's presence from mortals. This does not cause the fae to completely vanish from sight; it merely hides any visible parts of her mien. Any humans spotting the character believe her to be an ordinary person. Using Dominions in any way, without cloaking them with Mists, immediately cancels the effect of this power; but it otherwise lasts until the fae willingly cancels it. If a fae remains hidden for more days than her Willpower rating, she becomes Lost (see p. 103).

Regaining Mists Points

Fae regain Mists points in three ways. Commonly, all a fae need do is to remain within the boundaries of a fae realm. Every day she recovers 1 Mists point (the Holdings Background can increase this to 1 point per hour; see p. 93). The other is to Unleash Dominions. The fae regains 1 Mists point per two successes on the roll, whether or not the Unleashing went as she planned. Finally, fae with sprite servants can siphon the magic from them (see the Sprites Background, p. 95).

Weaving

If the Mists saturate the fae in gloriously chaotic magic, Weaving grounds the fae in its directed currents. It is what keeps the Dominions from a total Unleashing by providing fae with focused magic — the cantrips. Indeed, Weaving is so powerful that it can actually be used to mitigate any horrifying results of Unleashing.

Weaving is a measure of the fae's ability to ground his magic with his own will. Without Weaving, the fae would only be capable of Unleashing. Changelings have a certain affinity for Weaving; much as human belief can harm the fae (through Echoes), the changelings' part-human minds give them a greater measure of control over their own magic.

As a trait, Weaving measures the forces of order in fae magic and acts as an anchor that physically grounds the chaos on Earth. Like Willpower, it ranges from 1–10 on the character sheet. The circles represent the character's permanent rating, while the boxes symbolize the temporary rating. When making Weaving rolls, always roll a dice pool equal to the *permanent* rating. Spending Weaving points reduces the temporary rating. Temporary ratings may never exceed the permanent.

Benefits and Dangers of Weaving

- **Weaving Imbalance:** If the character's permanent Weaving rating is higher than her the permanent Mists rating, the fae may become imbalanced. This occurs if a character's permanent Weaving rating is 3 points higher than his permanent Mists rating. See p. 103 for more information.

- **Control the Unleashing:** A player may spend Weaving points on a one-for-one basis to reduce the number of dice that may cause an Unleashing to

go out of control. Spending 5 points removes the dangerous effects of Unleashing entirely. (It is still clear to any fae onlooker that an Unleashing, not a cantrip, was used — Weaving cannot mitigate the visual effects of Unleashing.)

- **Counter Cantrips:** A faerie may attempt to absorb a cantrip of a Dominion he himself knows. This requires a roll of Dominion + Weaving. For more details, see p. 130.

- **Echo Clash:** Every 2 points of Weaving spent reduces the effect of an Echo by one success (see p. 111).

- **Forge Oaths:** When forging oaths, a character must spend a number of Weaving points equal to the Oath rating. See p. 109 for full details about oaths.

- **Regain Control:** When an Unleashing botches, but before the Storyteller describes the effect, a player may spend 2 points of Weaving to reduce the magical damage by one step on the scale. No fae can ever prevent these horrifying effects completely, and thus they always suffer at least a stage-one effect.

- **Suppressing the Mists:** If the fae spends Weaving points too often (more times per day than her Mists rating), it becomes harder to call on effects of the Mists. All difficulties on Mists-related rolls increase by +2 for as many days as the fae continues to use Weaving points above the set limit. If a character breaks the limit for more consecutive days than her permanent Willpower rating, she may become Locked (see below).

Regaining Weaving Points

Characters may regain Weaving points in several different ways. First, some fae strongholds help replenish Weaving (see the Holdings Background on p. 93 for details), and all fae can regenerate 1 point of Weaving per day in a fae realm. Also, fae involved in actively fulfilling an oath can regain Weaving points through that oath. Every time a fae actively takes time to fulfill his part of an oath, the player rolls the Oath's rating (difficulty 6). Each success allows the character to regain 1 Weaving point.

Imbalance

Imbalance occurs whenever a character has 3 more dots of Mists or Weaving in relation to the opposite trait. Thus, a character with Weaving 2 and Mists 6 is imbalanced, and suffers the consequences of it. Using cantrips is more difficult for fae in Mists imbalance (the difficulty of all cantrips increases by

+1). Weaving-imbalanced fae suffer the same difficulty penalty on Unleashing.

Restoring a character sheet from imbalance only requires that the player balance out the ratings of the traits. In story terms, however the aid of other fae is necessary to bring the imbalanced fae back to normal by subjecting her to orderly conduct and coercing her into using cantrips to counteract Mists imbalance, or introducing chaos and Unleashing around a Weaving-imbalanced fae.

It is always possible to temporarily avoid imbalance by selecting an additional Echo each time the higher trait is increased. For instance, a character has Weaving 5 and Mists 2; when the player raises the character's Weaving to 6, she may avoid imbalance by taking an additional Echo (this Echo does not grant Features). If the player later raises the character's Mists rating to 3 (which means the character would no longer suffer from imbalance), the Echo remains.

Being Lost or Locked

Mists and Weaving are extremely useful and important in the magical exercises of the fae, and are parts of their very nature; but while these traits bring many advantages to the fae, they are also extremely dangerous if not kept in check.

If Mists grows too important and is used too frequently, the fae may end becoming Lost. When a fae is Lost, she neglects the world and everything around her in favor of the pure chaos that makes up the Dominions. She devotes herself to magic and retreats from society, sometimes unknowingly clouding her presence with Mists. Eventually, memories of others fade away while the fae builds a world in which her words and will are law. Such fae vanish from the face of the Earth. These pocket realms are extremely hazardous and hard to locate; trying to find one deliberately requires Kenning 5 and weeks of searching. Sometimes, however, fae and even mortals stumble into these "Mists-pockets." Such unfortunates rarely leave, since escaping these realms requires the permission of the ruler.

Being Locked, on the other hand, means that the chaos that Mists and the Dominions represent simply ceases to exist for the fae. In fact, the fae despises chaos more than anything else and attempts to impose order upon her life and surroundings. Unfortunately this also means that her faerie nature eventually dies, and the once-fae becomes human regardless of her previous Origin. The odd thing, however, is that the (now)

human retains the ability to wield any cantrips she knew before (although cannot learn new cantrips or increase her Dominions). Some Locked fae simply reject life itself and turn to stone so that they can never again be the subjects of chaos.

Thankfully, the paths to these two states are full of warning signs.

Four Signs

The following examples are four danger signs that fae on the path to becoming Lost or Locked tend to display. When someone exhibits more than two of these, it is not long until he becomes Lost or Locked.

- One of the first steps to becoming Lost or Locked is to enter imbalance. A fae who finds that he has trouble using cantrips or Unleashings had best examine his habits.

- Echoes hurt even more than they normally would for those who are nearly Lost, and it is harder to use oaths as a shield from them. For those who are becoming Locked, the Echoes hurt less, and the oaths become superficial since they do not need to protect themselves against order. They willingly subject themselves to Echoes even when it is possible to avoid them. Those on the verge of becoming Lost or Locked may not forge new oaths with humans; doing so requires a certain distance between fae and humanity, and characters edging close to extremes of order or chaos fall short of that distance in one direction or another.

- The Mists often cause cantrips to fail. Meanwhile, Weaving does the opposite and causes Unleashing to go terribly wrong, until the fae becomes fearful of using anything but cantrips.

- The personality of the fae changes drastically to suit the core of the Mists or Weaving. This change occurs overnight; the fae becomes either drastically chaotic and encourages such behavior in others, or so orderly that she may punish anyone who brings disorder into her vicinity. Of course, some faeries are already chaotic or obsessively fastidious, and for them the state of imbalances pushes their opinions to the truly extreme.

A few common factors that push a faerie into either a Lost or Locked state are:

- **Magical Error:** The player botches a roll for Unleashing (Mists) or cantrips (Weaving) with horrifying effects.

- **Origin:** Changelings show a predisposition for becoming Locked, whereas firstborn more often be-

come Lost. Inanimae don't seem especially prone to either state.

- **Locations:** The character spends all her time in the faerie lands studying magic and practicing the use of Mists, or she led her life in the city among humans and constantly rejects her chaotic nature.

- **Desire:** The faerie willingly subjects himself to the risks of becoming either Lost or Locked. This is the rarest form of crossing the limit, since fae instinctively fear these states; but it happens occasionally, usually to self-destructive fae.

- **Curses:** The fae may be cursed by another in such a manner that it pushes an already imbalanced fae across the limit into being Lost or Locked.

- **Cantrips:** The fae overuses cantrips, using them to the exclusion of Unleashing, and casts magic to accomplish the simplest of tasks. Casting the same cantrip in the same way too often also puts the character at severe risk. The Storyteller may impose any system she likes for determining what "too often" means; casting a cantrip more than five times in one scene is probably extreme enough to nudge the character toward becoming Locked.

It is possible for a faerie headed down the path to the Locked or Lost state to turn his life around; this is most easily done with the help of friends or benefactors. The easiest way to help is to expose the wayward fae to the antithetical force. A Mist-burdened fae brought into the human world for a while and prevented from Unleashing quickly recovers, while fae affected by Weaving get to spend time in intimate encounters with chaos.

Curing the Lost and Locked

While these states are inimical to each other, curing both of them follows roughly the same pattern. Both states result from an excess of either order or chaos in the fae's magical leanings; curing the states, therefore, requires balancing those leanings. Just as human doctors attempt to balance the bodily humors, the fae attempt to balance their fellows' relationships with magic. Doing so is just as difficult, and often just as painful, as bleeding a patient to cure a fever.

Curing the Lost requires the fae's chaotic tendencies to be balanced with order. The character must conform to a strict daily regimen — eating, sleeping, working and studying at the same time each day. If the character cannot conform to a schedule (and if she's already Lost, chances are she can't), the character's benefactors must often use cantrips, typically of the

WHY BOTHER?

Players might be wondering what the point is of assuming one's mien at all, especially if the character has no Greater Features. After all, all the mien does then is set the fae apart from humanity and make her an obvious target. First-born, of course, don't have a choice — they remain in their fae miens permanently. The following are three good, solid, game-system related reasons why other fae favor their miens:

- Changelings cannot use Unleashings in human form, only in their fae miens.

- All fae can soak lethal damage in their fae miens.

- Remaining cloaked by the Mists for too long can result in the fae becoming Lost.

But quite apart from these reasons, many inanimae and changelings feel like they are wearing uncomfortable disguises while in human form. Inanimae, especially, detest wearing a human body for too long. It isn't that they hate humans (necessarily), it's simply that they don't like hiding themselves away, locked behind false flesh and unable to experience the natural world they love so much. Yes, it's dangerous to assume one's fae mien, but the alternative is hiding oneself away — and this isn't palatable to the fae at all.

Day Dominion, to force this way of life. The character must be watched at all times and must never be allowed to deviate from this schedule. Naturally, the Lost fae must *never* be permitted to Unleash her magic, although casting cantrips is keenly encouraged (at the proper time of day, of course). Once the character has successfully adhered to a rigid schedule for at least one month, the player may roll Weaving (difficulty 8). If this roll succeeds, the character has shaken herself out of the Lost state.

Curing the Locked is much the same. The character must avoid keeping schedules or regimens of any kind. Her benefactors might attack her with magic from out of nowhere — not with the intent to harm her, but to frighten her into Unleashing to defend herself. They might force her on surprise journeys; the fae will resist, of course, and might need to be magically coerced. Most important, the fae must be encouraged to Unleash her magic rather than cast

cantrips; often her benefactors use the Mists to disrupt any cantrip she casts during her "treatment" (see p. 130 for more on disrupting cantrips). If the fae manages to go one full month without keeping any kind of schedule in her magical or routine life, the player rolls Mists (difficulty 8). Success indicates the character is no longer Locked.

Constructing Mien: Features

While it may seem a bit complicated at first, building the fae character's appearance is actually quite intuitive. A faerie's mien consists of several Features that separate him from humanity. Firstborn tend to appear as the purest embodiment of their Courts, while inanimae Features consist of both seasonal aspects and their elemental affinity. Changelings look much the same as the firstborn, but because of their human souls they can never really achieve the same purity.

Features are divided into two categories: Lesser Features and Greater Features. Lesser Features are entirely cosmetic: a strange tint to eye color, a variation in height or unearthly beauty. Greater Features are obviously alien but provide a system bonus that normal traits cannot. For instance, a fae might emit a scent that urges mortals toward sins of lust. In game terms, this provides no benefit, but can be simulated by the player's purchase of a high rating in Subterfuge (perhaps with the Seduction specialty). This scent is therefore a Lesser Feature. If the character has horns growing from his head, however, or is so large as to be obviously inhuman, this constitutes a Greater Feature; it might allow the character to inflict extra damage on a head-butt or have extra health levels due to his great size.

Inanimae switch between their faerie mien and human shape with a Weaving roll (difficulty 6). Changelings bring forth their faerie miens with a Mists roll (difficulty 6), and must roll Weaving (difficulty 6) to switch back to their human shapes. Firstborn only have their faerie mien and have to rely on the Day Dominion and the Mists to hide. Sometimes, however, it is easier for the changelings and inanimae to simply make use of the Mists to hide from humanity as well. Botching any roll to switch forms locks the fae in her current form for a number of hours equal to her Weaving rating.

Before adding Features, decide how the character looks while appearing human (at least, his preferred

appearance). Once you have that image clear, imagine how the appearance changes after you add Features to that picture. This is the character's mien. Courtly fae base their mien on Court affiliation. Solstice fae, on the other hand, always base Features on the highest-rated Dominion they possess.

The following are some examples of Features that characters can purchase. By using these as guidelines, it is easy to create your own Features (with Storyteller approval).

Lesser Features

Lesser Features are cosmetic; and while they might make a fae appear strange, they do not automatically mark her as being a faerie creature. A Lesser Feature might be used as justification for a high rating in an Attribute or Ability (for instance, a character might have Appearance 5 and choose Surreal Beauty as a Feature), but it does not confer any mechanical bonuses by itself. A fae with five or more Lesser Features runs the risk of gaining Echoes when a mortal sees her fae mien.

The following are examples of Lesser Features for use with your **Dark Ages: Fae** characters, or as inspiration to create your own.

- **Elemental Blessing:** This Feature is common for inanimae, but not unknown among other fae. The character's appearance is reminiscent of one of the five elements (air, earth, fire, water and wood). Some examples: Graceful movements, cold to the touch, white eyes, smell of ozone (air); stocky build, always leaves dirty footprints, permanent layer of dust (earth); smoking hair, orange-tinted skin, permanent maniacal grin, hot to the touch (fire); touch leaves moisture behind, slightly blue-tinged skin, constant tears (water); green or brown-tinged skin, green hair, scent of pine or wheat, flowers sometimes fall from hair (wood).

- **Elongated Appearance:** The fae becomes extremely thin, and even his face and ears appear to be slightly elongated. Fingers are long and so are nails, legs, and feet. Even the faerie's hair stretches down to his knees.

- **Endowment of the Season:** Summer Court fae gain a noble bearing as they walk. Spring fae may appear stern but they move with confidence and gentleness at the same time. Autumn Court fae grow incredibly thin, but retain the beauty of the season. Winter Court bones begin to bend, giving the fae

almost twisted limbs. An inanimae also gains a smell that suits her natural affinity.

- **Eyes the Season:** The fae's eyes are paler than normal human eyes (Summer), intense brown and green (Spring), passionate red and orange colors swirling together (Autumn), or extremely dark or ice-blue (Winter).

- **Faerie Size (Lesser):** The fae is abnormally tall or short. Adjust the character's height by six inches in either direction.

- **Repulsive Countenance:** Only characters with Appearance 2 or less can take this Feature. The character is ugly in a way that defies easy description; humans can't point to a specific feature of his face that repels them, but they all agree — the character is disgusting to look at.

- **Scent:** The fae exudes a faint, natural odor appropriate to her Court and concept. Some fae smell of rich, moist earth or rain, while others smell of smoke, spices, sex or animal sweat. In any case, the scent is not overpowering, nor is it out of place for the region (i.e., a fae living in the desert won't smell of a pine forest).

- **Skin Hue:** The character's skin assumes a slight color tinge suitable to the season of her attunement. Summer fae are fair, Autumn fae are bronze-skinned, Winter fae have a bluish cast and Spring fae have rich, brown skin.

- **Surreal Beauty:** Only characters with Appearance 3 or more can take this Feature. The fae is beautiful in a way that appears otherworldly and indescribable. He stands out in a crowd, even among those who are more regal or better-dressed than he.

Greater Features

These Features mark the fae as obviously inhuman and alien. Inanimae in their fae mien automatically possess at least one Greater Feature. Greater Features provide bonuses to certain rolls, lower difficulties, add dice or grant special powers. The Storyteller is the final adjudicator of whether a proposed Feature is so alien or powerful that it must be considered a Greater Feature and not a Lesser Feature.

A fae with one or more Greater Features runs the risk of gaining Echoes if a mortal sees her mien (see p. 114).

- **Armored Hide:** Some fae have thick, hairy skin that can stop spears; others appear to be made of rock or even water. The ways in which this Feature can

manifest are limited only by the player's imagination. In any case, the player rolls three dice whenever his character would take damage; each success cancels a level of damage (regardless of damage type). The character may then soak normally with his Stamina.

- **Beastly Visage:** The fae's hair feels and looks fur (or feathers), and she gains the strong smell of a predatory forest animal. Even her teeth appear sharp like those of an animal. Reduce the difficulty of all Animal Ken rolls involving predatory animals by -3. Lower the difficulty on Intimidation and Survival rolls by -1. The fae adds one die to any bite damage she inflicts.

- **Elemental Form:** Most inanimae begin with this Feature. The character's element has a direct bearing on his physical form. A number of effects are possible; the ones given here are only examples. **Air:** The wind always blows around the character, even indoors (halve damage from falling, wind can clear smoke). **Earth:** The character's hands turn to crystal (add two dice to punching damage, which becomes lethal). **Fire:** The character's flesh constantly smolders (ignite flammable material with a touch). **Water:** The character appears to be made of liquid and flows around attacks (add two dice to Dodge rolls). **Wood:** The character grows leaves and can take nourishment from the sun (no need to eat as long the character spends one hour a day in the sunlight, may regain a point of Mists once a day by spending two hours in direct sunshine).

- **Eyes of the Mists:** The magic of the fae is reflected in the character's gaze. This can manifest in a number of ways. The character's gaze could be alluring (the Feature grants the same effects the Entice cantrip, see p. 150); terrifying (anyone making eye contact with the fae must succeed on a Courage or Willpower roll [difficulty 5] or flee in terror; or commanding (anyone meeting the character's gaze must succeed on a Willpower roll, [difficulty 6] or immediately feel a sense of loyalty to the character, raising by +1 the difficulties of all actions taken against her for one scene).

- **Faerie Size (Greater):** The character is either a towering giant (maximum 14 feet tall) or a tiny dwarf (minimum one foot tall). A large character adds three extra Bruised health levels and a dot of Strength, but all attempts to hit him in combat are made with a -1 difficulty bonus. A tiny character loses her Hurt health level and has a maximum Strength rating of 3, but gains a dot of Dexterity and any attempt to hit her in combat suffers a +2 difficulty penalty.

• **Monster's Mien:** The fae boasts gruesome natural weaponry. Choose from one of the following:

Teeth: The fae's teeth are as long as daggers, but much deadlier. The character's mouth is grotesque and oversized, and she can bite through stone if she wishes. The fae's bite inflicts Strength + 2 aggravated damage.

Claws: The character sports wicked claws.

These inflict Strength + 1 aggravated damage but are not retractable. **Horns:**

The character has antlers or bull's or ram's horns. She can ram or gore opponents for Strength + 2 lethal damage, and she gains three extra soak dice to attacks that strike her head.

• **Season's Skin:** The fae's skin assumes a color associated with the season that his Court belongs to. It is a beautiful sight regardless of whether the fae has twisted bones or a noble bearing; the skin shimmers in a seasonal color. The player must decide what the character's skin looks like, but common tendencies are: Summer and Winter Court fae often have pale white skin (or in the latter case, a deep blue); Spring fae gain an olive-green color; and the Autumn-kin's skin becomes red or orange. Reduce Stealth difficulties by two when the faerie moves in environments matching his skin color. Also, the character gains an additional soak die during his Court's season.

• **Size of My Choice:** A fae with this Feature may grow shorter or taller by a number of inches equal to twice her Mists rating. Aside from the many obvious applications of such a power, the player adds two dice to the fae's Dodge pool.

Oaths

Fae legends speak of humans swearing oaths to the fae, promising to do something in return for the faerie's aid with a task. While the stories are true, oaths are much more complicated than just coming to an agreement. An oath has to be sealed, and this is done by those with the Gramarye Knowledge.

Historians believe that the first oaths were sworn with humanity in order to keep them in line while the War of Seasons raged. They also believe that unless the fae regain the knowledge of crafting oaths of that great power, the fae will lose any chance they have of reclaiming the world. These faeries are certain that the only way to re-learn the lost art of forging powerful oaths is to locate the answers in the forging itself, and so they continue to make new and narrower oaths with humans in the Dark Medieval.

Time truly takes its toll even on the fae. As centuries passed, so did oaths grow old and wither; and with the awakening in AD 1130, new views of what oaths really mean spread throughout faerie society. Once commonly considered a mere tool to keep humans in line, the oaths suddenly became the first line of defense against the powers of Echoes. As long as the fae actively maintained some sort of bond with humans, and the mortals also fulfilled their parts of the bargains, the Echoes were unable to touch the fae.



Of course, although it may appear as though oaths are just a tool to keep others in line and gain a defense against Echoes, it is imperative to remember that some fae use oaths as a means to protect *both* themselves and humans, simply because they are fond of the mortals.

During expeditions into the human world, the fae have discovered a terrible effect of the Christian baptism. Almost immediately after the ceremony begins, the unlucky fae is able to feel his bonds to humans untie. Any Iron or Stone Oaths (active and inactive) are washed away with the completion of the ritual. This effect also applies to humans being baptized, even if they have no sensation of the bonds' breaking. Gold Oaths, because they were sworn with such large segments of humanity, survive this process.

Gold Oaths

Long ago, before the Battle of Stone and during the early days of the War of Seasons, the fae learned how to forge oaths with humanity at a large. These oaths were powerful bonds that kept entire towns, or even nations, under their control. While it may seem cruel at first to bind humanity to such strong magical prohibitions in an age of war, most fae believe it was a charitable and merciful practice. Would there even be humans in the Dark Medieval if they had been drawn into the War of Seasons on a full-scale basis?

A Gold Oath's advantage lies in that it is sworn with a huge group of people. This means that the oath remains active even if not *all* humans lead their lives according to the agreement. In fact, almost every Gold Oath that was not passed down through generations as a village secret lost its place in human culture as a pact with the fae and was transmuted into a "tradition," "custom" or even "law." Entire villages, and even towns, may actually base much of their current culture on local traditions that once really were part of Gold Oaths. Common examples are villages where elders must leave their homes and wander off into the faerie forest on their 50th birthdays, or where mothers can somehow call the fae to take unruly children away for discipline. It explains why the Gold Oaths are active even if no one remembers them; and fae who can draw upon the protection of a Gold Oath are lucky for it shields them from even the most powerful (and magical) Echoes there are. *Nothing* except violating the oath renders a Gold Oath unusable.

Gold Oaths were sworn with a large group of fae as well as with a large number of humans. It was not uncommon for the fae to stipulate that the oath

involved all the faeries of a certain court or of an oathcircle. Once a faerie joins a court or an oathcircle with active Gold Oaths they must care for the oath but they may also use it to shield themselves from Echoes. Also, sometimes it is a hereditary line that is the subject of a Gold Oath; all direct descendants of the forger enjoy the shielding of the Oath and remain responsible for keeping it active and unbroken.

Today only a few Gold Oaths are active; they are spread all over Europe and Outremer, making the oaths extremely rare to most fae. Unfortunately the fae lost the knowledge of how to craft new Gold Oaths a long, long time ago. If someone ancient, such as Halostian, still existed among the fae, then perhaps they could regain their lost lore and new Gold Oaths might be sworn — provided enough people could be persuaded to agree.

Only characters with Gramarye 5 are able to forge Gold Oaths once the game begins — and even then only if they recover the lost lore of how to forge such powerful oaths.

Stone Oaths

While Stone Oaths are not as rare and powerful as their golden counterparts, few Echoes can pierce their shielding. According to fae, oaths sworn between the Battle of Stone and the Oath-Truce qualify as Stone Oaths. Considering the fact that fae kept mostly out of humanity's way during that time, many of these oaths have either fallen to the wayside or shattered completely. Some fae, however, ensured that their oaths were kept intact through extremely limited exposure to humanity, or by using magical beasts and creatures to fulfill their parts of the bargains. As mentioned, Stone Oaths are not as rare as Gold Oaths, but not as common as Iron Oaths.

Stone Oaths are less powerful than Gold Oaths simply because, with the limited exposure fae were willing to risk with humanity, they did not bother to swear oaths with entire communities (even if there are a few records of such events), but rather only to the head of a household who then committed his entire family, and perhaps even his future unborn heirs as well. All Courts have their own legends about when *they* struck the first Stone Oath. The only common factor is that each legend involves a powerful fae and a human family with a rising star.

Only characters with Gramarye 4 or greater are able to forge Stone Oaths once the game begins.

Iron Oaths

Iron Oaths are the most common type of oaths that fae have. It is also the only type of oath that all fae with a basic knowledge of Gramarye are able to forge. Unlike other oaths, Iron Oaths only last for a single lifetime, and are only struck between one human and a single fae. (Some few oaths extend to small groups of mortals [maximum 4 persons], or small groups of fae [maximum 5 fae].) These oaths are also extremely limited in that they are only active as long both sides are able to uphold them. If an oath requires that a human hold a certain position in mortal society to fulfill his part, and someone removes him from office, the oath is not broken; it is merely inactive. Should he regain the position, the oath is active once more. Iron Oaths are definitely weaker, but levy correspondingly weaker punishments for oath-breaking.

Forging Iron Oaths during a game requires Gramarye 1.

Oaths Among Fae

Fae can swear oaths to each other, using the sample processes for swearing oaths with humans (and the expenditure of Weaving points). The effects, however, are different. Fae cannot avoid Echoes using oaths sworn with their own kind, and so the oaths that they swear are usually symbols of fealty to a leader or fidelity to a lover. The most common oath sworn among fae creates an oathcircle, a group of fae bonded together for a particular purpose (or simply as friends for life).

Violating a sworn oath only carries magical consequences if the fae swearing the oath agrees to them; a fae swearing loyalty to a lord might vow to remain steadfast in the service of his lord, lest his magic fail and his blade dull. If he ever fails his lord, he might find himself unable to call on his Dominions or his sword, perhaps forever.

Constructing Oaths

Every character may begin the game with active oaths, as represented by the Oaths Background. Once the game begins, a character must possess certain knowledge within the Gramarye field to forge oaths. No rolls are required, only an expenditure of Weaving points (1 per level of the oath — if more than one faerie wishes to undertake the oath, each must pay the full cost in Weaving points).

In order for an oath to be valid and usable to the fae (in essence, in order to provide an Oaths Back-

ground rating) it must consist of five different factors. The first two are probably the most important — they prescribe exactly what the fae must do, and what the human does in return. A simple task that requires no real effort begets an extremely low rating, while more demanding and risk-filled oaths rise in rating and thus provide even more protection against Echoes.

The third and fourth steps in creating an oath are to determine what the involved parties must do (or not do) to break the oath. These restrictions should follow logically from the oath's first two parts (if only through faerie logic). The parameters for oath-breaking must be very precise.

All these steps lead to the fifth and determining factor — punishment. What sort of punishment does the oath inflict on the party breaking the agreement? Punishments should also follow the established logic of the oath, but it is always important to keep in mind that the higher the stakes of the oath, the severer the punishment it exacts on an oath-breaker.

The tables below detail the process of creating an oath, and provide guidelines for what may constitute the difference between Oath ratings. While a player should create the nature of the oath, the Storyteller should always be an active part in the process. It is important that the oath not only fits the character, but also the game.

Step One: The Fae's Deal

I will...

- ... ensure that your house is clean every morning... (Iron •)
- ... provide you with one stag each week... (Iron ••)
- ... protect your convicted "heretic" daughter from the clergy... (Iron •••)
- ... provide for your heirs... (Stone •••)
- ... kill those who dare threaten members of your family... (Stone ••••)
- ... ensure the safety of your heirs throughout their mortal lives... (Stone •••••)
- ... bring your village prosperity and wealth... (Gold •••••)

Step Two: The Human's Duty

... if...

- ... you wear this brooch. (Iron •)
- ... you cook it and give me half of it. (Iron ••)
- ... you openly renounce your faith. (Iron •••)

... as long as my dwelling is forever kept secret.
(Stone ●●●)

... you sacrifice a human in my honor each year.
(Stone ●●●●)

... each generation you provide what I need to
birth (or sire) three children. (Stone
●●●●●)

... all your elders enter my domains on their 50th
birthdays. (Gold ●●●●●)

Step Three: Faerie Parameters

I will fail my oath if...

... I forget to perform my duty. (Iron ●)

... fail to deliver the stag. (Iron ●●)

... they get hold of her. (Iron ●●●)

... your family or heirs ever starve. (Stone ●●●)

... I allow a threat to go unpunished. (Stone
●●●●)

... one of them dies at the hands of another
human. (Stone ●●●●●)

... your community becomes deserted as the result
of my negligence. (Gold ●●●●●)

Step Four: Human Parameters

*You will fail the oath and suffer the wrath of the bond
if...*

... you forget to wear my brooch in the evenings.
(Iron ●)

... fail to deliver my half of the cooked stag. (Iron
●●)

... you ever set foot within a church. (Iron ●●●)

... your family ever reveals my secret to an out-
sider. (Stone ●●●)

... you forget to make the sacrifice or dare sacrifice
an animal. (Stone ●●●●)

... if a generation fails to birth (or sire) my three
children. (Stone ●●●●●)

... someone forgets or refuses to walk into my
domains, or if it is done after dawn on the
day following the birthday. (Gold ●●●●●)

Step Five: The Punishments

Fae (Human)

*If the oath breaks, my (your) punishment in shame
is...*

... to proclaim to my Court every morning that I
am incapable of ensuring that a human
house is clean. (... to never wear the
brooch or anything of the same material
again; and if I do, I must have someone
publicly whip me each morning.) (Iron ●)

... to always fail the hunt for animals. (... to
never eat stag again without falling ill.)
(Iron ●●)

... to never venture out among humans again. (...
to publicly commit an act the Church
considers a sin and repeat this once per
month.) (Iron ●●●)

... to never be able to hide from *anyone* ever again.
(... to never be able to keep a secret until
death.) (Stone ●●●)

Echo Protection

A player may roll her character's Background rating in Oaths (difficulty 7) when encountering Echoes. Remember that in order for oaths to shield the fae against Echoes, the character needs to *actively* uphold the oath (as must the human). The player may make subsequent oath rolls against the same Echo as long as she rolls for a different oath each time. Every success on each of the rolls deducts successes from the Storyteller's Echo roll. If the Oaths Background is pooled, the characters must share the dice from the Oaths rating; each available die may be used only once against a particular Echo.

Example: *Daniel's character Lindolen attempts to sneak into a church in order to steal a faerie treasure that the village people gave to the clerics. Lindolen successfully sneaks into the church; but just as she lays her hands on the treasure, one of the clerics makes his presence known wielding a cross. Lindolen's Echo happens to be that crosses drive her away, and so she must attempt to resist the Echo's effect on her. Thankfully, she has an Iron Oath with an architect in the town, so Daniel rolls the Oath's rating, but fails. In a desperate attempt to withstand the effects, Daniel remembers that his character has a Stone Oath with a family there. He rolls the Stone Oath and scores just enough successes to reduce the Echo roll to one success.*

Echoes

Some Echoes are old remedies that humans use to protect themselves from the fae, or sometimes even other supernatural creatures. Other Echoes are based on faith, and came with the rise of Christianity. Still others are simply customs that someone made up, and that spread to such a degree that people began to believe in them. These more localized phenomena can impose just as severe a punishment on the fae as a faith-based Echo. Every fae has at least one Echo that

affects her, and players determine what these Echoes are during character creation.

An Echo consists of a trigger and an effect. The trigger is always constant. The effects of an Echo are rarely the same twice, however. Why is this the case? The fae state that it is because human minds are confused, weak things that have not learned how to apply order to their magic. Forward-thinking fae note that some humans seem to wield Echoes with a great deal more precision than others, and worry that in not too many years any human might be able to change a faerie into a stone statue by ringing a small bell. In mechanical terms, the effect of an Echo depends on how many successes the Storyteller secretly makes on the Echo roll.

When a fae encounters an Echo, the Storyteller (or player) rolls the mortal's Willpower (difficulty 7). The Storyteller rolls five dice if the Echo isn't being wielded directly by a human being — for instance, if the fae suffers an Echo merely from hearing church bells, the Storyteller rolls five dice, not the Willpower rating of the people ringing the bells (who don't even know what effect their actions are having). In either case, the difficulty of this roll is 7. If the fae possesses an active oath, he can attempt to find strength in his bond to humanity and counter the Echo. The player rolls a number of dice equal to the character's Oath rating (difficulty 7) to resist the Echo roll (if the character possesses the Sprites Background, the player may add dice to this roll; see p. 95). If the fae wins, the repellant fails to work on the fae and the character is free to do as he pleases; he is not affected by that Echo for the remainder of the scene. If, however, the Echo roll came up with more successes, the fae suffers an effect equal to the number of net successes. These effects are rated one to five and are listed below. Firstborn add one success to the Echo roll, and changelings subtract one (before applying the successes from the oath roll).

ECHO WARFARE

Of course it has occurred to the less scrupulous among the fae that if they can discover a fae's Echoes, they might be able to use them. Apparently, though, causing Echoes is the province of human beings — no fae can engender an Echo in another, deliberately or accidentally. Nothing prevents a fae from informing humans about the particulars of an enemy's Echoes, of course.

Echo Effects

Effects of Echoes depend on how many net successes the Storyteller achieves on the Echo roll. Echoes may be continuous (a man holding a cross), or fleeting (hearing church bells ring). The effect passes away with the Echo, so a man holding a cross continues to impose the Echo until the fae backs away or is somehow repelled completely (or resists the Echo). When designing the effects of an Echo, consider the following:

An Echo effect of one causes little more than discomfort to the fae, and forces her to step back and stay clear of the source of the Echo until the Echo vanishes. The effect does very little to the fae in terms of game mechanics, but may reduce dice pools by one or two dice.

An Echo effect of two may prove harsh to the fae depending on the surroundings. Everything related to her supernatural powers is much harder and she has to find the strength to penetrate her clouded mind to achieve results. Difficulty penalties occur during these encounters.

An Echo effect of three forces the fae to reveal her true nature to a limited degree. She may call upon the Mists to cover the revealed mien. It is also possible that the Echo inflicts bashing damage (up to three health levels).

An Echo effect of four *always* prevents the fae from using Dominions on the mortal, and she is unable to Unleash her magic as long as the Echo is active. Mists function as normal. It is also possible that the Echo inflicts lethal damage (up to four health levels).

An Echo effect of five banishes the faerie from the area for at least 24 hours, and inflicts terrible wounds or effects. A firstborn character suffers three levels of aggravated damage and an additional level of lethal damage per two turns she remains in the Echo's presence, or close enough to hear it (if it is bells or prayers). Inanimae immediately break down into the components for their natural aspects and remain unable to reform themselves until enough of the chosen element appears in the area to form a body from (which means that while an air inanimae can reform almost immediately, a lightning inanimae is stuck until the next thunderstorm). A changeling suffers three levels of aggravated damage and one level of lethal damage per two turns he remains in the presence of the Echo. In addition to this, the changeling gains two new permanent Echoes (of the Storyteller's choice) if he survives.

For characters of all three Origins, these effects take place *in addition* to any other effects listed for five-success Echoes.

The following is a list of 25 possible Echo effects as they may appear in the game, divided by successes on the roll. Some of these work within the guidelines above, while others “break the rules” a bit. Keep in mind that for each roll, only one effect may affect a character at a time.

One Success

- **Aura of Intimidation:** The fae is truly intimidated by the Echo. If the Echo emanates from a person, attacking him is only possible with a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 6).
- **Humble Fae:** A sensation of sadness and humbleness overcomes the fae in such a strong way that it terrifies her. All Willpower rolls are at +3 difficulty.
- **Itch:** A terrible itch breaks out and plagues the fae to no end. All difficulties rise by +1 until the Echo ends.
- **Paranoia:** The fae becomes paranoid and will ensure her own safety above anything else, even preemptively attacking those she feels might try to harm her.
- **Safe Zone:** The fae cannot approach the source of the Echo at all and must keep a distance of at least 20 feet.

Two Successes

- **Barred from the Otherworld:** The difficulties of rolls involving the Dominions, Weaving and Mists are increased by +2.
- **Saint Vitus's Dance:** See p. 263 of *Dark Ages: Vampire* for a full description. The effect only lasts for as long as the fae remains within sight or earshot of the Echo. All actions are at +1 difficulty.
- **Fear of Humanity:** For a number of minutes equal to his Mists rating, the fae fears all humans. Engaging or otherwise dealing with mortals requires a Willpower roll (difficulty 7).
- **Hurtful Vision:** The fae experiences intense pain while she hears or sees the Echo. The character suffers wound penalties as though she were Mauled for a number of turns equal to half her Mists rating. These are cumulative with any actual wound penalties she suffers.
- **Thin Mists:** The fae feels more distanced from the Mists, and must pay twice the normal number of points when using Mists powers.

Three Successes

- **Backlash:** Unleashing a Dominion is harder than usual, and the fae really struggles to control her magic. Add two dice to the Unleashing pool for one day.
- **Echo Lash:** The fae suffers three levels of bashing damage in the form of invisible pinpricks and battering (this damage may be soaked).
- **Frozen:** The fae is unable to move for a number of turns equal to the character's Mists rating.
- **Mental Vulnerability:** All Mental rolls suffer a +2 difficulty penalty while the fae remains in the vicinity of the Echo.
- **Mien Revealed:** As the fae's magical nature draws closer to the human world to stave off the Echo, her mien becomes visible to onlookers. The skin radiates a soft glow and her Features become visible. Even Lesser Features are accentuated and appear obviously supernatural.

Four Successes

- **Cantrip Unleashed:** Add an Unleashing dice pool when the fae attempts to make use of a cantrip. Every two successes on the Unleashing pool counts for one success (see Chapter Four for the effects of Unleashing). This lasts for one day.
- **Imbalance:** The fae is immediately thrown into Weaving or Mists imbalance. This effect passes within a number of hours equal to the Weaving or Mists rating.
- **Honest Mien:** Any Mists or cantrips concealing the fae's mien cease to function immediately.
- **Disruption:** Any active fae magic in the close vicinity (50-yard radius) is entirely canceled.
- **Deprived Senses:** The fae is totally blinded as long as she remains in the vicinity of the Echo.

Five Successes

- **Immolation:** The fae catches fire; the flames will eventually consume him if he is not removed from the area of the Echo. The fire inflicts three levels of aggravated damage per turn.
- **Frenzy:** Rage overcomes the fae and she lashes out at anything, beginning with the origin of the Echo. Even friends remain unsafe in her presence. She acts on a survival instinct and nothing else. Once the Echo is destroyed or dealt with, the fae flees from the scene, howling with pain. The frenzy passes within a day.
- **Lost:** The fae immediately becomes Lost. He may avoid this effect by submitting to a permanent

Echo (for changelings, this is *in addition* to those gained for suffering a five-success effect).

• **Mythical Statue:** The fae turns to stone and can only be brought to life by powerful magic. Dawn 5 can reverse the effect with a successful Unleashing, at which point the character returns to life at the Incapacitated health level (all damage is considered lethal). The statue has 10 health levels and a soak pool of 20. If the statue is destroyed, the fae dies.

• **The Terrible Mien:** The character's mien shines through, but it appears truly twisted and malevolent, turning the character's fae nature against her. All bonuses granted by Greater Features become equivalent penalties, and she temporarily loses all Charisma and Appearance dots.

Sample Echoes

The following is a short list of Echo examples that may affect fae. This is by no means an exhaustive list of possible remedies against the Fair Folk, of course. Each Storyteller must take into account what suits the area the game is set in before judging whether or not a character may have the specific Echo. Plenty of literature, available on the Internet and at your local library, provides useful information on this. If you base your character on a literary character or creature, note down anything that may constitute as Echo for the character while reading the legends.

- Crosses (or other holy symbols and relics)

- Prayers
- Individuals with strong faith
- Virgins
- A kiss from a beautiful woman (or a handsome man)
- Saying the fae's name backwards
- Possession of a piece of the fae (teeth, skin, bone, etc.)
- Entering a house without invitation
- The sound of bells
- Entering rooms with iron horseshoes above the door and window frames
- Calling out the fae's name (true names inflict an automatic Echo effect at level five; oaths can still mitigate this effect)
- Touching cold iron
- Humans wearing clothing inside out
- Eating blessed food
- Looking into a mirror
- Entering consecrated grounds
- Witnessing a mortal throwing salt over his shoulder
- Encountering a human wearing a visible four-leaf clover
- Hearing a rooster crow
- Being scolded like a child
- Having hospitality formally refused
- The sound of children's laughter



Gaining New Echoes

Players may take additional Echoes at character creation in exchange for additional Features.

During a chronicle, a character gains new Echoes when exposed to potential Echoes while in her fae mien. If a character has five or more Lesser Features or even one Greater Feature, this is a possibility. When mortals see the fae in her mien, the player must roll a pool of 10 dice, subject to the following modifiers:

- Subtract one die for every five Lesser Features.
- Subtract one die for every Greater Feature.
- Subtract one die if the character is an inanimae.
- Subtract one die for every three mortals present.
- Subtract one die if the mortals witnessed any character casting a visible cantrip in the same scene.
- Subtract two dice if the mortal witnessed an Unleashing in the same scene, and three dice if that Unleashing went awry (see Chapter Four).

Mortals who have been brought under the Mists (see p. 101) or have a Kenning rating for any reason do not trigger this effect, nor do supernatural beings such as vampires and werewolves. Some mages *do* trigger this effect. Normally, mages of the Messianic Voices, Ahl-i-Batin and Order of Hermes count as mortals for purposes of this roll, but a mage with extensive contact with fae might not (at the Storyteller's discretion). The difficulty of this roll is always 7. If the player scores any successes, her character is safe. If the roll fails, she immediately gains an Echo appropriate to the situation. If the roll botches or the dice pool is reduced to zero, she gains two Echoes.

Example: The Autumn Court changeling Gamble, while trying to seduce a young mortal girl, runs afoul of a gang of her cousins. He brashly takes his fae mien in an attempt to frighten them off. He has no Greater Features, but has six Lesser Features. His player rolls 10 dice, minus one for his Features, minus two more because six humans are present, and minus two more because he tries to frighten them off by Unleashing his Dusk Dominion, for a total of five dice. The roll fails. Because one of the cousins shouted for him to be gone in the name of God, the Storyteller rules that curses in the Lord's name are now an Echo for poor Gamble.

Character Development

Neither a story nor the characters in it should ever be static. In time, characters accumulate enough experience to warrant an increase of their Abilities, Attributes or advantages. Awarding experience points works in the exact same way as in **Dark Ages: Vampire**.

Raising Mists

Raising a faerie's permanent Mists rating brings the character closer to her magic and to the realm of the fae. She finds Unleashing to be almost a second nature to her and prefers to remain as far away from humans as possible. Her mind draws closer to the possibilities that exist within the faerie realm, and the logical and more down-to-earth way of thinking grows ever more distant with each Mists increase. Of course, receding into the Mists too far may lead to becoming imbalanced and even Lost, so it is important to plan ahead on how to raise both Mists and Weaving ratings. Raising Mists also grants the character a new Lesser Feature. Alternately, the player may pay 3 additional experience points and take a Greater Feature instead.

Raising Weaving

Weaving brings a fae closer to logical thinking, rational actions and stricter behavior. Increasing the character's Weaving rating does not mean that he turns stiff or uncaring, that he draws closer to understanding how humanity thinks. While the entire concept of humanity remains alien to the fae, he gains a better grasp of why people act the way they do. Raising the trait also brings the magical nature of the fae closer to the human world. Cantrips become the preferred way to exercise magic, since it allows the fae to control his powers. Just as with Mists, the player should plan ahead on how to raise the trait since a high rating of Weaving may cause a character to become imbalanced and even Locked.

Raising Dominions

Dominions are special in that they actually require a teacher to advance. No rolls are required for this, but the teacher should be present during the training with the Dominion to explain how to delve deeper into the magic of the fae. A teacher can be a friend or a temporary ally who decides to aid the fae in achieving a greater understanding about the Dominions. The student begins to under-

stand the difference between affecting a single victim with a cantrip, and an entire group. She learns how to inflict horrifying damage instead of surface wounds. The entire process is as uplifting as it may be horrific when theory goes into practice. For more information on increasing Dominions and learning new cantrips, see Chapter Four.

Gaining Features

Fae characters gain Lesser Features whenever the player raises the character's Mists rating. Gaining Greater Features costs 5 experience points (or 3 experience points when bought in conjunction with an increase in Mists rating). Developing new Features indicates that the character is growing more in touch with the Mists, or sometimes follows exposure to a severe Echo.

EXPERIENCE COSTS

Attributes:	Current rating x 4
Abilities:	Current rating x 2
New Ability:	3
New Ability Specialty:	Current rating
Increase Mists:	Current rating x 3
Increase Weaving:	Current rating x 3
Increase Favored Dominion:	Current rating x 5
Increase Non-Favored Dominion:	Current rating x 6
New Dominion:	10
New Greater Feature:	5
Willpower:	Current rating





The humans had chosen to live at the base of a mountain,

and yet they were surprised when the mountain fell.

Elsabet watched from a hilltop. Her eyes gleamed like cat's, and she wiped fresh cream from her mouth as the mountains sang to her. They sang of loss, time and the beauty of warming and cooling over the months. Elsabet belonged to the Spring Court, so she could appreciate the moment where cold ended and warmth began better than other fae. She crouched low in the shadow of a great willow tree and watched the people of the village.

She might have felt sorry for them, but fate was fate. The mountains were singing, and Elsabet had an oath to fulfill.

Of course, the humans didn't remember the oath. They remembered to leave cream out for Elsabet, but not always — other villages were better about that. They remembered to place iron on the door to keep out trolls and other feral sprites, but lately they had been using the iron to shoe their horses and other such barbarism.

Elsabet heard the song of the mountain telling her that the humans had broken an oath, and so she sang back. Her small body hardened, her eyes changing from gold to green to black. Her hair solidified into strands of fine stone, and powdered rock fell from her mouth and ears. She reached up, and then slammed her tiny fist into the ground, taking her control of the Dominion of Dawn, power over earth and rock, and Unleashing it.

Somewhere up on the mountaintop, a boulder worked itself loose from its moorings. Maybe it would have fallen the next day or the next year, but it would have fallen, and so Elsabet didn't feel guilty about pushing it. The humans had promised to stop mining when they reached the Black Glass, but it had taken them generations to reach it, and they had forgotten the mercy that Elsabet's firstborn "father" had shown them in letting them mine at all. Her father had given them the tools and then permission to dig their way into the mountain, had even exchanged his own birth daughter for Elsabet many years later. But by that time, they had forgotten the oath, and yesterday they had reached the Black Glass.

Some of them had felt the oath then. Some of them had seen that dark shimmer from the rocks and wanted to stop. But most of them didn't.

"Take what you will from the mountain," whispered Elsabet into the night, "but leave my Black Glass there, for it is sacred as lover's blood to me." Her lips grated together like stone on stone. The Unleashing was nearly complete. "Take the Black Glass, and take the rest of the mountain as well."

As the boulder crashed down the mountain toward the village, knocking loose hundreds of its smaller brothers on the way, it occurred to Elsabet that maybe the humans simply hadn't understood the oath.

No matter now. Fate was fate.



CHAPTER FOUR: DOMINIONS

He lives not long who battles with the immortals, nor do his children prattle about his knees when he has come back from battle and the dread fray.

— Homer

Mortals of the Dark Medieval fear the weird powers of the fae... and well they should. Faerie magic is awesome and uncanny, potent yet unpredictable. Perhaps the most disquieting thing about the fae and their enchantments is that they can make the ordinary either helpful or deadly. Fae tears can kill or heal; even their voices can grant restful sleep or nightmares mixed with eternal slumber.

Fae, as a general rule, are circumspect with their magic. They prefer not to use blatant displays of power in front of large crowds, but that doesn't mean they're shy about using it when necessary. Moreover, much of their magic is by its very essence subtle; much of what the fae do can be attributed to natural phenomena, like storms or freak accidents. Those mortals who anger the fae do so at great risk of their lives and sanity. The fae take careful note of slights, and their memories last long. Human legends are filled with tales of fae exacting revenge decades after a seemingly minor altercation.

This chapter details the workings of fae magic, both in terms of game mechanics and the actual effects of magic. It also provides the means for players and Storytellers to create unique and individual "spells" to liven up a chronicle.

• DARK AGES •
• FAE •



Words and Power

The heart of faerie magic rests in the Dominions. A Dominion, simply put, is a set of concepts related to a certain diurnal time period that sets boundaries on what fae magic can or cannot do. Depending on which Dominion the fae uses, she can cast focused magical spells, called *cantrips*, to perform all kinds of interesting feats. The four Dominions are Day, Night, Dawn and Dusk, and each is associated with a Court, respectively Summer, Winter, Spring and Autumn (see sidebar). Court doesn't restrict which Dominions a character can have, however. Beginning changeling characters have access to two dots of Dominions; beginning inanimae and firstborn characters have three dots in Dominions. When using the Dominion associated with her Court, the character receives a -1 difficulty. Thus, it's advantageous for a character to acquire cantrips in her Court's favored Dominion, though it's certainly not required. Likewise, during one hour of the day (sometimes called the *prime hour* or *juncture*), each Dominion gains an additional bonus if a cantrip is cast during that period, when the difficulty is again lowered by -1 (see sidebar table). Finally, once a year, each Dominion gets a bonus on the appropriate solstice or equinox, when the difficulty is lowered by -1 again (see sidebar). All bonuses are cumulative.

Each Dominion has five levels, which determine how impressive the cantrips associated with each Dominion are. The higher the level in each Dominion, the more powerful the magical effect created.

Example: Sara, Joseph and Brad are constructing **Dark Ages: Fae** characters. Sara chooses to play an *inanimae* of the Winter Court, Joseph a changeling of the Summer Court and Brad a firstborn of the Spring Court. They record how many dots of Dominion each character receives according to his or her Origin. During character creation, Joseph uses his two dots to gain one level each in the two Dominions of Day and Dusk. Sara has three dots, and she places two in Night and one in Dawn. Brad, on the other hand, places all three of his dots in Dawn, giving him access to three levels of cantrips. Note that Sara gains a bonus on rolls involving the Dominion of Night, while Joseph and Brad have the same bonus for the Dominions of Day and Dawn, respectively. Sara and Joseph's characters have a wider range of abilities, in that each character has more than one Dominion, but Brad's character has potent abilities because he has concentrated on one specific Dominion.

The number of cantrips the player can purchase is based on the character's permanent Weaving score. For each permanent dot in Weaving, a character can have one cantrip for each Dominion. Thus, a character with three dots in Weaving can have a maximum of 12 cantrips, one for each of the four Dominions. Obviously, if a character doesn't have a dot in every Dominion, he's only going to get the cantrips for the Dominions he does have.

Example: Continuing with the above characters, Sara's *inanimae* begins the game with three dots in Weaving. She has access to two Dominions, Night 2 and Dawn

1, and so Sara's character will have a total of six cantrips, three in Night and three in Dawn. All the cantrips in Dawn will be level one, but Sara might choose to have her character's three cantrips in Night be a mix of levels one and two.

Brad, on the other hand, also has three dots in Weaving, but he'll only have three cantrips, all within the Dominion of Dawn, since that's the only Dominion he chose to put dots into.

Casting Cantrips

The basic mechanic for casting cantrips (or casting a *glamour*, which is an archaic and less-used term) is fairly straightforward. The player adds the levels in the specific Dominion to an Attribute or Ability, which varies by cantrip, then rolls the dice. The default difficulty is 6, but remember, if the Dominion in use is favored by the character's Court, the difficulty is lowered by -1. Likewise, don't forget the bonuses that might come from the time of day or year. The player counts up the successes, and the Storyteller determines the result based on the description of the cantrip. When creating new cantrips (see below), the Storyteller and players should discuss which Attributes or Abilities are appropriate, if the difficulty needs to be adjusted accordingly and what the ultimate results of the cantrip will be.

Example: Sara's *inanimae* character, Cairistona, has access to two Dominions, Night 2 and Dawn 1. One of the Storyteller characters, a human named Bethany, has seen Cairistona and is going to blab to the local villagers that some sort of magical being lives in the river near the mill. Cairistona chooses to cast the first-level Night Dominion cantrip, Hush, on the luckless Bethany. Sara looks up the

DIFFICULTY ADJUSTMENT BONUSES

At certain times, the various Dominions have greater potency. Likewise, when a fae of a certain Court uses his favored Dominion, he gains a bonus. For each of the following conditions met (favored Court, time of day, solstice or equinox), lower his difficulty on invoking a cantrip or an Unleashing by -1. The bonuses are cumulative, so that a fae of the Summer Court using the Day Dominion at noon on the summer solstice would have the difficulty of casting a cantrip or performing an Unleashing lowered by -3. Needless to say, most fae know better than to challenge others during their times of power. *The minimum difficulty of any cantrip or Unleashing is 4, no matter how many modifiers apply.*

Dominion	Court	Time of Day	Solstice or Equinox
Day	Summer	Noon and the half hour before and after	Summer Solstice
Night	Winter	Midnight and the half hour before and after	Winter Solstice
Dawn	Spring	Sunrise and the half hour before and after	Vernal Equinox
Dusk	Autumn	Sunset and the half hour before and after	Autumnal Equinox

SYSTEM: CASTING CANTRIPS

Step One: Select cantrip. Calculate dice pool by adding rating in Dominion + Attribute or Ability listed in cantrip description. Check difficulty, adjusting for any modifiers set by the Storyteller.

Step Two: Is the Dominion associated with character's Court? If so, lower the difficulty by -1.

Step Three: Is the time of day influential? If the action occurs in the appropriate juncture, lower the difficulty by -1 again.

Step Four: Is the cantrip cast during a solstice or equinox associated with the Dominion? If so, lower the difficulty again by -1.

Step Five: Roll dice, count successes based on final difficulty, check cantrip description for results.

cantrip and sees that the roll is Dominion rating (2 dots for Night) plus Manipulation (Cairistona has 3 dots), with a difficulty 6. Since Cairistona is of the Winter Court, however, and its favored Dominion is Night, the difficulty is only 5. Sara rolls five dice, getting a 5, 2, 3, 7 and 9 — three successes! The effect of the cantrip is that the target's tongue and vocal cords become paralyzed for one hour per success. Bethany suddenly finds that she can't talk; in the future, maybe she'll think twice about spilling Cairistona's secrets.

A character can cast cantrips as often as she likes; she has no limit to how many times she can recast the cantrip in succession. Some fae consider it a bit gauche to rely heavily on only one particular type of magic all the time, but this isn't the only risk; a character who overuses cantrips in general (and any given cantrip in particular) runs the risk of becoming Locked. See p. 103 for more on this state.

Unleashing

Unleashing refers to times when a fae wants to use the power of a Dominion he controls, but doesn't have a useful or specific cantrip to cast. It's a risky proposition with potentially dangerous side effects, but the power of Unleashing can sometimes save the characters' skins.

Example: *Let's take Joseph's changeling character, Lysander, who belongs to the Summer Court. Lysander has a rating of 1 in his Court's favored Dominion, Day, as well as rating 1 in the Dominion of Dusk, and his permanent Weaving score is 4. He did not elect to decide upon all*

of his cantrips at character creation, however. Thus, he has two level-one cantrips in Day (Luminous Splendor and Decree, plus two more unused slots), along with three in Dusk (Leaves of Copper, Spectral Whispers and Study Façade, plus one unused slot).

Lysander and his fellow fae have entered an enemy stronghold, and the whole place is covered in some sort of mystical, unnatural darkness. Although Lysander has no specific cantrip designed to light up an area, he is of the Summer Court and has knowledge of the Dominion of Day, which has power over light. He chooses to perform an Unleashing with Day, knowing that he's taking a risk, but deciding it's worth it. He's hoping that the Unleashing will light up the area with the power of the noontime sun.

Joseph doesn't have a specific cantrip to calculate the Attribute or Ability plus Dominion, so he uses a slightly

SYSTEM: UNLEASHING

Step One: Add Mists + Dominion for base dice pool.

Step Two: Set out Unleashing dice, three for firstborn, five for changelings and inanimae. Note that you can spend Weaving points to subtract dice from this pool on a one-for-one basis.

Step Three: Roll each dice pool separately. Count successes at base difficulty 6 (or whatever difficulty the Storyteller requires). Don't forget that difficulties may be lowered in the base dice pool due to Court, time of day, equinox or solstice.

Step Four: Calculate results. Weird visible effects occur, regardless, according to the Dominion used. If the number of successes in the base dice pool equals or exceeds those in the Unleashing dice pool, the effect occurs and remains under the caster's control. If the number of successes in the Unleashing dice pool exceeds those in the base dice pool, assuming the base dice pool yields at least one success, the Dominion effect is released; but it's totally out of control. If neither roll has any successes, but no botches occur, nothing happens other than the visible effects. The same is true if at least one success is rolled on the Unleashing dice, but no successes (and no botches) are rolled on the base dice pool. If a botch occurs in either dice pool, dramatic and nasty things happen, at the whim of the Storyteller. (Note that damage is generally a bit more severe in failed Unleashings with Day and Night.)

different system. He counts his dots in Mists (2) plus the Dominion used (Day 1), which makes his total dice pool 3, with a difficulty of 6. (This is the default difficulty; Storytellers might choose to raise or lower this number, depending on the situation. Also, don't forget to take into account any lowered difficulties due to Court, time of day and equinox or solstice.) Then, he sets out five more dice in a separate pool because he's a changeling (firstborn use three dice, changelings and inanimae use five). These are his Unleashing dice, and ideally he'll keep them to the side or choose a different color of dice to keep them separate from his other dice pool. Joseph rolls the dice... and this is where things are a little more complicated.

First, Joseph counts the successes of his base dice pool (three dice, base difficulty 6, reduced by -1 for his character's Court equals difficulty 5), which is a measure of whether or not the power of the Dominion actually works. Then, he counts the successes of his five Unleashing dice, base difficulty 6, which is a measure of whether or not the effect is controlled. If the number of successes in the base pool is equal to or greater than those of the Unleashing dice pool, the character both successfully Unleashes the magic and maintains control of it. If, however, the successes in the Unleashing pool exceed those of the base dice pool (assuming at least one success was rolled in the base pool), the effect works, but is totally out of control. If the player fails the Mists + Dominion roll, but succeeds on the Unleashing roll, the power is not released, but the weird visible effects (see below) happen anyway. If either roll results in a botch, the power of the Unleashing goes completely haywire, releasing the destructive power of the Mists into the world.

Each Dominion has specific visible effects for Unleashing, whether the attempt works or goes awry. These are described within each Dominion's section following. For this example, let's say that fortune is with Lysander, and he does maintain control of the Unleashing (the player rolls more successes on the base dice pool than the Unleashing dice pool). Light glows all around the changeling and his companions, and Lysander's own eyes shine like fiery gold in the gloom.

Unleashing vs. Cantrips

It is tempting for players of characters with high Mists scores to Unleash rather than use cantrips, and trust their luck. This is fine; it's a player's choice to do so (though we hope that the decision has more to do with character and story than game mechanics). To aid the Storyteller, and give the players an idea of what they're in for if they Unleash too much, some of the cantrips listed in this chapter have suggestions as to what might happen when the player Unleashes the Dominion to achieve the

same effect. These effects do not occur if the character simply uses the cantrip, only if she Unleashes the Dominion in question to "mimic" the cantrip. Also, they are meant to be examples only; the effects of Unleashing are rarely the same twice.

This brings up a natural question: Can a fae Unleash a Dominion to create the effect of a cantrip she actually knows? The answer is: Absolutely. Consider the level-one Dawn cantrip *Famine to Feast*. This cantrip enables the fae to change inedible material into luscious food (if only temporarily). A fae who knows the cantrip, however, might decide to Unleash the Dawn Dominion to change rocks into food rather than use the cantrip if she wants to truly dazzle any onlookers. In that case, while the pile of stones that is the target of the Unleashing does change into a pile of fresh-baked loaves of bread, the magic also changes the stream in which the character is standing into sweet wine and a nearby rotted log into a roasted pig. The effects of Unleashing can never be directed, however; using a cantrip allows precision in working with the Dominions. A fae who relies on Unleashing is bound to run out of luck sooner or later, and the magic of the Dominions will run wild.

Creating New Cantrips

Players and Storytellers should plan on creating their own cantrips during the chronicle. This way, you can individualize fae magic and design many more effects than we can summarize in this one chapter. But how do you create cantrips from scratch? Read on; while you might approach the process in a different order, here's a summary of the basic steps in cantrip creation.

First, think about the effect you want to achieve and what Dominion would include that effect. Various fae myths and legends are great sources for inspiration. You might find that the cantrip would fall into more than one Dominion, so you'll have to get pretty specific on how you visualize the cantrip appearing to others. Look over the list of Dominions and what each covers to get a better idea of which you should ultimately choose. Remember that generally speaking, more beneficial cantrips fall into the Dominions of Day and Dawn, while those that are a bit more harmful often come from the Dominions of Night and Dusk. Still, all Dominions have the potential to both help and hinder. Day and Night are easier to use if you wish to cause direct damage; Dusk and Dawn effects tend to be a bit more tricky or subtle.

Next, consider who you want the power to affect — one person or target, or multiple targets? The more targets the cantrip affects, and the more potent the

effect, the higher the level should be. For example, level-one and -two cantrips don't inflict direct aggravated damage, and most (but not all) affect only the caster or one or two others. Level-one and -two cantrips are the ones usually best suited for defense, as well. Your Storyteller can definitely give you some feedback on what level she thinks would be suitable.

Third, figure out the dice pool you want to create. What Attribute or Ability seems to make the most sense for what you're trying to achieve? Are you trying to affect someone's mind or opinion? If so, an Attribute such as Manipulation might be ideal in figuring the dice pool. Or, are you attempting to play specifically upon someone's emotions? In that case, maybe the Ability of Empathy would be more appropriate. Cantrips that call upon the caster's own resolve might use a Physical Attribute, such as Strength or Stamina.

Next, consider how you'll determine the difficulty of the cantrip. Are you going to use the default difficulty of 6? Or is there something about the cantrip that will measure a target's resolve, such as the Willpower trait in the case of mind-reading magic? In this case, perhaps having that trait serve as the difficulty would make more sense. A higher-level cantrip with harsher effects may be more difficult to cast. Also, you might want to have the number of successes determine how successful (or not) the casting is; the more successes, the greater the range or damage of the cantrip.

Finally, you'll need to decide the end result of the cantrip. Is the goal to affect someone else, by causing damage or otherwise applying a penalty to his rolls? Or is the idea to give a bonus, either to another type of roll made during the scene or to your own character? Basing bonuses or penalties on the number of successes achieved is one way to approach this. In cantrips where uncovering information is important, consider giving limited information with fewer successes and greater detail with more successes.

Overall, the goal of cantrips is to allow the fae characters to influence the world around them —by hiding, traveling, fighting, gathering clues, changing perceptions and so on. Just keep this principle in mind, and you shouldn't have any problems creating your own unique bits of fae magic.

Common Cantrips

While cantrips are often unique to a given Dominion, there is some overlap, with cantrips differing only in their Dominion-specific flavor. Below are a few cantrips that can be found in all four Dominions. Those with specific differences in application or sys-

tem are referenced under the appropriate Dominions, as well.

Level-One Cantrips

- **Call Element:** Each Dominion has an affinity for one of the four elements. Day is affined toward fire, Night toward water, Dawn toward earth and Dusk toward air. Successfully casting this cantrip results in a small amount of the appropriate element appearing before the caster, even if there is no nearby source (it creates fire on stone, or a dirt pile on a boat deck, for example). The player rolls Dominion + Strength, with successes determining amount or duration.

Day's version of Call Element creates a flame the size of a small campfire. It lasts for one turn per success, after which it vanishes unless given fuel.

Night's application of Call Element results in a small pool of water appearing before the caster, one gallon per success. If the water isn't given a container or depression, it seeks its own level (spilling over the ground).

Dawn's Call Element cantrip results in a small mound of earth and rock appearing before the caster, roughly one cubic foot per success.

Dusk's version of Call Element results in a swirling puff of air appearing before the caster, even if he is in a place where air doesn't normally exist. Roughly three cubic feet of air is created per success. While this cantrip can scatter papers or other light objects, the caster has no control over the direction of the wind (this is the province of the Control Air cantrip).

- **Unleashing: Success:** The chosen element in the character's area responds to the magic. This might result in a tiny tremor in the earth, a gust of wind, a layer of frost over the ground, or a quick flare-up of any fire in the area. **Botch:** The magic absorbs, rather than creates, the element. This might result in all of the heat or air being leeched from an area, meaning that the character might begin to freeze or collapse from lack of breath.

- **Court Summons:** Members of a Court use this cantrip to send out a call to their fellows, for aid or simply to proclaim a gathering. The "call," as it were, isn't perceptible to human ears, although some animals may whine or act fretfully if they're in hearing range; species associated with the given Dominion (dogs for Day, rabbits for Dawn, etc.) are particularly susceptible. The summons isn't exactly a matter of words, either; rather, it's an unshakeable feeling that comes over any who hear it. Usually the mood of the caster is apparent in the call; if he's afraid or agitated, the summons is more edgy than if he just wants to have

a friendly reunion. The number of successes determines how far the summons reaches as shown on the table below; only fae of the appropriate Court hear the call.

Successes	Range
1 success	1 mile
2 successes	5 miles
3 successes	10 miles
4 successes	20 miles
5 successes	50 miles

Note that the fae who hear the summons are under no compunction to answer it, though they'd probably be wise to at least find out what the fuss is about. The player rolls the relevant Dominion + Charisma to cast the cantrip.

- **Leaves of Metal:** With a mere touch of her finger, a fae can seemingly turn natural items into metal — either a double-fist-sized item or several smaller objects. Each Dominion has one of these (Leaves of Gold, Leaves of Silver, Leaves of Bronze and Leaves of Copper), with varying conditions on what may be changed and what metal it becomes, as well as when the illusion ends. Unfortunately for anyone who takes this “faerie coin” as payment, the illusion fades away in less than 24 hours. To cast this cantrip, a player rolls Dominion + Wits. Only one success is needed to cast this illusion, but additional successes dictate how fine or exact the new item is (for example, one success may produce worn coins or a simple necklace, while

three successes results in newly minted coins or a master-crafted ornament).

The Day version of Leaves of Metal allows the fae to turn any green, growing thing into items of solid gold, whether nuggets, coins or jewelry. This “faerie gold” fades back to its original form the following noon.

Night's version of Leaves of Metal allows the fae to turn any withered or unliving thing of nature (i.e. a dead tree branch, bones, a rock, or even animal dung) into bright silver. The illusion fades away the following midnight. Note that this silver does not act as true silver with regard to werewolves, nor can they sense it as such.

The Dawn Leaves of Metal cantrip allows the fae to change nuts, living twigs or berries into shiny copper. The illusion fades away the following sunrise.

The Dusk application of Leaves of Metal allows the fae to change seasonally-dead things such as autumn leaves, dried seeds or plant husks into bronze. The illusion fades away at the next sunset.

Unleashing: Success: The character's clothes take on the same sheen as the metal for a short time. **Botch:** The leaves remain unchanged, but the character's flesh changes to the metal involved for a number of turns equal to the character's Mists rating. This does not grant any resistance to damage, but imposes a +1 difficulty on all Dexterity rolls.

Level-Two Cantrips

- **Control Element:** Often used in conjunction with Call Element, this



cantrip allows the caster to manipulate the element most closely associated with this Dominion. The player rolls Dominion + Wits to control the element; only one success is needed. The element can move somewhat, for one turn per success, but this movement can't fundamentally alter the element; fire can't be made to consume iron and water can't freeze in an instant with this cantrip. The amount of material and severity of change depend on successes.

The Day application of this cantrip allows control over fire. With a wave of her hand, a fae can make a candle burn twice as bright (and thus half as long) (one success) or send fire leaping a few feet from torches (three successes).

Night's Control Element cantrip can cause trickles of rain water to coalesce into a pool for drinking (one success), or alter the course of a stream with a mere thought (three successes). Note that the fae can't force the water to behave against the laws of nature; for example, she can't make the water immediately wash away a rock-strewn path; such things take some time.

Dawn's Control Element provides command over earth. The fae with this cantrip can't make boulders fly through the air. He could, however, cause a boulder to become loose and roll down a hill onto some unsuspecting enemies (three successes), roll a suitable throwing rock towards his hand (one success) or shift sand to put out and conceal a small fire (two successes).

Dusk's version of this cantrip can manipulate air to blow out a candle (one success), yank a map from someone's grasp (two successes) or even knock over a poorly staked tent (three successes). The fae can't use this cantrip to make air do things outside the laws of nature, like suck all the air from a room.

- **Drain:** Typically, only unscrupulous or sadistic fae use this cantrip, but it's useful for any faerie in a pinch. The fae chooses a target displaying a certain set of emotions, depending on the Dominion in question. Then the fae psychically funnels those emotions away from the unfortunate victim. In return, the character gains a temporary boost to his own resolve and tenacity. The player rolls Dominion + Wits. If he succeeds, the character gains a point of Willpower while the target loses one. The target can regain the Willpower normally; but until he does, he suffers from a distinct lack of the drained emotion.

The Dominion of Day drains faith, confidence, loyalty and fidelity; Night drains joy, delight and elation; Dawn drains innocence, purity and virtue; and Dusk drains pride, arrogance and confidence.

Unleashing: *Success:* The target stumbles as if struck. Her nose might start to bleed slightly or she might burst into tears. The fae glimmers slightly with white, blue, golden or copper light, and might flush or otherwise show signs of arousal or satiety. *Botch:* The target suffers even more severely, losing 1 point of Willpower per success. She collapses in pain and despair. Everything that she feels, however, the fae also feels; the character loses the same number of Willpower points and until the next juncture associated with the appropriate Dominion, she feels exactly what the target feels: physical pain, emotional anguish and so on.

- **Hedge of Thorns:** This cantrip causes a wall of brambles to rise up out of the ground directly in front of the caster, to form a hedge six feet wide, six feet high and four feet deep. The effects of the hedge vary by Dominion (Thornwall for Day, Winter's Brambles for Night, Springbriars for Dawn and Nettlethorns for Dusk). These cantrips are defensive; they only affect a person if he tries to pass through the hedge. The roll is the relevant Dominion + Strength, and the cantrip lasts for one hour per success.

Day's version of this cantrip, called **Thornwall**, causes a wall of razor-sharp thorns to spring up; no one can step through without suffering aggravated damage equivalent to the number of successes the player rolls (soakable if the victim can normally do so) as the thorns stab into the foolish victim.

Night's version of Hedge of Thorns, **Winter's Brambles**, causes a hedge of envenomed, gnarled thorns to spring up. No one can step through without taking lethal damage equal to the caster's rank in Night. If any of the damage is unsoaked, the victim falls into a nightmarish and feverish sleep for a number of hours equal to the caster's Night rating.

Springbriars, Dawn's version of Hedge of Thorns, creates an open hedge of limber stems armed with short, sharp thorns. Any who try to step through the hedge encounter twining and constricting branches. The brambles have Strength ratings equal to the caster's rating in Dawn, and they attempt to grapple their opponents. Once the victim is entangled, the vines constrict, driving wickedly sharp thorns into flesh (inflicting Strength + 1 lethal damage). If the target suffers any damage, the true horror becomes apparent: the thorns suck blood at the rate of one health level per turn, until the victim is dead or her player manages two successes on a Strength + Athletics roll to pull free. Three stems appear per success within the area of the cantrip (six feet by four feet).

Finally, **Nettlethorns**, Dusk's version of Hedge of Thorns, causes a hedge of stinging thorns to spring up. No one can step through without suffering lethal damage equal to the caster's rating in Dusk. If any of the damage is unsoaked, the thorns deliver a burning poison which wracks the victim's body with agony for hours, removing the caster's rating in Dusk from the victim's dice pools for all attempted actions. This penalty decreases at the rate of one die per hour. (Poison from a Dusk 4 caster causes all dice pools to be reduced by four dice due to pain; after one hour the penalty falls to three dice, then two dice after another hour, and so on.)

Unleashing: *Success:* Plant growth becomes baleful in a 20-foot radius around the character. Even normal grass grows thorns or causes a rash. *Botch:* The character's fingernails and toenails elongate into thorns. These thorns make walking and fine motor skills difficult (halve movement speed and raise difficulties on Dexterity rolls by +2), but are far too brittle to cause any real damage to an opponent.

• **Mantle:** This effective cantrip allows the fae to change her shape into one of several animals or trees, though many fae tend to pick a specific form for their shapechanging and stick with it. Each Dominion is restricted to certain flora and fauna, outlined below. To enact the change, a player rolls Dominion + Stamina. Three successes are needed for a complete transformation, and the effect lasts until the fae wishes to change shape again. Note that the fae in this form has no special fae abilities or powers, save the awareness and ability to regain her own form; for good or ill, she takes on all the physical characteristics of the plant or animal.

For Day's version of the Mantle cantrip, fae are restricted to domestic animals and fruit-bearing trees, as these flora and fauna best represent summertime. Common choices include dogs, cows, horses, goats, swine, apple trees or berry bushes.

With Night's version of the Mantle cantrip, fae are restricted to nocturnal animals and evergreen trees. Frequent choices include cats, owls, bats, weasels, pines and firs.

Dawn's version of the Mantle cantrip restricts fae to crepuscular, herbivorous animals and flower-bearing vines or vine-like trees. Examples include rabbits, deer, honeysuckle, wisteria, willow and morning glories.

For Dusk's version of the Mantle cantrip, fae are restricted to crepuscular, carnivorous animals and non-flowering bushes and vines. Examples include bears, wolves, holly, ivy, poison oak and hawks.

Level-Three Cantrips

• **Charm:** This cantrip allows a fae to imbue an object with the effects of magic of a given Dominion. There are several limits to this cantrip. First of all, it can only affect certain items, namely those associated with its Dominion; for a Charm of Day this includes things that are made of gold, things that are yellow, an item that produces heat, a symbol of loyalty and faith, and so on. Of course, only magic effects or cantrips normally associated with the specific Dominion can be placed into the object. Storytellers should help players decide if the cantrip would be effective or not, depending on the item. Moreover, the magic doesn't last long; in fact, at the Dominion's next juncture after the cantrip is cast, the magic fades away, even if it hasn't been used. Finally, the spell effect on the object is "one use only," although this cantrip can be used subsequent times on the same item. The player first rolls to determine success for the cantrip to be placed into the Charm. The player must also specify any conditions or effects for the emplaced cantrip; for example, if the Mantle cantrip is placed into a Charm, the player must stipulate the animal or plant that the bearer of the Charm will become when it is activated. Finally, the player rolls Dominion + Wits (difficulty 7), and only one success is required. If the roll botches, however, or a player uses Unleashing in an attempt to replicate this cantrip and it goes awry, a terrible thing happens: The item in question becomes permanently cursed. Storytellers can have some wicked fun with this plot thread. In the case of Day Charms, one example might be a cursed gold ring that burns off a finger when worn.

• **Fostering:** The Fostering is one of the first steps to becoming a fae, and this cantrip allows a would-be fae (a sprite) to take on a single Lesser Feature and begin the path to Saining in the chosen Court. The caster should consider deeply whether or not the sprite would be a worthy member of the Court before using this cantrip. The player rolls the relevant Dominion + Intelligence (difficulty 7) and only one success is needed. Each Court has its specific Fostering ritual. Changelings are not capable of casting this cantrip.

Unleashing: *Success:* The sprite takes on the personality of the character for a few days, but the character's best and worst traits are magnified to extreme levels. *Botch:* The sprite becomes an exact duplicate of the character for three days, possessing the same Features but none of the character's Dominions or memories. The sprite might well believe itself

to be the character, but it retains its usual complement of Charms (see p. 96).

- **Shaping:** With this cantrip, a fae can cast the effects of Mantle on another person. As with the lesser cantrip, the caster is restricted in what type of animal or plant the target may become; the same restrictions for Night's Mantle apply to Winter's Shaping, for example. The target retains her own memory and conscious awareness, but she takes on all the physical characteristics of animal or plant she becomes. To cast the cantrip, a player rolls Dominion + Stamina. Three successes are needed for a complete transformation (a certain donkey-eared king only received one success), and the effects last until the fae ends them. If the transformation was complete, for every year in the new form the target must succeed at a Willpower roll (difficulty is 4 + fae's successes on Shaping cantrip) or fall into a dreamlike state, still aware but becoming more like the animal or plant in question.

Unleashing: *Success:* Anyone in the immediate area gains some of the given animal's qualities. If a Spring fae changes someone into a rabbit, any other humans nearby might become timid and find their hearing augmented. *Botch:* The fae herself changes into the animal in question for a few turns.

- **Straight Track:** When fae need to move quickly to a specific place of safety or access a nexus of mystical energies located in the human world, they use this cantrip. For the Dominions of Day, Night and Dawn, it is level three; but the Dominion of Dusk, with its penchant for travel, allows users to cast this magic at level two. The visible effects vary slightly for each Dominion; for example, the track that appears for Day blazes bright gold, while that of Dawn shimmers with a pinkish-amber light. Night's track is midnight blue scattered with the faintest dusting of silvery starlight, and that of Dusk is a rich mahogany. The magic for each Dominion, though, is the same; if successful, the caster opens an enchanted road between where he is standing and a known point. The caster must specify where he wishes to go, and he must know of the locale's existence. Therefore, "Take me to my friend Lady Ginevra's keep" is a legitimate use of this cantrip, while "Get me to the nearest fae household!" wouldn't accomplish anything. If the cantrip works, the road appears at the caster's feet; some fae like to dart behind a tree or other cover before invoking the magic, giving rise to the idea that faeries sometimes disappear into thin air. The fae may find himself walking along the Straight Track for quite a while, depending on the successes rolled. The player rolls Dominion + Perception (difficulty 7); each success effectively makes the

track "faster" for travel. The Storyteller should make a good guess as to how many miles away, as the crow flies, the caster's destination lies. Each success halves the effective distance to the chosen locale. For example, if a fae is 100 miles from his lady's keep, one success creates a track that leads to the keep with an actual distance of only 50 miles. Two successes means the keep is only 25 miles away, three successes equals 12.5 miles, and so on. Moreover, travel on the track is fairly swift, with the default rate of travel being five miles an hour. While on the track, fae don't get weary or require any food, though they'll likely be tired and hungry after they complete their journey. Storytellers may choose to have a botch successfully open the track, but cause the journey to take longer than anticipated. Once the fae and his companions step onto the track, it begins fading away and disappears entirely within a day. Anyone with a Kenning rating, even a temporary one, can look for a track; Storytellers will likely wish to apply a penalty to the Perception roll depending on how much time has passed since the track was created.

Unleashing: *Success:* The track glows brightly enough to be seen for miles, and has a strangely alluring effect on any mortal with a Willpower rating lower than the fae's Mists rating. *Botch:* The fae is immediately transported onto a track, but has no idea where it will take her. While she knows the track does not lead to her destination, she has no choice but to either follow it or wait 24 hours (after which the track fades and she reappears in the same place she Unleashing the Domain).

- **Sword:** The fae charges any normal metal weapon (an axe, a sword) with her magic, allowing it to inflict aggravated damage. The weapon visibly changes as the fae infuses it with her power; the Day Dominion creates white-hot blade smoking with brimstone; Night freezes the blade solid and turns the metal black; Dawn encrusts the weapon with thorns or sharpened stones; and Dusk causes the blade to grown impossibly thin and sharp. The player rolls Dominion + Strength (difficulty 7); the sword retains its magical properties for one scene.

Level-Four Cantrips

- **Arch:** The Dusk Dominion allows access to this cantrip at level three, while it appears at level four in the Dominions of Day, Night and Dawn. Arch is a tricky but incredibly potent cantrip that, simply put, allows a fae to access a trod leading directly to a faerie realm. Trods themselves can be doors, gates, paths or tunnels. What Arch does is take the fae caster right to

the trod's entrance; the trod itself may or may not be open right away, depending on any number of conditions, such as its nature and where it leads (see Trods, p. 170). It's conceivable that a fae could cast Arch, arrive at the desired Trod almost immediately, and still have to wait until a certain time of day to reach her ultimate destination. The difficulty of this cantrip is in both its casting and the number of successes required. The roll is Dominion + Wits, difficulty 8. A total of three successes is necessary to open the arch; one or two successes has no effect. With three successes, the caster and others with her may step through the arch and arrive at their destination by walking for one hour. Four successes means the journey takes 20 minutes, while five successes indicates arrival in 10 minutes. With six or more successes, the journey is instantaneous. The successes also indicate how long the Arch is open — anyone who happens by this magical gateway can step through it during this time. Thus, it's to the caster's advantage for the player to roll well; no fae really wants an Arch open for an hour or more, allowing just any passerby to step through! Should the roll fail or botch, the Storyteller might want to have the characters end up at the wrong trod, which might spawn an entirely unforeseen, and probably unfortunate, series of events.

When cast successfully, Day's version of the Arch cantrip appears as a glowing circle of fiery light. The arch emits a gentle warmth, pleasant to the flesh. Still, Cainites will find the tendrils of fire emitted from the gateway frightening and must check for Rötshreck.

Night's rendition of this cantrip shows a jagged, oval cloud filled with inky blackness that appears in front of the caster. Neither light nor sound penetrate the archway, though dogs and others with sensitive ears may hear an unexplained moaning just out of normal audible range. Once the caster and others step through, they can see and hear normally.

When a fae casts this cantrip through his Dawn Dominion, an archway of bright green vines appears, seemingly hanging in midair. A rush of verdant scents permeates the immediate area; and from inside the arch, a cool but pleasant wind blows.

The Dusk Arch appears as dried, withered vines that sprout from the earth. The wind coming from inside the archway is chill and slightly damp. The smell from the vines is both loamy and somewhat sour.

- **Persisting Charm:** This cantrip works exactly as Charm, except that the magic imbued in the item remains intact until it is used, no matter how much time passes. As with Charm, once the power is used, it's gone, but the effect can be recast on the same item. Likewise, a botch on this cantrip or a failed Unleashing will create a cursed item; Storytellers should make the effects more dreadful, since this is a level-four cantrip. The player rolls Dominion + Wits (difficulty 7) and one success is needed. The imbued cantrip must be successfully cast and given parameters just as for Charm.

- **Saining:** Among the most revered and wondrous fae magic is the ability to bring a Fosterling into one of the Four Courts, welcoming those of various Origins into the full circle of faerie life. The effects of the Saining glamour are deep, mysterious and far-reaching. The long Saining process combines mental and spiritual rebirth with a ritual passage into maturity no outsider can ever quite comprehend. Additionally, the ritual forges bonds of unity with other fae in the Court that supercede any past actions or dealings. For example, if a Fosterling made an enemy within the Winter Court but then later were Sained into that Court, such old hostilities may well be forgotten. The process for Saining is similar in each Court, but of course some differences in ritual and tradition exist. While the period of Saining lasts for an entire year, and includes Cleansing, Naming and Acceptance, a

Level of Cantrip	Number of Targets Affected Simultaneously	Area of Effect	Damage Type
•	Self or 1 other only	Range of touch	Bashing only
••	2 others	Immediate vicinity; within 5 feet	Bashing, lethal
•••	6 others	Within 10 feet; 100 square feet; a small room	Bashing, lethal, aggravated
••••	20 others	Line of sight; 300 square feet; a large room	Bashing, lethal, aggravated
•••••	100 others	A place the fae has seen and touched, even if out of sight range; a large castle	Bashing, lethal, aggravated

ritemaster invoking the Saining cantrip performs this magic as the very last step of initiation into a particular Court. There is simply no possibility of return to one's former life once Saining has been cast successfully.

To cast Saining, the player rolls Dominion + Manipulation (difficulty 8). Three successes are needed. If fewer successes are achieved the magic doesn't work, and the caster must wait an entire year to attempt the magic again. Such failure is a bitter disappointment to everyone, and a mark of shame against the caster. Needless to say, the Fosterling is in the poor position of spending yet another year in a period of limbo — not a full member of the Court, but not exactly an outcast, either, unless she chooses for some reason to become Solstice-kin at this time.

Saining into the Winter Court takes place on the winter solstice, preferably in the hour before midnight, just as Saining into the Summer Court occurs at midday on the summer solstice. Saining into the Spring and Autumn Courts transpires on the vernal and autumnal equinoxes respectively, at the hours of sunrise and sunset. (Note that these ideal conditions reduce the difficulty of the cantrip accordingly.)

Unleashing: Unleashing this cantrip successfully is impossible. Even if the roll succeeds, only some very spectacular visual results are likely to occur. Botching the Saining is explained on p. 84, and results in a Solstice fae.

Level-Five Cantrips

- **True Enchantment:** The ultimate expression of the skill of a fae enchanter, this cantrip allows the creation of a powerful magic item. As with Charm, certain limits apply as to what kind of item can be enchanted and the nature of the magic imbued into the object, according to the Dominion. If this cantrip is successful, however, not only is the magic permanent, it also has unlimited uses. In other words, using this cantrip, it is possible to create magic items imbued with a permanent, multi-use effect. To accomplish this difficult task, a player must roll Dominion + Intelligence (difficulty 7), and three successes are required. The imbued cantrip must be successfully cast and its parameters delineated prior to the use of True Enchantment. Botches or failed Unleashings have long-reaching and perhaps devastating effects.

Other Dominion Considerations

Below are some additional factors to consider when using the Dominions in **Dark Ages: Fae** chronicles.

Dominions and Courts

For quick reference, here are the Courts and general powers associated with each Dominion. Players generally choose to place at least one dot in the character's Court-favored Dominion, both for the flavor of the magic and the bonus when casting cantrips, but this isn't an absolute requirement by any means.

Court and Season		Dominion	Powers/Areas of Focus
Summer	Day	Light	faith, loyalty, thought, heat, fire, controlling minds, gold, yellow
Winter	Night	Darkness	nightmares, despair, betrayal, cold, water, shielding minds, silver, black
Spring	Dawn	Senses	time, the body, the future, healing, purity, earth, controlling weather, copper, green
Autumn	Dusk	Spirits	gateways, space, humanity, air, atonement, the past, reading minds, bronze, red

Levels and Numbers

One of the greatest advantages of acquiring cantrips at higher levels is the number of targets or size of area a fae can affect. The following table gives a *general* idea of both area and how many people (or other things) a fae may affect at the various levels in a Dominion. Please note that these are just general guidelines; Storytellers have ultimate say on both number affected and range of effects, depending on the cantrip and the way a character uses it. Likewise, within the details on each cantrip, some specify an exact range, effect or targets; if given, *that* specification should be the one used. Certain Dominions also have specific effects at lower levels than do others; Dusk, for example, makes traveling to a trod easier than the other Dominions, while Dawn allows true healing at a lower level than other Dominions.

Perpetuity

Most cantrips last for a specific amount of time — a day, a season, a year and a day, and so on. Often, the caster's degree of success determines how long the cantrip's effects last. Some cantrips are perpetual, until the fae decides otherwise. Unless stated in the description, Storytellers and players can assume that the results of a cantrip are unending (hence some of

the stories about mortals turned into trees, only to one day, centuries later, be remembered by the fae and restored to their human forms).

Magical Advancement and Cantrip Progression

Learning new cantrips isn't simply a matter of raising one's Weaving rating (although that's certainly part of it). The character must either learn a cantrip from another fae or from a book, or must experiment with the Dominion in question until she learns to weave that particular application of magic into a predictable result. Doing so requires Unleashing the Dominion and then spending Weaving points to mitigate the chaotic effects of the Mists. Over time (and remember that the fae's relationship with time is different than humans', meaning this process can take only days of human-time) the character forges a new cantrip.

Players may also choose to replace cantrips that their characters know with others. For instance, a character who knows the Day cantrip Friend from Foe might, upon gaining a second dot in that Dominion, wish to learn the cantrip Befuddle. This latter cantrip has a similar effect insofar as it confuses another's perceptions, but the specific result is very different. The player may substitute the higher-level cantrip for the lower-level one. In terms of the chronicle, the character practices using her Day Dominion just as she normally would to learn a new cantrip. Later, she finds that she doesn't recall exactly how to cast the Friend from Foe cantrip with the same precision that she used to (i.e., she can still use the effect but must now Unleash the Day Dominion in order to do so). Thus, a character may only have a number of cantrips in each Dominion equal to her Weaving rating. This is because Weaving measures the amount of will and knowledge that the character can potentially wield with regards to the magic of the Dominions. Raising Weaving therefore allows for greater application of that will.

Countering Dominions

Battles between powerful fae sorcerers are typically destructive and spectacular, as both participants Unleash their magic. Using cantrips is risky, because fae can counter each other's cantrips much more easily than they can each other's Unleashings.

Fae have two methods of countering cantrips. First, the defending fae can simply call upon her own knowledge of the appropriate Dominion, absorbing the magic before it ever has a chance to coalesce into a tangible effect. In order to do this, the defender must have at least one dot in the appropriate Dominion and

must act before the attacker (that is, must win initiative). The player then rolls Dominion + Weaving (difficulty 7); this roll resists the attacker's cantrip roll. If the defender wins, the cantrip simply fails. If the defender exceeds the attacker's successes by three or more, she gains a point of Mists as she absorbs the magical energy from the attacker's working (the attacker does not lose this Mists point, however). The defender's player may spend a Weaving point for one automatic success on this roll (but may not spend Willpower as well).

Example: *The Solstice assassin Marlowe is on the run from the family of the Summer Court noble he recently murdered. One of those aggrieved fae, however, happens to be Joseph's character Lysander. Lysander uses the Decree cantrip to force Marlowe to surrender; the Storyteller decides that since Marlowe also happens to know the Day Dominion (and won initiative this turn) he will attempt to counter that cantrip. Joseph rolls only one success for the Decree cantrip, while the Storyteller rolls Marlowe's Day (one die) + Weaving (3 dice) and manages four successes. Marlowe gains a point of Mists as Lysander opens his mouth to issue the decree... and no sound emerges.*

The second way to counter cantrips is by applying one's control over the Mists. The character uses her power over the chaos of the Mists to scatter the attacking fae's ordered spell, rendering it harmless (or at least mitigating its effect). This method of countering a cantrip requires a Mists roll (difficulty 5 + the level of the cantrip); this roll resists the cantrip roll. If the defender manages more successes, the cantrip flies apart, usually with a subtle visual effect similar to an Unleashing. The defender's player may spend a Mists point on this roll to ensure one automatic success, just as if spending Willpower ordinarily (the player cannot spend both Mists and Willpower, however).

Example: *Brad's Spring Court firstborn, Veritas, runs afoul of the Solstice assassin Marlowe (after the latter gave Lysander the slip). Marlowe, not wishing the Spring Court weakling to spread word of his whereabouts, calls upon the Night cantrip Sword of Ice, the better to make mincemeat of the firstborn. Veritas obviously has no desire to be stabbed, and not being any kind of swordsman himself, decides to counter the cantrip. Brad rolls Veritas' Mists rating against a difficulty of 8 (the base difficulty of 5 + 3 for the cantrip level). He scores four successes, while the Storyteller manages only two for Marlowe's cantrip roll. Marlowe clenches his fist and a few tiny icicles dangle from his knuckles... but that's all.*

Countering an Unleashing is much more difficult, however. The energies of the Mists are far too wild and

powerful for a fae to simply shut them down (that is, using Weaving in the same way that she could use Mists to counter a cantrip). Instead, the character must attack her opponent's control over the magic, forcing the Unleashing to go awry. This requires the defender to roll her Mists rating (difficulty 8); each success subtracts one success from the attacker's Dominion + Mists pool. If the defender rolls enough successes to completely cancel the attacker's successes, the Unleashing is considered to have botched, with all the attendant backlash. As above, the defender's player may spend a Mists point on this roll to ensure one automatic success, just as if spending Willpower ordinarily (the player cannot spend both Mists and Willpower, however).

Example: Marlowe, frustrated, decides to Unleash his Night Dominion at Veritas, hoping to simply freeze him solid. Veritas, encouraged by his earlier success but still rather frightened, attempts to make Marlowe lose control of this Unleashing. The Storyteller rolls seven dice for Marlowe (3 for Night + 4 for Mists), while Brad rolls four dice for Veritas (his Mists rating). Brad decides to spend a Mists point for safety's sake. He rolls three successes, plus a fourth for the Mists point, while the Storyteller only manages one on Marlowe's roll (not his day). The Unleashing botches, and Marlowe screams as whirling winter winds freeze his clothing to his body, his helm to his face and his feet to the ground. Veritas, fortunately not standing too close, is only covered in a thick layer of frost.

Dominion of Day

Brendan and what remained of his small company limped towards the great tent, which by Prince Lleufer's whim appeared mantled with ten thousand ivy leaves. A last look behind showed him a battle line, largely obscured by a dust cloud yet pierced by flashes of swords glittering, ringing with clashing weapons and the alarum of battle. From the haze, wounded warriors limped or crawled, but more and more broke away with no hurt to be seen. Brendan had not the will to curse those who fled; indeed, he had little heart for moving, for the air burned in his lungs and stones could not be so heavy as his limbs felt now.

"My Lord, my Prince!" he croaked through sun-cracked lips. "Our army is hard pressed, and more foes march down the valley. The day has turned against us, and the men are breaking!" He did not add that were it not for the oath he swore and his bone weariness, he would likely be running for the hills himself.

A sudden gust sundered the tent; the leaves fluttered away to reveal a mighty charger, night-black, with eager light in his eyes. And astride the mount, a figure so majestic all the crowned heads of the known world would abase

themselves if he but looked their way. His mail coat rested lightly on his frame; and his helm, dressed in gold, threatened to outshine the sun. Without thinking, Brendan dropped to his knees, as did the soldiers about him; even those in flight halted and turned. The warrior felt shame for his despairing words, but Lleufer's soft voice carried above the clamor. "Are they, indeed? Then we must convince them to hold. Are you coming, Brendan?"

The company of men sprang to their feet, their strength returned, all weariness and hurts forgotten. "You can count on us, lord Prince!" they cried with one voice. Looking to the straggling deserters, the sergeant roared, "You heard the lord. To me! To me! I don't care if you've lost your sword, tear one from the hands of your foe!"

Then Lleufer sounded his great gold-banded horn; it boomed and echoed up and down the valley, to be answered by the roar of the army as they renewed their efforts. Carried by the horn's call, all the soldiers turned and charged toward the battle. Even grievous wounds were a trifle — the man before Brendan fell dead; Brendan leapt the body and ran on. Swift as the wind, the charger passed them all in a thunder of hoof beats; Lleufer raised his sword on high, the blade flashing with skyfire. And they ran, shouting the prince's name with every breath, with the fire burning in their own hearts — for war, for victory, for the prince!

The Day Dominion encompasses all that can be imagined pertaining to warmth, light and brightness. Day has control over fire and heat, which can cause terrible damage to flesh or burn away imperfection. Moreover, this Dominion holds the power to control the minds of other beings, bending them to the fae's will. Day likewise includes cantrips that enhance leadership, as well as faith in one's self and others.

One of the more important powers of this Dominion is the ability to cast a glamour of mortal form. Many fae use this power to disguise themselves as human without calling the Mists. It's not true shapechanging, but it fools most onlookers. Day has its own brand of genuine shapeshifting, in that skilled practitioners of the Dominion can transform themselves or others into animals that love the day and retire at night (such as cows, dogs, birds or pigs). Additionally, some fae choose instead to transform into trees, choosing fruit or nut-bearing varieties (like apple, pear, cherry or walnut).

Favored Court: Summer

Day's Influences

The following section provides players and Storytellers with general ideas about the varying scope of power as command of the Day Dominion increases.

Day, Level One

Cantrips at this level tend to have minor or short-lived outcomes. Often, the cantrips only affect the caster or one individual, and they're limited in distance to what can be touched. Within the Dominion of Day, level-one cantrips allow limited mind control, the means to summon fire and simple enhancement of the caster's presence. The caster can't force others to perform acts that are against their basic natures, such as jumping into a bonfire. He can, however, subtly affect emotions and even use the Dominion to determine if someone's words are true or false. This level also allows a caster to find gold and certain precious gems. Overall, level-one cantrips in Day are meant to be useful, simple means for improving everyday life (for the caster).

Day, Level Two

Day cantrips at this level often affect not only the caster, but also one or two others simultaneously. The fae can also issue simple commands that others must follow, influence the emotion of love, and control fires (as opposed to merely summoning them). At this point, the fae can also use Day to change shape and cast complex illusions, such as appearing to be human (without calling down the Mists). Similarly, level two in Day allows the caster to shapeshift into certain types of animals, though she can't yet use her magic to transform others. Think of level-two cantrips as either having more potent effects for the caster herself, or bestowing the ability to affect someone other than herself, albeit in minor ways. Note that cantrips at this level can also cause direct damage to the fae's opponents (bashing or lethal damage only). Range is limited to about five feet, or a place the caster can reach within one turn.

Day, Level Three

Level-three cantrips in Day are able to affect a small number of people concurrently, such as an oathcircle or the half-dozen inconvenient guards around the brig. The effects are also much more potent, capable of causing aggravated damage via a weapon, changing a target's form, or mentally coercing others into performing acts against their will. The fae using Day at level three can also erect strong barriers and shields against damage in an area roughly as large as a 10-by-10-foot room, or within about 10 feet. Unlike Dawn and Dusk, the Dominion of Day at this level can inflict aggravated wounds of small degree at range. Other powers within this level include the ability to make someone fall in love and to force others to tell the truth.

Day, Level Four

Cantrips at this level are capable of affecting a large number of people, such as an entire troop of soldiers. Moreover, a fae skilled with Day at level four can almost completely direct the mind of another being for extended periods of time, even if the target is unwilling. Similarly, the caster can bind willing members of an oathcircle in a pledge of fidelity so tight, nothing but death can sever their ties. Using fire or light to block damage in a large area or causing aggravated wounds by mere thought to several people is within the grasp of a caster at this level. Now, the fae can affect targets at a distance, but within line of sight. Finally, one of the foremost abilities of level-four Day cantrips is the Saining of other fae into the Summer Court.

Day, Level Five

Only the most accomplished fae learn Day at this level, but the forces at their command are awesome and terrible. Mastery of Day even allows a caster to call down the power of the sun against his enemies, or surround an entire keep in a deadly nimbus of fire. More terrible is the fact that a fae can affect any area he has seen and touched... and all the beings within that area.

Cantrips

The cantrips listed here are available to all fae with prowess in the Day Dominion. Note that mostly level-one and -two cantrips are listed, as these are more frequently known and used by beginning characters.

Level-One Cantrips

- **Candor's Light:** This cantrip determines whether or not a target is telling the truth during a scene. Those who are honest when answering (or believe they are being honest) glow with a dim, golden light. The player rolls Day + Perception.

- **Cow the Bitter Wind:** In the frigid watches before dawn, the fae draws upon the warm memories of midday to banish the cold. The roll is Day + Stamina (difficulty 6 if the air is still and freezing up to 2 higher or lower depending on temperature and wind). One success keeps hypothermia at bay with basic clothes, while three successes or more allows the caster to caper around naked with no ill effects. The caster's body radiates more heat than normal, though she feels perfectly comfortable. The cantrip lasts for once scene, and can be cast upon one other being instead of the fae.

• **Decree:** The fae using this cantrip successfully can issue one simple command to a target. The fae must have the subject's attention and speak clearly enough to be heard and understood (the cantrip's power doesn't transcend language barriers or deafness); the command cannot cause the target to take any direct harm, so telling a hapless victim to fall on his sword won't work. The player rolls Day + Manipulation, and the difficulty is the target's Willpower score. Only one success is needed for this cantrip to work. Simple commands might include phrases such as, "Stay seated on this stump until sunrise," or "Give this scroll to Alphonse the Miller who lives a mile down this road." Note that the results of the command have to be fulfilled within a day's time; a fae can't command the target to do something next week, for example.

Unleashing: *Success:* The fae's voice reverberates like a hammer on an anvil, allowing anyone within earshot to hear the command she has given. *Botch:* The fae's presence terrifies the mortal so much that he screams in panic, yelling for help against the demon assaulting his mind.

• **Fireside Chatter:** This cantrip can be handy if the fae suspects watchers may be lurking just out of sight, spying on him and his comrades. Typically, the fae demands that they show themselves, but a subtle caster simply wills the spies forward while stirring the flames. The player rolls Day + Charisma; a small fire is necessary for the effect to work. The cantrip affects up to any three random targets who are hiding outside the range of the fire's light (not counting guards or others the fae is aware of and *wants* to remain hidden). When the magic works, the spies must step into the light of the fire, revealing their presence; they don't, however, have to be friendly, nor do they lose an action if a fight appears imminent.

• **Friend from Foe:** While this cantrip won't turn sworn enemies into fast friends, it will make the faerie's attacker pause and reflect on what he is doing. The player rolls Day + Charisma (difficulty is the target's Willpower), and makes some sort of brief but flowery speech; this requires a full turn. One success is needed, and the attacker loses his next action, as he listens to the caster with rapt attention.

• **Heart's Rest:** The fae can evoke a momentary feeling of solace with this cantrip, as cares and weariness melt away. The tired gather strength, the panicked collect their wits and the sorrowful feel again the comfort of a mother's arms. The fae generally interacts with the target, whether by soothing word, song or tender touch; the player rolls Day + Empathy. The

effect lasts one turn per success, and leaves the target with a Willpower point to be spent only on resisting weariness, fear, rage or mental weakness. (At the Storyteller's discretion, a frenzied Cainite or werewolf can try to regain control during each turn the cantrip is in effect).

• **Luminous Splendor:** The fae using this cantrip shines with an inner light that causes all who see her to gape in awe. The player rolls Day + Charisma. Each success from the cantrip allows the player to add one success to a Leadership or Intimidation roll made for the rest of the scene. Note that the player can choose to use all the successes from the cantrip on one Leadership or Intimidation roll, or spread them out if multiple rolls of these Abilities are anticipated for the scene. At the end of the scene, any unused successes fade away. Each bonus success may only be used once.

Unleashing: *Success:* The character's light is infectious; anything she touches glows for three turns. *Botch:* The character absorbs light, turning completely black. This state lasts for three turns.

• **Merry Meet:** This cantrip is useful when meeting new people; when cast successfully, it reduces the difficulty of all the caster's Social rolls by -1. In effect, the cantrip makes him seem more charming and alluring than he may actually be. The player rolls Day + Charisma. This cantrip lasts for one scene.

• **Oathbound Strength:** Oaths can protect fae from Echoes, and for those with some knowledge of the Day Dominion, can provide additional sources of strength. A character can use this cantrip within one hour of fulfilling the terms of an oath (as per the Oaths Background). The player rolls Day + Gramarye. If the roll succeeds, the character gains 1 point of Willpower. Unlike most cantrips, this cantrip can only be used once per day.

Unleashing: *Success:* The fae glows with a reverent, golden halo. The air around him warms comfortably, and all present feel the pleasant sensation of sunlight on their faces. *Botch:* The sacred bond of the oath strains. The Storyteller rolls the character's Mists rating; the result is applied to the character as if the oath were temporarily an Echo. The oath used in this cantrip cannot protect him.

• **Seek Treasure:** Fae skilled in Day use this cantrip to locate the presence of gold in quantity. The player rolls Day + Perception. One success gives the character a general idea of where at least a small amount of gold exists, such as the amount in a personal purse or pouch. The cantrip doesn't help locate a single coin or piece of jewelry; the total amount of the gold must be larger than the palm of the hand. Some

fae sniff out the gold; others swear they hear the metal ringing faintly. The range of this cantrip is a room or small clearing.

- **Sunbeam:** Even in the darkest dungeon the fae can conjure up a ball of light, bright as a torch but cool and steady in the strongest wind. The roll is Day + Wits, and the light lasts one minute per success. The ball of light moves with the caster if desired, or it can be left in place, but it must be within 10 feet of the caster to be moved. Though it may temporarily blind those accustomed to darkness, the cantrip does not evoke a true sunbeam and thus will not burn vampires.

- **Sun's Shield:** When a fae wishes to remain out of an opponent's sight long enough to make her escape, this is a most useful cantrip. A blaze of light appears around the fae just for a moment, blinding anyone looking at her in that instant. The character gains an initiative bonus equal to the player's successes; this bonus lasts for three turns. The player rolls Day + Strength. The faerie's opponents do not remain blinded for

long; but if the character gains initiative in the very next round and immediately hides or leaves, her opponents will not know where she has gone (though she may be tracked normally).

Unleashing: *Success:* The flash of light is accompanied by a wave of heat and a faint wisp of smoke. *Botch:* The character is the only one who sees the flash of light, and suffers an initiative penalty equal to her own Mists rating for three turns.

Level-Two Cantrips

- **An Air of Wisdom:** Much like Friend from Foe, this cantrip is particularly effective in making attackers take a long pause and reconsider their actions. The difference is that this cantrip works on up to three attackers simultaneously. The player rolls Day + Charisma and makes a brief, impressive speech. At least one success is needed per attacker (up to three); if there are more targets than successes, those with the lowest Willpower traits are affected and lose their next actions. Whether they resume their attack depends on how truly convincing the fae was.

- **Befuddle:** This is a classic ploy for confusing one's enemies. The target obeys one simple and direct command to repeat a task over and over until the fae verbally dismisses the victim or the sun rises to high noon. The command cannot be something that would mortally endanger the target. Common tasks include things like digging holes, marching, picking fruit or washing socks. The player rolls Day + Manipulation (difficulty is the target's Willpower).

Unleashing: *Success:* The ground around the target warps slightly as he undertakes his task, forming a small trench for him to walk in. *Botch:* The character becomes confused and unable to focus; until the next high noon, she suffers a +2 difficulty to all Mental rolls.

- **Fire Armor:** When cast, a glowing nimbus of flame surrounds the caster; though nothing he carries or wears is damaged by the nimbus, anything else that touches the fae is subject to torch-hot burns (see *Dark Ages: Vampire*, p. 257). In addition, the whirling fires serve to deflect part of the force of any blow; the player rolls Day + Stamina; for every success, a die is added to any soak rolls, including versus aggravated damage. The armor lasts for one scene.

Unleashing: *Success:* The fae's hair bursts into a blazing white-blue fire. This does not harm the fae, but



lasts until the cantrip's effects end. *Botch*: The fae is trapped in a ring of fire. Any attempt to cross the ring ignites her clothing and hair. This ring burns for one scene.

- **Fireside Revelations**: This cantrip works like Fireside Chatter, except that up to half a dozen targets are affected. The player rolls Day + Charisma, and a small fire is still necessary for the effect to work. When the magic is successful, the hidden spies step into the light of the fire; what happens after that depends on what the characters say to each other.

- **Flame's Kin**: With this cantrip, one may play with fire and not get burned. The fae has learned how to ward off the effects of open flame. The roll is Day + Stamina; each success subtracts one level of damage per turn (unsoaked damage is still aggravated; see Fire Effects, p. 256 of *Dark Ages: Vampire*). The cantrip lasts for one scene, and protects clothes and worn items. The cantrip can also be cast on another individual, but the base difficulty is 8.

- **Lightning-Strike**: This cantrip is useful for stunning an opponent, though it causes no direct damage. Typically, the fae raises her fist and drops it quickly in the desired direction of the strike. When successful, it summons a bolt of lightning, which temporarily stuns the target and knocks him off his feet. The player rolls Day + Stamina (difficulty is the target's Willpower). If successful, the opponent is stunned, prone and incapable of any action for one full turn.

Unleashing: *Success*: The lightning-strike is accompanied by tiny licks of flame that threaten to ignite the target's clothing if he moves from the prone position. *Botch*: The lightning strikes the fae rather than the target, singeing her hair and clothes and inflicting damage as described on p. 138.

- **Plunder**: This cantrip is similar to Seek Treasure, except that the range of the magic is much wider. Plunder helps a fae locate gold in the area of a large keep, a field or within a small forest. The player rolls Day + Perception, and with one success can find an amount of gold at least as large as an apple.

- **Pronouncement**: More potent than Decree, this cantrip causes a target to follow much more complex and risky commands, though the victim still won't knowingly inflict injury on himself. Examples include telling a target to "Steal a horse from Sir Jon's stable and bring it to Dead Man's Brook at sunrise," or "When young Lady Mariona goes on her morning walk, bring her to the apple orchard and leave her there." To activate the effect, a player rolls the character's Day + Manipulation (difficulty is the target's

Willpower). Only one success is needed, and commands are effective for up to one week.

- **Summer's Glamour**: This cantrip allows the fae to cast an illusion on himself to appear human. The difficulty is 6 if the fae chooses to appear with his own features mostly intact (i.e. same height and weight, eye and hair color, and skin tone). The difficulty is increased by +1 for each major change the fae wishes to incorporate into the cantrip. For example, if a black-haired fae wishes to appear as a golden-tressed human, the difficulty is 7. The roll is Day + Wits, with a base difficulty of 6 plus any alterations the faerie wishes to make (final discretion is of course left to the Storyteller). In any case, the magic remains for one hour per success. To witnesses, the change usually begins at the head and works its way downward in a moment.

Unleashing: *Success*: The fae glows with a bright yellow-white light, causing anyone in the area to look away momentarily. *Botch*: Instead of appearing human, the character changes herself into an animal or plant appropriate to her Court's favored Dominion (as the Mantle cantrip). This transformation remains for three hours, at which point the character can change back.

- **Veritable**: This cantrip does not simply detect truth; it forces a target to answer a single question with complete honesty. The target may not *know* the truth, but he will speak what he does sincerely believe when answering the caster. The player rolls Manipulation + Day, (difficulty is the target's Willpower) and only one success is required for the target to blab away.

- **Wall of Fire**: This cantrip causes a wall of fire four feet wide and six feet tall to appear directly in front of the caster. No one can step through without suffering aggravated damage equivalent to the caster's rank in Day (the victim can soak this aggravated damage, if she is normally capable of doing so). The roll is Day + Strength, and the wall lasts for one turn per success.

- **Will of Fire**: When a fae proficient in Day wants to stoke the flame of his resolve, he calls on this cantrip. Success allows the player to reduce the difficulty of all Willpower rolls by -2 for one scene. The fae can cast this on herself or on another person. The necessary roll is Day + Stamina.

Unleashing: *Success*: The fae's eyes and head glow with a fiery halo. Anything touching this halo feels a painful heat, though the character suffers no adverse effects. *Botch*: A loud crack of thunder stuns the fae. She loses 2 Willpower points as her resolve scatters.

Level-Three Cantrips

• **Brotherly Bond:** This cantrip allows a selfless fae to loan a temporary dot in an Attribute or Ability to someone of his choosing, whether fae or human. The roll is Day + Charisma (difficulty 7), and the effects last for one scene. The fae generally touches or embraces the beneficiary as the cantrip is cast, and the character loses whatever traits she loans for the duration of the cantrip.

• **Dominion Writ:** The character writes or carves a spell onto a parchment or into a hard surface (wood, stone, marble, etc.). The cantrip can then be used later, without taking the time to weave the spell then and there. The player spends 1 Weaving point and rolls Day + Crafts (difficulty 7). If successful, she has prepared the surface or paper properly. She then makes the appropriate roll for the cantrip she wishes to write down. The cantrip need not be a Day spell, but if it is not, the difficulty increases by +1. The spell must be used before the next midday, although the fae need not remain in the same place as the spell the entire time. That is, the fae could cast Dominion Writ on her own front door at sunset, and then leave. The spell would remain intact until high noon the next day, and the fae could return to activate it at any time. If the spell isn't activated before noon, it simply dissipates, the writing vanishing from the page or surface.

• **Healing Heat:** Although the gift of healing belongs to the Dominion of Dawn, Day can burn poison from a target's system with this cantrip. The target's body is wracked with pain as the magic burns the offending substance from him. This cantrip works on any poison, from arsenic to alcohol, and completely cancels its effects (restoring any health levels lost from the effects of the poison only). Afterwards, the target suffers wound penalties equal to the number of health levels healed for a number of hours equal to (5 - Stamina) from the discomfort caused by the cantrip. The player rolls Day + Stamina, and three successes are needed.

Unleashing: *Success:* The fire burns the target's clothes away (but does not affect metal), leaving the target naked, but also burns away any minor scars or blemishes on his body. *Botch:* The magic burns not poison, but poisonous thought. The target is incapable of raising a hand in violence, even in self-defense, for three days.

• **Hearts Afire:** Fae leaders often use this cantrip to rally their flagging troops. The leader draws attention to herself (through a speech, brandishing arms or standard, or sounding a war horn); the player rolls Day + Charisma. For each success, one member of the caster's troop can add one die to any attack roll (such

as Dexterity + Melee) for that particular turn. While the effects are short-lived, sometimes a few particularly successful blows can ultimately turn the tide of battle.

• **Law of the Land:** The Summer Court fae take their oaths and laws very seriously. Within a Summerkin's holdings (or any other fae who knows this cantrip), it is wise to respect those laws. The player rolls Day + Law. Anyone who breaks a law against the local fae ruler or violates an oath to another fae (provided that the lawbreaker knows about the law or oath — ignorance is, in this case, an excuse) loses a point of Willpower. The cantrip affects a one-mile-radius per success, and lasts for one week per casting.

• **True Ardor:** Whether for good or ill, this potent cantrip causes one person to fall in love with another person of the caster's choice (including the caster). Some fae use this magic because they genuinely crave the target's affections; others cast it as a form of vengeance. Regardless, the player rolls Day + Charisma (difficulty is the target's Willpower, +1 if the lover-to-be is not in sight). Three successes are needed for the victim(s) to fall haplessly, foolishly in love. The fae need but whisper his intent and the names to invoke the magic (in a pinch, nicknames or descriptions will do).

Unleashing: *Success:* Gentle, soothing light or a harsh sunbeam (depending on the fae's motives) streaks from the fae's eyes or hand, striking the intended target and the love-to-be. *Botch:* The target suffers a burning sensation behind his eyes and on his hands whenever he looks at the intended target, incurring a health level of lethal damage each turn unless he looks away. This effect is permanent.

• **Verdict:** By using this cantrip, a caster can make a target perform one direct command, even against her will. Likewise, she will follow the command despite its danger to herself, as long as the command doesn't involve directly committing suicide (marching into battle under the fae's banner, however, is perfectly legal). The time limit on the command is determined by successes rolled as shown on the table below. To use this cantrip, the player rolls Day + Manipulation (difficulty is the target's Willpower). If successful, the target feels the power of the Verdict clamp down around her, before settling in her mind and chest with a feeling of the inevitable. Fae who know the Day or Night Dominions may absorb the magic of this cantrip (see p. 130).

Successes	Duration
1 success	One week

- 2 successes One season
 3 successes A year and a day
 4+ successes The indefinite future

Level-Four Cantrips

- **Flame of the Muse:** Perilous is the beauty of fae lords to mortal eyes; it can wound the heart surely as steel. By using this cantrip, a fae may fan the flames of inspiration in a mortal's soul, using up all his creativity in one stroke. Some mortals bargain with the Fair Folk in a gamble for artistic immortality; some fae do not give mortals an option. The player rolls Day + Appearance. Each success adds a die to the target's pool for creating a work inspired by the fae — depending on the situation, this could be anything from a sculpture to a skald's epic to a fine sword. The target must possess some skill in said art or craft, and will hasten to begin work on the new project, to the exclusion of all else. Once the work is completed or performed, the subject loses the creative spark forever; he knows the learned technical aspects of his art but no longer possesses the drive or inspiration to start anything new. In fact, he will likely be melancholy the rest of his days. Woe to an *artless* victim of this cantrip (possessing no artistic skill to express his passion), for with no creative outlet the fire consumes utterly; if they don't kill themselves, such wretches often end their days drunk and muttering of the vision of beauty that burns their hearts still.

- **Last Stand:** Troops commanded by fae proficient in the Day Dominion are dangerous for a number of reasons, not the least of which is this cantrip. The character actually prevents his troops from feeling pain or fatigue; however, casting this cantrip is an admission that the only victory possible is a symbolic one, for it usually kills the troops affected. The player rolls Day + Stamina. For each success, the character may affect one warrior (or a troop of 10 in mass combat, at Storyteller's discretion). Affected warriors do not suffer wound penalties, do not run in fear or break ranks and receive two extra dice to all damage rolls; these benefits last until the battle ends. When this happens, however, the troops suffer lethal damage equal to the fae's Weaving score (or Mists, if the fae Unleashed this effect). No soak is possible.

- **Pure Form:** The fae can reveal the true glory of the Mists to onlookers; but woe to those who see it, for it usually spells their dooms. The character glows with the light of the sun, moves with the grace of the winds and fights with the tenacity of a forest fire. The player rolls Day + Charisma. The player gains a number of dots equal to his character's Mists score to divide up among Strength, Dexterity, Stamina and Wits. Ap-

pearance is automatically increased by 3 dots. The character remains in this idealized form for one turn per success.

- **Oathbreaker's Prison:** Fae in general hold oaths as sacred, but Summer fae are particularly harsh on oathbreakers. This cantrip only works on a target, human or fae, who has violated a Gold, Stone or Iron Oath. The player rolls Day + Strength (difficulty is the oathbreaker's Willpower). The oathbreaker is sealed in an amber-like prison, forever alive but unable to so much as blink. A determined person could theoretically chip the prisoner out, but the Summer-kin have a habit of burying those sealed with this cantrip deep in the earth.

- **Sun's Crown:** This magic is perhaps partially responsible for fae legends of great warriors rallying even downtrodden troops from defeat to victory. When cast, the cantrip makes a leader's words and presence inhumanly grand and majestic. The result is that all fighters owing allegiance to her receive a powerful boost of energy and renewal. To invoke the magic, a player rolls Day + Charisma (difficulty 7). Up to two dozen loyal warriors within line of sight of their leader immediately gain an extra die to all Dexterity-based rolls for the scene, including Melee, Dodge and Brawl rolls, as well as one temporary Willpower point. Finally, the warriors gain one automatic success on any rolls involving morale.

Unleashing: *Success:* Any troops augmented by the fae's magic bleed golden sunlight, and their voices are ringing and clear above the din of battle. *Botch:* The troops fall to their knees, screaming in pain, helpless to defend themselves. Their screams echo in the ears of the fae, deafening her for a week.

Level-Five Cantrips

- **Face of the Sun:** The fae can seemingly bring the sun to rest upon the earth. By giving a great shout, he envelopes an object (a ship, keep or even a mountaintop) in a glow equal in brilliance to the sun (with all the properties of sunlight). This blinding sphere of skyfire is hot enough to melt metal on contact; all within the sphere are warm but can see out without so much as squinting — though should they try to cross the boundary they will surely vaporize. To invoke the powerful magic, the caster stands beside (or upon) the object. The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Day + Charisma (difficulty 7); the resultant "sun" can have a radius of 10 feet per success. Curiously, the sun doesn't burn the ground or the base of the central object. The effect lasts for a scene.

Unleashing Day

When a fae successfully Unleashes the Day Dominion, a light suffuses the features of the caster; her hair crackles and stands on end, and her skin glitters and glows like gold. The whole effect is that the fae embodies the best features of the Dominion of Day: faith, fidelity and light. Observers may find it hard to tear their eyes away because the fae's presence is quite awe-inspiring. Depending on the level of the Unleashing, some of these effects may appear in other fae in the caster's immediate vicinity. While this appearance doesn't affect any dice rolls or scores, the Storyteller should note that the fae looks quite impressive and give descriptions accordingly.

The downside is when Unleashing goes awry (the Unleashing dice successes exceed the players' Day + Mists successes). In this case, the fae's skin becomes hot to the touch, as if he were suffering from a high fever. His eyes burn — not with faith and light, but with an angry heat and flame. He seems to seethe with anger (whether he actually is angry or not), and others may well recoil from him in fear. Tendrils of smoke waft from his ears and nose, and the scent surrounding him is akin to brimstone and sulfur. All in all, he's quite unpleasant company until the effects fade away, usually by the next midday.

Should a botch occur during Unleashing, a number of unpleasant things might happen, at the Storyteller's discretion; the higher the level of the Dominion used, the more horrific the effect. These events are *meant* to be near catastrophic, so players should understand the consequences of messing up. The Storyteller should tailor the effects of the botch to the original intent of the caster. The results detailed here are scaled according to the level of Day Unleashed, and are meant to serve as examples only.

Botches: Dominion of Day

Level One: Caster and those nearby suffer bashing damage equal to rating in Day + Mists as a concussive blast of heat rushes from the caster's hands. If the caster is standing next to combustibles such as hay or straw, they catch fire. For days afterward, the caster alone is haunted by the crackle of flames and the smell of burning flesh.

Level Two: Caster and those nearby suffer lethal damage equal to rating in Day + Mists as flames erupt all about the fae. Anything inflammable in a 10-foot radius ignites. For the next day, the caster and those close at hand at the time of the Unleashing share an unshakable faith in each other and supreme confi-

dence in their own plans and abilities — even if rational folk see their actions as folly.

Level Three: Caster and any bystanders suffer aggravated damage equal to rating in Day + Mists as fire shoots in several directions from where the caster stands. Those who know what to look for swear they see tiny beings of fire leaping around in the flames. This kind of botch harms everything within 100 feet, and this magical flame is difficult to quench. Cloth, books and fodder burn quickest. For the next few days, the caster feels uncomfortably warm, even if she lies freezing to death in the snow.

Level Four: The entire area, up to the size of a village, is covered in flames. The fae caster and other people in the vicinity, up to a 1,000-foot radius, suffer aggravated damage equal to the caster's rating in Day + Mists. Needless to say, a blazing inferno follows. The caster, should he survive, carries hand-shaped scars on his limbs from fire elementals who play tug-of-war with him.

Level Five: Botching an Unleashing at this level is most probably fatal for the caster and anyone unlucky enough to be within a half-mile of him. Everyone within that radius suffers aggravated damage equal to the caster's Day + Mists; most everything combustible in that area is engulfed in a cyclonic firestorm that sucks incinerated material high into the sky. Those within the caster's immediate reach (roughly a five-foot radius) suffer an additional number of aggravated damage dice equal to the caster's Willpower. Surviving companions may see the caster being carried up the whirling chimney of flame by cackling fire-beings, never to be seen again. Hopefully, this kind of cataclysm only happens once or so in a lifetime....

Dominion of Night

"Walter, I can't go much further!"

After hours of evading their erstwhile captors, both of the harried young changelings were nearly spent. A few clever cantrips near dusk gave them a lead; but now they were lost in the darkness, as hounds bayed in the distance. Henry cursed as he stepped in water halfway up his calf. They had hoped the bog was far behind, but evidently the pair had meandered since nightfall. The moon peered down from the gathering clouds, illuminating the series of ponds and hummocks that stretched before them. The barking grew louder.

"This is no good," Walter moaned as he sank to his knees. "We'll never cross this."

"You may not have to." The voice was like the gurgle of a drowning man, and the figure that rose from the

nearest pool was just the sort of thing mothers threatened naughty young children with. Glassy eyes regarded them, unblinking; and stringy hair covered its body like water weeds. When it spoke, its oversized mouth showed jagged rows of teeth. "I can take you where they will not follow, and bring you back at dawn. If you wish."

Though he was filled with revulsion at the creature's appearance, Walter knew they had no hope of seeing the dawn otherwise. "Why would you help us... fair... lady?" He barely choked out the words, but he knew courtesy could save their lives.

"I know who follows you, young ones. Perhaps your deliverance pricks the Summer Court, and that is always to be desired." The creature moved closer to the edge of the pool. "As to what you can offer me in return... we can discuss it once you are safe." The hounds were closer now, their bays frenzied as the quarry's trail grew hotter. "Or send me away and face your end as you like."

Henry said nothing, for he was close to panic. Walter considered, then nodded. "Very well, we accept y—"

Two overlong arms shot out and clasped them in an iron-strong grip, crushing the startled changelings to the creature's cold, slimy breast. Walter heard his friend's muffled scream as he himself was nearly overcome by the stench of rotting vegetation and dead fish. The water beast sank into the swamp, still holding its two charges.

The pool stilled. The baying ceased abruptly.

The Dominion of Night focuses on the aspects of darkness and cold. Associated most closely with the Winter Court, practitioners of this Dominion deal with nightmares and despair; and their offensive capabilities are among the strongest fae magic. Fae using Night can create respect born of fear in their allies, and sheer terror in their enemies. They can command the element of water, and often favor magic that involves the freezing power of ice. This Dominion also allows practitioners to cloak themselves in shadows and even assume the shapes of animals that love the dark, such as owls, moles and cats.

Unlike the Dominions of Day and Dusk respectively, Night cannot command or read minds. Fae skilled in the Night Dominion, however, can block the effects of mental commands or mind reading, almost as if they were placing a wall of darkness around someone's consciousness. Night can't heal wounds or poison, either; but some fae know cantrips of this Dominion which can freeze blood to stave off death at least temporarily.

Favored Court: Winter

Night's Influences

The following section provides players and Storytellers with some general ideas about the breadth of

powers available as a character's prowess in the Night Dominion increases.

Night, Level One

Generally speaking, level-one cantrips in Night have brief effects, such as granting the power to see in the dark. The affected party is usually the caster or only one other person. These cantrips allow the user to partially shield a single mind, have minor control over the element of water, or invoke fear or surprise in an opponent. Another useful ability is causing bashing damage to an opponent with a slight touch. Fae can also use level-one Night cantrips to shield themselves behind coverings of ice, or to create small areas of silence and darkness. Use of this Dominion can also "blight" a garden-size section of crops. In other words, these cantrips have a number of minor uses, and fae often use these powers to either keep things secret or find information others don't want anyone to know.

Night, Level Two

While level-one cantrips only affect the caster or one other target, certain level-two cantrips permit the caster and up to two others to be affected at the same time. One of the most important abilities of this level is causing lethal damage to an enemy target, usually through cold, ice or internal bruising. This level also permits a fae to cast a glamour about himself to appear as a shadow, almost invisible, and also to turn himself into any nocturnal animal (though the ability to do this to others is yet beyond his grasp). Other notable cantrips at this level can cause night terrors, summon a small pack of baying hounds and freeze an opponent in her tracks.

Night, Level Three

One of the most useful characteristics of level-three cantrips is the opportunity to affect one's oathcircle, or any group of about a half-dozen people. Users of the Night Dominion can cause all sound to evaporate from an area, or inflict aggravated damage through the use of cold, either with a weapon or within a short range. Likewise, they can shield their comrades' minds from coercion, blight an entire crop or emit a piercing shriek that causes others to tremble in terror. The fae can also use her ability to transform shapes on others, turning an enemy into a cat or worse. Moreover, the fae's powers cover a wider area, such as a small room.

Night, Level Four

Level-four cantrips are able to affect a large group, such as a pack of marauders, and cause them

to become blind or deaf. The fae can also summon a large pack of angry dogs that nip and harry his enemies. Level four in Night also allows for the Saining of other fae into the Winter Court. Using the Dominion of Night to inflict aggravated damage on a group of foes is well within the fae's grasp at this level, as is shielding even 20 comrades from harm or an enemy's mental onslaught.

Night, Level Five

The forces of Night are already terrifying to many, but the fae with command of the Dominion at this level causes havoc on an epic scale. Earning the wrath of a fae with mastery over Night can lead to nightmares so intense the victim is incapable of the most basic functions of life. The powers of the Dominion are nearly limitless in their area of effect and scope at this level.

Cantrips

The cantrips listed here are available to all fae with skill in the Night Dominion. Note that level-one and -two cantrips are most numerous; beginning characters use these more than higher-level cantrips.

Level-One Cantrips

- **Black and Blue:** With this simple but effective cantrip, a fae can cause ugly bruises to appear on an opponent's flesh with a mere touch. The player rolls Night + Brawl. For each success, the victim suffers one level of bashing damage; a normal soak attempt is allowed. Even if no damage occurs, the victim still has black and blue marks on his arms for a few hours.

- **Blight Garden:** This cantrip allows a fae to destroy a small garden plot, such as the size of a personal herb garden, or roughly a 10-by-10-foot plot of land. Only one success is needed for a sudden freeze to completely destroy someone's horticultural masterpiece or life-saving plants. The player rolls Night + Wits.

Unleashing: *Success:* Anything made of plant material on the character's person withers slightly (though not enough to impede functionality), and her entire body is covered in a thin frost. *Botch:* Anything made of plant matter on the character's person freeze solid and cracks, shattering if too much force is placed on it.

- **Embrace the Night's Chill:** This cantrip bestows immunity to the cold. It differs from Day's Cow the Bitter Wind in that the Day cantrip wards the fae with inner heat, while the Night cantrip simply makes the fae indifferent. The roll is Night

+ Stamina (difficulty 6 if the air is still and freezing up to 2 higher or lower depending on temperature and wind). One success keeps hypothermia at bay with basic clothes, while three successes or more allows the caster to caper around naked with no ill effects. The cantrip lasts for one scene, and can be cast upon one other being. The caster's body temperature drops, reaching near freezing (or ambient temperature if higher than freezing) — which is quite disconcerting for anyone who touches her.

- **Gloom:** The Dominion of Night, logically, has powers over darkness. Using this cantrip, a fae can create a small area of darkness, useful for hiding himself or conveniently obscuring a deep hole in the ground. The area covered is about the size of a horse-drawn cart, roughly five feet on each side. The player rolls Night + Wits; only one success is needed to create the darkness. The effect lasts for one scene.

Unleashing: *Success:* A hush falls over the surrounding area. Animals fall quiet and breezes still. This lasts for three turns. *Botch:* A small patch of the gloom covers the character's face, rendering her blind for three turns.

- **Hush:** A fae can use this cantrip to silence one individual; the effect is that the target's tongue and vocal cords become temporarily paralyzed. The player rolls Night + Manipulation. For each success, the target will remain silent and unable to speak for one hour. This cantrip can also work on animals, to keep them from barking or making noise.

- **Mindveil:** The Dominion of Night doesn't allow mind reading or control, but its users can shield their thoughts from others' prying magic. To use this cantrip, the player rolls Night + Wits, during his character's action; as with Dodge, the player can decide to make a Willpower roll to "switch gears" in the midst of combat to use Mindveil as opposed to his original intended action (see **Dark Ages: Vampire**, p. 241). Each success with this cantrip takes one success away from the attacker's dice pool. Those who try to listen in on the fae's thoughts hear only the roar of surf.

- **Night Sounds:** The fae can make the sounds of night more prominent to an individual. The creak of a stair, the moan of the wind, the yowl of a cat — the sounds which wake the sleeper, set the guilty to pacing and make the watchman's heart race. Note that Night Sounds makes remaining undetected more difficult for the fae unless she then uses the cantrip Still of the Night upon herself. The target must be within hailing distance; the roll is Night + Survival, and one success is needed to raise the target's Perception by one for a

scene. Despite the title, this cantrip does function during daylight hours.

Unleashing: *Success:* Shadows lengthen and the temperature drops slightly within 10 feet of the target. *Botch:* The character cannot hear speech for the remainder of the night, only the night sounds she sought to enhance.

• **Owl Eyes:** A simple but useful bit of magic, this cantrip allows the caster to see in the dark as if it were normal daylight. The player rolls Night + Perception. The effects last for one scene; and during this time, the caster's eyes glow pale silver.

• **Paranoia:** In unity is strength, but distrust and dissention shatter unity. Under the influence of this cantrip, a person hears subtle slights in casual conversation, sees superiors favor peers and rivals, and imagines pity or disdain in the eyes of those he holds dear. Some wither inside, others respond in kind — and a few will plan preemptive action, sowing the seeds of betrayal. The effect lasts for one day per success on a Night + Subterfuge (difficulty is the target's Willpower).

• **Still of the Night:** Even if sentries cannot see, they can still hear. That's why this cantrip allows the fae to move in utter silence over nearly any surface. Shoes don't squeak, leaves don't crunch — but a bottle knocked over still shatters. The fae wills himself to silence, and sometimes traces a symbol on the soles of his feet; the roll is Night + Wits. Only one success is needed for the scene, but if the caster deliberately makes noise (speaks above a whisper or attacks someone without succeeding at a normal Stealth roll), the effect dissipates and must be recast. The cantrip may be cast on another.

Unleashing: *Success:* Tiny, black, imp-like sprites composed of shadow and chill wind, follow the character, hushing the sounds he makes. *Botch:* The sprites appear, but shriek in glee and alarm, alerting anyone within earshot to the character's presence.

• **Veil of Tears:** This cantrip is useful for blocking an opponent's sight long enough to get away. A torrent of tears momentarily makes the target rub her eyes and look away.

The character acts before the target on the following turn, no matter what their comparative initiatives. The player rolls Night + Strength, and one success is needed.

• **Weariness:**

Duller in mind and body, a bone-tired foe is apt to make mistakes.

Using this cantrip causes weariness to sap the strength of the target; the feeling may creep into his body or wash over it in a wave. However it strikes, snap decisions may go awry, details are missed, and feet shuffle where once they marched. The player rolls Night + Manipulation (difficulty 3 + the target's Stamina). If successful, all of the victim's rolls are made at a +1 difficulty for the rest of the scene. If the fae gains five successes or more, the victim's Willpower rating is temporarily reduced by -1 — dulled wits make for malleable minds.

Level-Two Cantrips

• **Blight Field:**

This cantrip is identical to Blight Garden

except it affects a much larger area, approximately 400



square feet. The sudden freeze blackens the plants in the area of effect. The player rolls Night + Wits, and only one success is needed for the base effect. Each additional success *doubles* the area of effect, so this cantrip can be truly devastating.

- **Clouded Vision:** When cast on a target, this cantrip causes a dark frost to fall across her eyes, rendering her almost blind. She has a splitting headache, and the difficulties for all rolls that require Dexterity or visual acuity (Perception) rise by +2. The magic lasts for a full scene, though it only affects one target at this level. The player rolls Night + Wits, and only one success is needed.

- **Unleashing:** *Success:* Rain clouds form over the character's head, and rainwater drips from her fingertips. No thunder sounds; the rain is the cold, dreary stuff of winter. *Botch:* Water flows from the character's eyes, mouth and nose. She does not drown, but cannot do anything except expel the water. This lasts for one full scene.

- **Dreamtongue:** This cantrip allows the caster to speak to someone in dreams. The caster can't control the dream, nor can he in any way directly influence the actions of the target, but he can leave messages and vague impressions, which the target may or may not choose to heed. The player rolls Night + Manipulation (difficulty is the target's Willpower). To successfully use this cantrip, the caster must be holding something that belongs to the target, such as a strand of hair, piece of clothing or other personal item.

- **Ice Armor:** When cast, a glowing nimbus of ice crystals surrounds the caster, crystals which bite into anything that touches the fae (inflicting two dice of lethal damage per turn of contact). In addition, the ice deflects the worst of the impact of any blow; the player rolls Night + Stamina, and every success adds a die to any soak rolls, including those versus aggravated damage (even if the fae cannot ordinarily soak aggravated damage). The armor lasts for one scene.

- **Lesser Hounds of Hell:** This cantrip is more bark than bite, but the Lesser Hounds of Hell will surely scare a foe out of her wits. A small pack of night-black hounds, such as foxhounds or wolfhounds, appear to menace the fae's adversary. They can bark and yowl with great ferocity, though they won't actually bite or attack. This cantrip is generally intended to frighten, not hurt, though anyone not heeding the warning may suffer the wrath of the caster. The player rolls Night + Intimidation. For each success, two fierce hounds appear and harry the caster's foe for one scene.

- **Unleashing:** *Success:* The caster's eyes become yellow and wolf-like, and his teeth elongate into

sharp, feral canines. His skin darkens in color and his voice takes on a distinctly canine growl. *Botch:* Until the next full moon, dogs and wolves of all kinds attack the caster on sight. His eyes take on a sheep-like cast and his bearing is weak and timid (+3 difficulty penalty on all Intimidation attempts).

- **Night Terror:** When cast successfully, this cantrip causes a target to suffer one full night of the most terrible dreams imaginable. Worse, she can't wake herself from these nightmares, but must wait until the sun rises before they go away. The dreams leave her shaken even in the morning light; the day following her restless night, she suffers a +2 difficulty on all Dexterity and Wits rolls. To cast the cantrip, the fae whispers his curse after dark, but before the target is fully asleep; the player rolls Night + Manipulation (difficulty is the target's Willpower). One success is needed.

- **Unleashing:** *Success:* The room in which the target sleeps grows cold and odd sounds surround her bed. They do not wake her (but might awaken others nearby). Animals in the house grow skittish and paw at the doors. *Botch:* The fae does not sleep for two weeks, but instead sees his dreams as waking hallucinations. They are physically harmless, but can of course serve to distract and confuse him.

- **Nightshade:** Like Gloom, this cantrip provides a user with powers over darkness itself. With this cantrip, a fae can create darkness in an area approximately the size of a large feast hall, around 400 square feet in any regular or irregular shape. All those within the area of darkness are effectively blinded. To cast the cantrip, the player rolls Night + Wits. The effects last for one scene.

- **Rain-Strike:** This cantrip temporarily disables an opponent, though it causes no direct damage. When successful, it summons a blast of icy rain, causing her to shiver and have difficulty standing, much less fighting. The player rolls Night + Stamina (difficulty is the target's Willpower). The target loses three dice from all pools due to cold and pain for one turn per success.

- **Salmon's Breath:** This cantrip allows a user to breathe water as if it were the purest air. To invoke the cantrip, a player rolls Night + Stamina. Only one success is needed, and the effects last for one scene. During this time, small gill slits appear on the neck and throat of the caster.

- **Scare:** This cantrip puts terror into the heart of a target. The player rolls Night + Intimidation (difficulty is the target's Willpower). Each success means that the target spends one turn in defensive action

only. The target may dodge, parry or run, but he cannot attack.

- **Stillness:** With this cantrip the fae freezes her opponent in place with her stare, for one turn per success, effective immediately. The player rolls Night + Intimidation (difficulty is the target's Willpower). The victim need not be looking at the fae for this to work.

- **Winter's Glamour:** This cantrip allows the fae to cast an illusion on himself to appear as an inky, black shadow. The difficulty is 6 if the fae uses the ambient lighting to his advantage (i.e., in a room lit by candles as opposed to broad daylight). The Storyteller should raise the difficulty as appropriate depending on the brightness of the surroundings. The roll is Night + Wits. Anyone looking for the character must counter his successes with a resisted Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8). The effects last for one hour per success.

Unleashing: *Success:* The character leaves behind footprints of frost; these fade seconds after the character passes by and sometimes point in the wrong direction. *Botch:* Shadows flee in terror from the character. Even in the darkest night, he is clearly visible. This lasts for three nights.

Level-Three Cantrips

- **Blight Acres:** As with Blight Garden, this cantrip destroys growing things by covering them in a deadly frost. Blight Acres is much, much worse, as it ruins *all* of a specific type of crop chosen by the caster. For example, if a feudal lord has 10 acres of rye and 10 acres of wheat, and a fae successfully casts this cantrip choosing to obliterate the wheat, it's gone. (A modern acre is 43,560 square feet; in medieval fields, an acre is a plot of land roughly 660 feet long by 66 feet wide; it is the amount of land an ox can plow in a day. The 660-foot length is also called a "furrow-long" or a "furlong.") The rye is unharmed for the moment; but unless the lord appeases the fae, it may not be there the next morning. The player rolls Night + Wits (difficulty 7), and one success is required to blight a single crop in one acre. The effect doubles with each additional success, meaning that two successes wipes out a sole crop in two acres, four acres are gone with three successes, eight with four successes, and so on.

- **Freeze Death:** The Dominion of Night has no power to truly heal, but it can stop someone from dying. This cantrip "freezes" the body in whatever state it's in, but allows for full functionality. Bleeding stops, poison and disease halt in their tracks and the subject feels no pain or discomfort whatsoever from her infirmities (and therefore is not subject to wound

penalties). The wounds do not heal, however, so a subject brought to Mauled by a sword wound and then graced with this cantrip still has a gaping wound in her chest — it simply doesn't bleed or cause her any pain. The player rolls Night + Stamina. The effects last for one night per success.

Unleashing: *Success:* The subject does not breathe, hunger or thirst, nor does her heart beat, during the cantrip's effects. Her eyes become entirely white, and her skin takes on a sickening pallor. *Botch:* The fae's skin cracks, his fingernails turning to ice and his blood seeping out like frigid water. He suffers damage as described on p. 146, and his touch covers objects in a thin sheet of ice.

- **Midnight's Domain:** Winter fae are territorial; they long ago discovered that in their own domains they were the masters not only of servants and sprites but of reality itself. This cantrip allows a fae to rewrite the laws of gravity, motion and temperature as she sees fit, but only within a structure or holding that belongs to her. She can walk on walls, sleep on the ceiling or drop the temperature below the freezing point with but a thought. The player must roll Night + Wits for every alteration of reality the fae wishes to make, but each alteration can thereafter be sustained as long as the fae wishes.

- **Shriek:** Any fae using this cantrip emits a scream that not only inspires fear, but also causes considerable damage to a target's ears. The magic affects up to three targets within earshot, at the caster's discretion. Others can hear the screams, and often consider them a portent of doom, but they won't suffer any damage. The player rolls Night + Stamina. For each success, the designated targets suffer one level of lethal damage, which can be soaked normally. If the target fails to soak all of the damage, however, he is deafened for the remainder of the scene.

- **Silent Brethren:** This cantrip is similar to Hush, but affects multiple targets. The player rolls Night + Manipulation (difficulty 7). The caster can affect one target for each success. The duration of the silence is one hour per success, divided among the targets.

Unleashing: *Success:* All affected by the cantrip find their mouths covered in ice; targets are unable to so much as open their mouths while the cantrip is in effect. *Botch:* No matter what surface the fae walks upon, her footprints sound like a frozen lake cracking under weight, and she leaves tiny fissures in wood and stone.

• **True Apathy:** A bit capricious and cruel, this potent cantrip causes a target to fall completely out of love with someone of the caster's choosing. Fae often use this magic to get rid of a pesky mortal lover, or to quench the effects of True Ardor. The cantrip doesn't cause the target to consider his former lover to be a dire enemy, but rather causes him to be cool towards the former beloved. The player rolls Night + Charisma (difficulty is the target's Willpower). A total of three successes is needed for the victim to fall completely out of love.

• **Winter's Shadows:** This magic is similar to the cantrip Nightshade, except that it creates a large area of darkness, up to the size of a small keep, an irregularly shaped, open area around 2,000 square feet. Everyone within the area is blinded. The player rolls Night + Wits.

Level-Four Cantrips

• **Blindness:** This is a harsh cantrip most fae reserve for their enemies, or others who genuinely rouse their anger. The player rolls Night + Wits (difficulty 7). If successful, a single target becomes permanently and almost incurably blind. The only way this curse can be reversed is with magical healing, such as that of the Dawn Dominion or another supernatural source.

• **Haunting Curse:** The faerie curses a target to linger, unseen and unheard by all except the fae, in one area. The character must point at the target and curse her to solitude and ignominy, blanketing her with a permanent shroud of Night. The player rolls Night + Charisma (difficulty 7); the target may oppose this roll with a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). If the fae wins, the target may not move further than 20 feet from her current location, and cannot be seen, heard or felt by mortals. Supernatural beings can detect the hapless shade with augmented perceptions (including the Auspex Discipline) or with Kenning. Freeing the victim, however, requires Dominion magic of at least level four to counteract the cantrip. The cantrip's effects last for one year per net success on the resisted cantrip roll.

Unleashing: Success: The area in which the target lingers remains cold, even in the warmest summer, and always seems dark and foreboding. Sometimes the victim's footprints are visible, especially in snow. **Botch:** The character who performed the Unleashing becomes trapped as described above, but successful Kenning only detects a powerful magical presence in the area. This lasts for one year, after which the character is free.

• **Greater Hounds of Hell:** This cantrip works like the level-two cantrip Lesser Hounds of Hell, except that the greater hounds aren't just for show. They bark, howl and — if directed by the caster — fiercely attack an enemy. Each dog's base attack pool is six dice, and it inflicts five dice of lethal damage with a successful attack (for variations on dogs, see p. 311 of **Dark Ages: Vampire**). To summon the hounds and have them obey, the player rolls Night + Animal Ken (difficulty 6). For each success, two bloodthirsty hounds appear to do the caster's bidding for one scene.

• **Grotesque:** Many fae are hideous, or at least strange, to human eyes, but the masters of the Dominion of Night know how to sculpt flesh into nightmarish grotesquerie. The player rolls Night + Manipulation. For each success, the character may temporarily assume a Lesser Feature, or use two successes to add a Greater Feature. These Features remain for one scene, unless the character wishes to terminate the effects early. Features added by this cantrip do not count against the character when determining if he gains Echoes from being seen.

• **Nightmares:** This cantrip is legendary among those who know the secrets of the Night Dominion. The player rolls Night + Empathy (difficulty is the target's Willpower). Each success causes the victim to experience one night of the most intense and terrifying dreams imaginable. The target removes two dice from all dice pools on *all* rolls made the day following a night under this curse. Effects are cumulative, so that two consecutive evenings of nightmares result in the loss of four dice, and so on.

Level-Five Cantrips

• **Soul Rime:** A bitter spell to weave upon a foe, this cantrip lays the gloom of utter despair on the heart of the victim. He sees the dark side of all goodness; in the eyes of laughing children he sees their deaths, and he knows that kingdoms crumble and even his greatest efforts will come to naught. Grief redoubles on the heart, and life's roads always lead downhill into darkness. The weak of will die by their own hands, whether quickly by rope or slowly by drink. Sterner lords of men take up arms and charge recklessly into battle, hoping for a quick and honorable end. Various ways exist to enact the spell, but one of the more colorful is to take the warm heart of a beast and freeze it (through means natural or otherwise) while uttering the target's name and the cantrip's intent nine times. The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Night + Empathy (diffi-

culty is the target's Willpower). With one success the target goes about his duties as normal, but takes no more joy in life. A total of three successes likely evokes a death wish in the target, while a total of five successes brings about near-catatonia or even immediate self-destruction.

Unleashing Night

Unleashing the Dominion of Night isn't awe-inspiring; it's frankly terrifying, in the way that falling into dark, icy water is both exhilarating and often deadly. A successful Unleashing causes the caster's skin to become silvery and pale. Her eyes gloss over to become solid black. Her voice takes on a cold tone, and those within a hand's reach can palpably feel the air around her turn chill. Shadows seem to dance around her feet, and even the fae's dearest friends back away. She appears to be untouchable and daunting, commanding and inviolate, all at the same time.

Of course, losing control of the Unleashing (that is, the Unleashing dice successes exceed the player's Night + Mists successes) is much worse. Soft, mournful wails reverberate around the fae, cries of unspeakable pain and loss. A light veil of

ice crowns her head, and snowflakes whirl about her body. Those nearby might be filled with an awful sense of despair or a fear of betrayal. At the least, the gentle coolness present when an Unleashing is successful now becomes a bone-chilling freeze. These effects generally last until midnight; until then, the fae likely finds herself left quite alone.

Should a botch occur during Unleashing, dreadful things may occur. The higher the level of the Dominion used, the more terrible the effect. These events are *meant* to be absolutely horrible, so players should understand the real risks of Unleashing.

The following table contains a few suggestions to illustrate how terrible this situation can be. The Storyteller should tie the effects of the botch to the original intent of the caster.

Botches: Dominion of Night

Level One: Caster and those nearby suffer bashing damage equal to rating in Night + Mists as a concussive blast of icy cold radiates from the caster's hands.

Any free-standing water in the immediate vicinity (within five feet) freezes solid. For several hours (usually two or three junctures), the caster's eyes become unusually sensitive to light (-2 Perception in normal daylight or



bright torchlight). In addition, allies feel less at ease with and less trusting of the caster, though they are hard-pressed to give a reason.

Level Two: Caster and those nearby suffer lethal damage equal to rating in Night + Mists as a wave of bitter cold emanates from the fae. This is definitely dangerous to any innocent human bystanders. Again, water in the area freezes to ice. For a week, the caster is plagued with nightmares of shadows stealing everything he holds dear. Even during waking hours, the occasional random shadow seems to move on its own accord to menace the caster.

Level Three: Caster and any bystanders suffer lethal damage equal to rating in Night + Mists as a stinging blizzard emanates from the caster. Any fragile objects within 100 feet, such as priceless glass, freeze and break in the bitter cold that ensues. Afterwards, the caster is overcome with despair for hours. Companions present at the Unleashing will bicker with fast friends and may find reasons to betray anyone else.

Level Four: Gibbering shadow beasts will rise from every dark place to attack the caster and torment companions. The caster suffers aggravated damage equal to Night + Mists as the goblins grab and claw him with their freezing talons. All flames within 100 feet are extinguished and even ambient light dims. The temperature drops, freezing everything within that radius for a scene; all ill-prepared beings suffer from exposure (they must soak dice of lethal damage equal to the Winter-kin's rating in Night + Mists). For days afterward, the caster feels uncomfortably cold — even if he is dying of sunstroke.

Level Five: This kind of botch likely has a lasting impact on the chronicle (perhaps by killing off player or Storyteller characters). A bitter cold extends half a mile in all directions, freezing rivers solid; breaking crockery; and killing crops, animals and unlucky people. Those within 100 feet of the caster are lost in a white sphere that swallows all warmth, all light, all sound, all will. Those outside the sphere suffer dice of lethal damage equal to the caster's Night + Mists ratings due to a cold that only natural fur and enchanted garments can defend against. Within the sphere, the damage is aggravated, and survivors must make Willpower rolls (difficulty 6) to avoid acquiring derangements from the experience of total sensory deprivation. Unfortunates trapped in the void are unable to move — mostly because they can feel nothing. The sphere and cold vanish after 10 minutes, leaving ice, corpses and madness in their wake. Should the caster die in this catastrophe, her body is never found; instead the

survivors find an ice-sculpture of the fae, face frozen in horror.

Dominion of Dawn

Mary knew she wasn't supposed to cross the wall in broad daylight, never mind in the chill of the pre-dawn. But the faint singing which had drifted through her shuttered window the last two nights was just too beautiful to bear for a third; and now her small feet guided her through the dewy grass, past the furrowed earth and pasture, into the dark wood her nursemaid warned her never to enter. Still the song drew her on, louder now, and clear though she could not catch the words. And there in a bower she beheld a lady more beautiful than her lady mother, more beautiful even than the Holy Virgin whose name she bore. The lady's eyes were like stars, her gown spun from spider webs bathed in the sunburned clouds of dawn. The dew-chased cold that had crept into Mary's bones vanished in the warmth of the tall lady's love.

"Are... are you an angel?" Mary whispered in awe.

The vision smiled tenderly; and in a voice light as a spring shower, the lady merely answered, "You are cold, dear one. See, the sun rises. Is it not beautiful?" The child looked just as the first rays filtered through the trees to fall upon her face. The lady stroked Mary's hair gently, twining the soft golden locks around her fingers. After a moment, the Lady of the Wood spoke again, though not to the young girl by her side. "Can you feel her innocence, my friend? Does it not draw you in like the shady brook on a summer's noon?"

Another voice, like wind in the new leaves, fluttered down to Mary's ears. "Perhaps. But why her? There are others more tender, more beautiful — more to your taste."

"Ah, but her father is a human lord, one who pays no heed to the cottars who remember promises made before ever mortals laid stone upon stone in this valley. This lord has set axe to tree in my wood. And that cannot go unanswered. No," the lady said, still gazing downward as she released the slender branches of the willow sapling that now stood beside her instead of the young girl, drinking in the first rays of the sun. "I shield this one's innocence from the harm it would surely suffer from what will come."

She looked into the sun, her eyes narrowing with menace. "When I destroy her father."

Among all the Dominions, only Dawn grants the power to quickly and cleanly heal wounds, or place the injured into a healing sleep. Fae using Dawn seem to have an affinity with the passage of time itself, using their talents to peer into the future or befuddle enemies into misjudging the passing of hours and days. Dawn allows command over the element of earth and

growing things; fae using this Dominion can even increase the fertility of fields, animals and humans. Users of the Dominion can't read or control minds, but they can enchant food or drink to make the imbibers much more susceptible to the mental powers of other Dominions.

Dawn gives those who discover its secrets the ability to cast glamours about themselves which confuse the senses of an onlooker; some fae even can make themselves and others invisible with this Dominion's power. Fae can also use this Dominion to turn themselves and others into herbivorous animals, birds or plants that love the sun's first light, including rabbits, morning glories and songbirds. Still, Dawn has the power to harm, even though it's a bit more difficult than using the Dominions of Night and Day; Dawn can cause drastic climate changes, and even earthquakes. Although each Dominion is associated with a specific element, it is Dawn that has broad control over weather systems; Night, for example, can cause water to flood, but only Dawn can summon an intense storm with rain, thunder and lightning.

Favored Court: Spring

Dawn's Influences

This section gives players and Storytellers some broad ideas about the scope of powers available as command of the Dawn Dominion increases.

Dawn, Level One

One of the most valuable abilities of the Dawn Dominion is the healing of wounds, and even first-level Dawn cantrips grant this power in limited form. Other notable abilities among first-level cantrips include limited foretelling of the future, basic command over the element of earth, and the ability to discern illusions. Dawn doesn't allow casters to read or command minds, but users of this Dominion can lower inhibitions in a single target. As with other first-level cantrips, casters can use Dawn to shield themselves. They can also speak in a tongue animals understand or put someone into a deep sleep. Dawn level-one cantrips are, in short, simple but quite effective.

Dawn, Level Two

Level-two Dawn cantrips are more powerful chiefly because they allow the caster to affect more than one target simultaneously, often himself and one other, or two independent targets. Moreover, any damage inflicted can be bashing or lethal, and the fae's healing powers grow as well. The fae using certain level-two

cantrips can also change his shape into that of a plant or animal that loves the first morning light, such as a deer or a honeysuckle, though he can't change the shape of others. A caster may also use a tricky glamour that fools onlookers into believing he is standing in one spot when he is really in another. Another notable ability is that of enticing others into his presence. Generally speaking, level-two cantrips in Dawn are not dissimilar in scope to those of level one, except that the powers have a bit more potency and reach.

Dawn, Level Three

Dawn level three offers a number of forceful cantrips for the caster. She can now affect a number of people rather than just one or two individuals. The damage she inflicts in hand-to-hand combat may be aggravated, and her protection cantrips are extremely strong and cover a large area. Moreover, the fae can render herself nearly invisible to normal sight, and turn people who earn her wrath into animals ripe for a hunter's bow. The fae also commands the might of storms and has a greater understanding of the future. Dawn is somewhat weaker at inflicting damage over great distances, however, and these types of powers are rarer in this Dominion until higher levels of mastery.

Dawn, Level Four

Level-four cantrips in Dawn grant incredible powers of both healing and destruction. The storms which a fae can summon will cover a large area and create havoc on crops and herds alike. The fae can also beckon even the most unwilling victims into his presence and cause them to remain there for almost any amount of time; and the number of targets he can affect is considerable. Saining new fae into the Spring Court is another notable ability of this level of Dawn. Command over the Dominion of Dawn at this level also allows a fae to gain protection from the earth itself as well as the great trees of the forest. The caster also finds that causing harm at a distance is easier now than at previous levels of proficiency.

Dawn, Level Five

The rare and terrible fae who know level-five cantrips in Dawn are reputed to have destroyed entire countries with their command of weather and earthquakes. They also have the ability to heal the most savage and deadly wounds, as well as peer clearly into the veils of the future, even to many generations hence. Few are those who master this Dominion with such great skill.

Cantrips

The cantrips in this section are available to any fae possessing the Dawn Dominion. Cantrips at the first and second levels are the most common, as these are more readily accessible to new characters.

Level One Cantrips

- **Beast Tongue:** The fae can speak to animals, including birds and insects. The player rolls Dawn + Charisma. Only one success is needed to communicate with a specific animal. A botch indicates the animal is hostile to the caster. The animal likely responds in a way that reflects its own thinking. For example, if the fae asks a wolf if he saw a human dressed in armor pass by at dawn, the wolf might respond that yes, he saw a two-legs with a turtle shell. Players may have to spend some time interpreting what the animal actually observed.

Unleashing: *Success:* The character and the animal begin to share traits during their conversation. For instance, the fae might begin to pant like a wolf or grow fur in her ears, while the wolf's eyes turn blue and he sits up straighter, as though trying to stand. These changes last only until the conversation is over. *Botch:* The animal becomes enchanted, able to recognize fae on sight, and forever despises all of faerie-kind. If the animal escapes, it might well lead curious humans back to the fae's home.

- **Brew and Bread:** The Dominion of Dawn doesn't allow users to read or control minds, but it does let them weaken the barriers surrounding conscious thoughts. This simple cantrip, when cast upon food or drink to be imbibed, lowers a target's inhibitions once the item is consumed. The player rolls Dawn + Stamina. The food or drink then becomes "fae touched," and if eaten, reduces the imbibers' Willpower rating by -2 for the rest of the scene. This cantrip only affects the first person to consume the enchanted item. The player may also choose to spend a point of Mists when casting this cantrip; in this case, the first person who eats the food is also subject to the Bestow Kenning effect of the Mists (see p. 101).

- **Earthen Refuge:** This cantrip creates a small burrow for hiding. The player rolls Dawn + Strength. The Storyteller may choose to lower the difficulty for softer dirt such as sand, or raise it for denser material such as hard clay. The caster is normally undetectable, although someone actively searching may make a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8). Only one success is needed for the burrow to appear.

- **Faerie's Fog:** Watching sunlight through morning mist can play strange tricks on the eye. With this

cantrip, the fae confuses onlookers as to her actual location. The player rolls Dawn + Dexterity. If successful, the fae receives a -2 difficulty bonus to all Dodge and Stealth rolls for the next three turns.

Unleashing: *Success:* A soft, soothing mist rises up around the character. Her voice seems to emanate from the mist itself; her actual location within the fog remains unclear. *Botch:* Attacks seem drawn to the character, as though the mists of morning actually make her easier to hit. Subtract -1 from the difficulties of all physical attacks (not cantrips or other magic) aimed at the character for the remainder of the scene.

- **Famine to Feast:** This cantrip causes natural, unworked items to appear as something they're not. A pile of rocks or handful of berries suddenly appears to become a bountiful feast, enough to serve about a dozen people. The "food" tastes wonderful; imagine a huge spread of roasted meats, savory cheese and fresh-baked breads. The problem is that the illusion fades at dawn, and so does that comfortable full feeling in the diners' stomachs (fortunately, so do the rocks, otherwise the targets might well die from the meal). The player rolls Dawn + Wits to cast the cantrip.

- **Green Touch:** The fae can cause plant life to spring up on any surface that would sustain them. He can cause flowers to spring from the ground, mushrooms to sprout from wood or moss and ivy to grow over stone. The character must touch the surface in question. The player rolls Dawn + Survival. Each success causes plant matter to grow over five square feet.

- **Hope:** With the new dawn comes new strength. The fae touches a target on the face or hand, instilling her with the resolve brought on by a full night's sleep. The player rolls Dawn + Empathy. If successful, the target is not subject to fatigue penalties and regains 1 point of Willpower. The fae cannot use this cantrip on himself, and not on the same target more than once between sunrises.

- **Reveal:** This cantrip reveals the effects of illusion and invisibility cantrips of levels one, two and three, regardless of Dominion. The fae using this cantrip sees people and things for what they really are, looking past illusion and dissembling. The player rolls Dawn + Perception; only one success is necessary to see through all three levels of illusion cantrips. The fae can likewise see through Chimerstry-derived illusions (note that the level-three cantrip Dawn's Revelation does the same for higher-level magic).

- **Sleep:** This cantrip is exactly what it sounds like — a simple sleep spell usable on one's self or one other person. The player rolls Dawn + Manipulation (diffi-

culty of the target's Willpower). The sleep lasts until the dawn of the following morning. Although not required, the caster will often sing to the target or touch her lightly as the magic takes effect. Fae use this cantrip as a means of stopping intruders without permanent harm, and also as a means of relieving pain and suffering for a time. The sleep caused is deep, but persistent shaking can awaken sleepers. The fae must be within a distance in feet of her rating in Dawn times five and be able to see the target to use this cantrip.

- **Spring's Urges:** The fae are notorious (renowned, in some circles) for spiriting away young folks for a "bit of fun." In the Dark Medieval, when so many people regarded the pleasures of the flesh as sinful, this cantrip is sometimes necessary. The player rolls Dawn + Charisma, resisted by a Willpower roll by the target (difficulty 6). The opposed roll is only necessary if the target would resist; a character whose mind was already on sex might not bother. If the faerie wins, the target feels aroused and is easily seduced (not necessarily by the fae, however — if a male firstborn casts this cantrip on a heterosexual man, the subject isn't going to suddenly start fancying the fae). This state lasts until the next dawn.

Unleashing: *Success:* The fae's cheeks flush with excitement, and she gives off a sweet, musky scent to anyone in her immediate area. *Botch:* The musky scent is present, but is rank and offensive. Anyone who comes too near the fae smells it and is repulsed; she suffers a +3 to all Social difficulties until the next dawn.

- **Thricetold Fortune:** This somewhat fickle cantrip allows a fae to give three general, broad predictions about a single target. A target might be a person, place or item. The *Storyteller* rolls the character's rating in Dawn + Wits. A total of three successes is required; fewer than this means the fae can't see into the hazy mist of the future. A botch indicates that the fae's predictions are incorrect, though others may still choose to act upon them. More than three successes allows the fae to provide more specific information or details. Typical revelations from this cantrip might include tidbits about where an individual might be traveling next, who he'll meet on the next full moon or whether or not his lady will be faithful to him. The clues should be related, or perhaps even three facets of a single fact or event. Storytellers should feel free to be as cryptic as they like with this cantrip; the three facts may only make sense if taken together, or lead to completely different conclusions depending on who does the interpreting.

- **Weep:** One of Dawn's greatest powers is healing. This basic glamour allows the repair of non-aggravated wounds with a gentle touch. Though not required, some fae dab their own tears on their patients. The player rolls Dawn + Empathy. For each success, two levels of bashing damage or one level of lethal damage are healed. Fae can use this cantrip to heal themselves, if they wish.

Unleashing: *Success:* Each of the fae's tears turn to tiny oval crystals. *Botch:* The fae's tears are not water, but blood, and she suffers bashing damage as described on p. 154.

Level-Two Cantrips

- **Dawn's Absolution:** The fae in general, and the Spring Court in particular, are notorious for spiriting away young mortals for an evening's frolic. They recognize, however, that the fragile human mind might never be able to cope with a coupling with (for instance) a fire inanimae or a particularly strange-looking firstborn. This cantrip causes a human to forget the events of the previous night. The player rolls Dawn + Intelligence. If successful, the target forgets anything that happened the previous evening, believing he was home in bed. Any damage to the human's body is healed (which means that a maiden's virtue becomes intact once again), and his body and mind are wiped clean of any lingering effects of the night. The only two things this cantrip cannot reverse are death and conception; a woman who has become pregnant remains so. This cantrip only functions on mortals, not on fae or other supernatural beings.

Unleashing: *Success:* The target falls into a deep sleep, awakening refreshed and smelling slightly of flowers and dew. For a month afterwards, he has extremely pleasant dreams, and fragrant flowers bloom outside his home. *Botch:* The target remembers only painful or traumatic events, and even pleasant occurrences are recalled with horror. The target can never look on the fae again without shuddering and crying out in fear.

- **Earth's Armor:** When cast, the fae's flesh takes on both the solidity and hue of the local stone. The player rolls Dawn + Stamina. For every success, add one die to any soak rolls, including those versus aggravated damage. Striking the caster is like striking stone, resulting in smashed fists and chipped or shattered blades; the caster's own bare-fist punches or bare-foot kicks inflict an additional die of damage; and anyone striking the character bare-handed must soak one level of bashing damage for each attack. The

armor lasts for one scene, and may not be cast multiple times during the same scene.

- **Earth's Current:** This cantrip shows a fae the direction something she is seeking has gone. The player rolls Dawn + Intelligence. Only one success is needed to get a general idea of direction, along the lines of a compass point. This is a good cantrip for tracking someone, if cast periodically along a path of travel.

Unleashing: *Success:* Trees and other natural phenomena bend slightly to indicate the path the fae should take. *Botch:* The world closes in on the fae; if she attempts to leave her immediate vicinity (20-foot radius), the land roils, trees bend and even the air forces her to remain. These effects last for one scene.

- **Entice:** With this cantrip a fae can compel someone to follow him. The player rolls Dawn + Appearance (difficulty is the target's Willpower). A total of three successes is needed, in which case the target willingly follows the caster, unless the fae is leading her into direct harm (such as into a fire or over a cliff). Fewer successes means that the target doesn't follow the fae, but she moves closer and pays heed to what he is saying.

- **Fruitful:** The ability to bear young or reproduce is highly important to all living things. Using this cantrip, a fae can grant this blessing even to one who is utterly barren. The cantrip works on people, animals and plants alike, and can be used to counteract the effects of a blight (including level-one and -two Night cantrips). At this level, a single target can be affected (one person,

one animal, a single crop or a small field). The player rolls Dawn + Strength.

- **Immortal Tears:** This cantrip is similar to Weep, except it allows the healing of aggravated wounds as well as bashing and lethal. The player rolls Dawn + Wits. For every two successes, one level of aggravated wounds is healed. Fae can use this cantrip on themselves, if they wish.

- **Memory of Stone:** Stones, assert the Spring Court, remember everything, and have much to teach. With simply a moment's concentration, the fae can enter a state of mind where she remembers everything she sees, hears and experiences. The state is temporary, but a wonderful boon when entering into delicate negotiations or research. The player rolls Dawn + Perception, the state of perfect recall lasts one hour per success.

Unleashing: *Success:* The fae's eyes turn to stone. When her attention shifts, anyone nearby can hear a sound like two huge rocks grating together. Her movements seem slow and deliberate, even if she actually moves very quickly.

Botch: The character cannot hold a coherent thought in her head. She automatically fails



all Wits rolls and her base initiative is considered to be 0. These effects last until the next dawn.

- **Morning Mist:** This simple but effective cantrip is ideal for hiding, as it creates a pea-soup fog around the fae using the cantrip. The caster is immune to the effects, but anyone within roughly a five-foot radius has the difficulty of any Perception rolls raised by +2. To invoke this cantrip, the player rolls Dawn + Stamina. Only one success is needed for a thick fog to rise.

- **Morning's Grace:** Fae sometimes act as muses to humans, and those who favor Dawn do not need to burn their subjects out with their magic (as with the Day cantrip Flame of the Muse). This gentle spell allows a faerie to guide a human — or another fae — to an idea or revelation. The player rolls Dawn + Expression (difficulty is the target's Willpower). If successful, the next Mental roll the subject must make receives a -2 difficulty bonus.

- **Obscure:** This cantrip makes someone's eyes "slide off" the fae caster, simply overlooking his presence. The player rolls Dawn + Manipulation. For each success, someone trying to spot the fae has the difficulty of her Perception rolls raised by +1. If the player scores more than four successes, the fae is invisible to normal sight. Supernatural methods, including Kenning, might still detect her, but the difficulty of such attempts is 10.

- **Slumber:** This cantrip is similar to Sleep, except that it affects up to a total of three targets (the targets must be within a radius in feet equal to the character's Dawn rating times five). The player rolls Dawn + Manipulation (difficulty is each target's Willpower), and one success is needed. If the cantrip is cast on a group of more than three, those with the lowest Willpower ratings fall asleep first. The sleep lasts until the dawn of the following morning.

- **Strength of the Oak:** Like the mighty oak, the fae using this cantrip can call upon the strength of the earth. The player rolls Dawn + Strength; each success adds 1 dot of Strength, to a maximum of 10. The effects last for one scene, and the cantrip may not be cast multiple times during the same scene.

Unleashing: *Success:* The character is covered in thick bark. Her hair changes to a rich green, and her hands are covered in moss. If her Strength doubles through the use of this Unleashing, she grows five feet in height. *Botch:* The character's flesh takes on the color and feel of rotting wood. All soak difficulties increase by +2 for one day.

Level-Three Cantrips

- **Bog:** Fae use this cantrip to trap and detain opponents. The character rolls Dawn + Perception (difficulty 7). For each success, a victim becomes trapped for one turn in a nasty, smelly bog that opens at his feet. The target (or targets) sinks up to his knees; even after freeing himself from the cantrip's effects, he'll be covered from foot to thigh in thick, sticky mud and able to move only half speed until he washes off the mess.

- **Dawn's Revelation:** This cantrip reveals the effects of any illusion and invisibility cantrips, regardless of Dominion or level. The player rolls Dawn + Perception. The fae's enhanced perception lasts for one turn per success, but any illusions she sees through during that time remain pierced even after the cantrip's magic fades. This cantrip also affects illusions created by Chimerstry.

Unleashing: *Success:* The character's eyes glimmer with the silver-white light of dawn, and anything she directs her attention to is bathed in that light. The light strips away illusions and disguises, leaving a thin layer of dust over the target. *Botch:* The fae cannot see through even the most basic of illusions or attempts to hide; another being holding his hand up to block the fae's vision is completely invisible to her. This effect lasts for one week.

- **Delving:** By using this cantrip, a fae can discover what the true nature of a target may be (i.e., a vampire, mage, werewolf, fae, demon and so on). The player rolls Dawn + Perception (difficulty is the target's Willpower), to discern the creature's identity (in a general, or perhaps literal, way; for example, the fae may sense the creature standing before her is a "dead thing that drinks blood," which is not always a vampire).

- **Ruins to Refuge:** This cantrip casts a large-scale and potent illusion. To invoke the magic, the fae must gather a small pile of rocks. He then casts his cantrip; if successful, the rocks seem to become a small stone keep. Those who can't see past the illusion believe themselves to be indoors, out of the rain, and so on. Unfortunately, with the dawn of a new day, the illusion fades, as does the feeling of being warm and dry. The player rolls Dawn + Wits, and three successes are needed.

- **Sight Unseen:** This cantrip grants almost complete invisibility to all senses. Unless an onlooker has preternatural abilities, tracking the fae is all but impossible. The player rolls Dawn + Wits. With one

success, the character is invisible to sight, though she still leaves footprints, possibly makes a slight sound and has a scent. With two successes, only her scent remains. With three successes, she's invisible to sight, scent and hearing. The cantrip lasts until the fae terminates the effects.

- **Storm and Stress:** When successful, this cantrip calls up a small but potent thunderstorm. It covers an area of about one square mile, brings torrential rains and summons wind, thunder and lightning. To cast the cantrip, a player rolls Dawn + Stamina. One success indicates the storm is powerful enough to force travelers to seek shelter; horses won't budge except to find a barn, for example. Two successes causes minor flooding — enough to make ferries or barges pull into shore. Three or more successes summons ferocious winds that claw at trees and roofs, buffeting the unlucky with gusts and branches causing dice of bashing damage equal to twice the caster's rating in Dawn for every 20 minutes spent away from shelter. The storm gathers in a quarter of an hour (less if the weather is rainy to begin with) and dissipates after an hour or so.

- **Tomorrow's Tale:** This cantrip is a much more accurate foretelling of the future than Thricetold Fortune. The player rolls Dawn + Perception. One success gives a general impression of the future of the target. Two successes reveals at least one fact about the future. Three successes gives an accurate and precise foretelling. Four or more successes gives as much information as the fae wants. Storytellers should be as honest as possible depending upon the number of successes, but they should also remember that the future isn't always as clear as it seems. Players should be reminded, of course, that the future the character sees is only one set of possibilities.

Unleashing: Success: The Mists coalesce in front of the fae, forming a swirling vortex in which he can read the future. Occasionally, tendrils of mist reach out and seize small objects from the area (nothing larger than a shoe) and pull them into the vortex; owners of these items might discover them later in strange places. **Botch:** Aside from inaccurate predictions, the unfortunate character loses the ability to sleep for one month. He is incapable of regaining Willpower by any means during that time, and suffers a +1 difficulty penalty to all rolls per week without sleep (cumulative).

Level-Four Cantrips

- **Aid of the Wood:** This powerful cantrip allows the fae to call upon the trees of the earth for aid. The player rolls Dawn + Charisma (difficulty 7). If successful, the trees nearby (up to 20) lend the caster their

assistance. The fae should be specific as to the request; but if it's a reasonable one, the trees are bound to help. They might, for example, help the fae travel from branch to branch with ease, escaping his enemies. If a fae hides among the branches, he gains two additional dice to any soak rolls versus bashing or lethal damage. Or the trees might be willing to attack a fae's foes; if this is the case, use the fae character's Dexterity + Melee for an attack roll, and determine damage according to the tree's size, from four to 12 dice. A towering great oak, for example, would inflict more damage than a slender young willow (though the willow might be able to entangle a foe in its branches).

Unleashing: Success: The character becomes one with the surrounding plant life. His feet root themselves into the ground, and tear the earth loose with every step. His arms and legs lengthen and grow a thin layer of bark, and his hair turns to a cascade of leaves or pine needles (as appropriate to the area). **Botch:** The trees respond to the fae's request... but not in the intended manner. The fae becomes a squirrel or another arboreal animal, and the trees are happy to provide sustenance and shelter for as long as the fae wishes. The character can regain his true shape on his own in one year, but may be changed back by another fae at any time.

- **Come Hither:** This is a much nastier version of Entice. The player rolls Dawn + Appearance (difficulty is the target's Willpower). A total of three successes is necessary; if the roll is successful, the target trots along at the fae's heels, no matter where the caster may lead. If the fae, for example, is able to fly or levitate and walks off a precipice, the target gleefully follows, only to plummet to her death. The effect lasts for one scene. Fewer than three successes means the target is attentive to the fae, but doesn't follow him.

Unleashing: Success: Tiny specks of light and wisps of fog wink in and out of existence between the fae and the target, leading the hapless target ever onwards. **Botch:** The character is fascinated with the target, and pledges to use his powers in her service and tell her anything she wishes to know, including his name, Echoes and any other secrets she might ask. This state lasts for one month.

- **Dawn's Domain:** Similar to the somewhat weaker Night cantrip Midnight's Domain, this spell makes a fae impossible to surprise (and extremely difficult to kill) within her own lands. Unlike the aforementioned Night cantrip, however, Dawn's Domain can be activated in places that the fae doesn't actually own, as long as she has spent at least

24 hours in the vicinity. The player rolls Dawn + Perception. For one day per success, the character knows if anyone enters the area (not more than a 10-mile diameter) with hostile intent, where they are and whether they are human, fae or some other supernatural being (though she can't identify other beings without using a cantrip such as Delving). Also, she adds one Bruised health level per success for the same duration.

- **Storm's Fray:** This cantrip reflects well the power Spring has over the weather. The player rolls Dawn + Stamina (difficulty 7). If the roll succeeds, the fae summons a terrible storm that covers three square miles per success. One success summons a storm that can delay an army's attack or send ships off course. Two successes pelts down hailstones that can turn a wheat field to stubble or knock holes in the decks of ships, while three or more successes causes serious direct damage to targets within the sphere of the storm. Up to 20 specific targets take dice of bashing damage equal to the caster's Dawn rating times three. A total of four successes makes the damage lethal. The storm blows up in about 15 minutes (less if the weather is already bad), and lasts for at least half an hour.

- **Wooden Arsenal:** The character with this cantrip is never unarmed, so long as he can touch anything made of wood. Branches of a tree form into arrows in his hand, while a table leg reshapes itself into a club. The player rolls Dawn + Melee. For the remainder of the scene, any source of wood he can touch reshapes itself into a melee weapon of his choice (the player may roll Dawn + Archery allow the character to reshape wood into arrows). Any weapon thus formed inflicts the usual damage for a weapon of its type, but all damage is considered lethal.

Level-Five Cantrips

- **Fortune Weaving:** This powerful cantrip allows the fae to significantly influence the fate of a being, for good or ill. The caster can withdraw this cantrip at any time, though most fae are loath to end a curse and usually say it can't be done. The player rolls Dawn + Manipulation; successes are split between the severity and duration of the blessing or curse as the caster sees fit. Some examples for *severity*: One success causes embarrassment or minor difficulties (stuttering, impotence, little hallucinations), or minor improvements (a skin problem clears up, the target has a bumper crop this year or finds a pouch of coins). Two successes causes bigger outcomes (luck/unluck in love, cows

always/never get sick), and three success creates tremendous effects (has a knack for gaining the favor of powerful allies/the enmity of powerful enemies, friends prosper or die badly in association with the target). Four successes results in truly life-changing events (the target's life is long and prosperous or short and utterly dismal). With five successes, the effects bleed over to neighbors and associates, who will instinctively know who to praise or blame for their turns of fortune. For *duration*: Allocating no successes means the cantrip lasts for a season; one success lasts for a year and a day; two successes lasts for three years; three successes lasts for life; four lasts for three generations of heirs; and five lasts for seven generations. So with six successes, a fae can bestow relative prosperity (two successes) for a mortal and the next three generations of her heirs (the remaining four successes). Note that free will, other influences and simple chance may interfere with the target's fate, but the Storyteller should keep this cantrip firmly in mind when deciding that character's future.

Unleashing Dawn

When Dawn is Unleashed, it is both exquisite and sinister. It presents the same kind of fascination as viewing childbirth: a combination of suffering, pain and delight. When Unleashing is successful, the caster's skin turns a pale green. His nails may turn brown as the earth, while his eyes shine like emeralds. The fae's voice booms, and the ground trembles at the passing of his words. Friends are torn between wanting to be near the fae for his protection and the enticing power he emits, and running as if from a dangerous storm.

Oddly enough, when the Unleashing of Dawn fails (i.e., the Unleashing dice successes exceed the player's Dawn + Mists successes), it is almost worse than any other Dominion because some of the most fearsome powers of nature itself burst from a wellspring of healing and fertility. The ground shakes, sometimes causing others to lose their balance and fall. The fae himself becomes twisted and gnarled, as if black, pitted bark were covering his flesh. Bits of bloodlike sap may ooze from his pores. The feelings he stirs in others are of hope dashed and destroyed, the promise of a new day suddenly turned into a nightmare. The effects generally last until dawn of the next morning.

If any botches occur during Unleashing, several things may happen, at the Storyteller's discretion; the higher the level of the Dominion used and the more dice in the botch, the more dreadful the effect. These events are *intended* to be disastrous, so players should understand

the consequences of screwing up an Unleashing. Following are just a few ideas to illustrate better the nastiness of messing up such an Unleashing. The Storyteller should link the effects of the botch in some way to the object of the original Unleashing.

Level One: The caster's senses distort; colors shift, perspective flattens, sweet becomes bitter, and sounds beget unbearable ringing in the ears (+3 difficulty penalty to all Perception rolls for a day).

Level Two: The Earth shudders beneath the caster's feet; the caster and those within 10 feet must make Dexterity + Athletics rolls (difficulty is the caster's Dawn + Mists) to remain standing. Failure results in dice of bashing damage equal to the caster's rating in Dawn + Mists. Inanimate breakables shatter, and shoddily constructed buildings may collapse. Several times a day for the next week, the caster sees visions — in reflective surfaces, in flames or even in clouds — of the worst possible outcomes of his chosen path. In the brief but vivid visions, friends die, loved ones are untrue, all plans go awry, and the caster may see his own demise. In addition, both the caster and those nearby at the time of the Unleashing feel their inhibitions loosen; lust, anger, greed, fear and other urges lie closer to the surface. For the next full day, all Willpower rolls are at a +2 difficulty.

Level Three: Time drags for all involved, yet they are powerless to stop events from unfolding. For the caster and companions, all reactions to another's action (parrying, running after another, etc) are at +2 difficulty for the scene. In addition, the next time the caster sleeps, she wakes to find three days have passed (to outside observers, she simply disappeared when they weren't looking).

Level Four: The caster and those close beside her are transformed into random plants or animals as per Spring's Shaping. They remain in this form until the next juncture, when they change into other random plants or animals. This may continue for one day or three, depending on their luck (and the Storyteller's whim).

Level Five: This type of botch is memorable and painful. Storm clouds gather in a moment, raining hail and lightning down; worst of all, a devastating cyclone strikes where the caster stands. The funnel cloud has a ground radius of 50 feet, and over the next 10 minutes it meanders for about a mile, flattening villages and crops, before dissipating as rapidly as it began. Those within 1,000 feet of the caster suffer dice of bashing damage equal to the caster's rating in Dawn + Mists from hail and battering wind. For those within 150 feet of the tornado the damage is lethal due to flying debris; for those unfortunate enough to be

caught in the whirlwind the damage is aggravated as they spin wildly about in the funnel. Survivors hear the caster's name in the howling of the wind. Should the caster die from the damage, he is drawn up into the clouds, never to be seen again. Hopefully, someone is left to pick up the pieces after this kind of misfortune.

Dominion of Dusk

By all rights Edwin should have felt elation. He was forever in the shadow of the master smith, suffering William's derision when by rights he could have founded his own smithy in another village. Only his love for Emma held him here. William the Smith knew it, and had threatened to replace Edwin's head with an anvil if ever Edwin mentioned his daughter again. And now the man had fallen ill, unable to walk, move his right arm or speak clearly. The wise woman expected the crippled man wouldn't see another spring. An elf stroke, the people said. Edwin knew that was only too true. Though the smithy would surely be his, and Emma soon thereafter, he was wracked by fear and guilt. If murder was done on his behalf, was the crime not on his soul as well?

The last rays of the sun were burning the clouds above as Edwin left his master's — for now — shop. But even as he approached the hovel he called home, Edwin saw what he had dreaded. Edwin called him the Dark Man, for he refused to give Edwin a name; in the gloom, Edwin could not tell where the tall one's black hair ended and the black cloak began. He could see the man's eyes and his perfect smile, as if both gathered and reflected the last light of day.

"I have done as you wished," the Dark Man stated without preamble.

"I did not wish for Master William to be struck down! I—"

"You wished your way clear to marry Emma and for the elevation of your own status. This has been done, in good faith. And it should be clear that what was done can be done again."

Though Edwin had already reached that conclusion, he paled at the words. "I... am grateful for your help," he finally managed. "W-what must I do in return?"

"Do what comes best to you, Edwin," said the Dark Man soothingly. "Be the finest smith in the shire. Marry your woman and have children galore. I wish you nothing but prosperity and happiness. Provided," and his soft voice chilled like the promise of winter on the wind, "you occasionally ply your trade on my behalf. The odd trinket, nothing beyond your skill." His teeth gleamed in the light of the rising moon. "Do this, and treat me with respect, and I will have no cause to be displeased with you."

Dusk is the Dominion of mystery; its users most often deal with roaming spirits, gateways to strange places and the boundaries of the physical world. Fae

knowledgeable in Dusk excel at magical travel; they can disappear and reappear instantaneously, moving themselves from one place to another, or levitate themselves into the air. They are friendly with ghosts and understand the intricacies of human culture. Moreover, fae who know this Dominion can peer into the minds of others and read what secrets may be hiding there.

Users of Dusk command the element of air. When they cast illusions, fae with Dusk often make themselves appear as ghostly figures, dim outlines of their true forms. Like all Dominions, Dusk can also cause pain and suffering, through the destruction of fertility or the warping of limbs and the body. It's not quite as easy for this Dominion to cause harm as for Night and Day, but fae proficient in Dusk can still wreak considerable damage. When shapechanging, fae with Dusk usually appear as carnivores that like to hunt in the early evening, such as foxes; some also like to take the form of trees with sharp needles or sticky sap.

Favored Court: Autumn

Dusk's Influences

The next section provides Storytellers and players with general guidelines about the potential of the Dusk Dominion as command of this magic increases in level.

Dusk, Level One

Dusk cantrips of the first level tend to affect either the caster or one other target only; most have short term or simple, straightforward effects. Still, even at this elementary level, a fae's magic can be quite valuable. For instance, she can peer into the past and gather general information about the history of a person, place or item. She can also read the uppermost thoughts in a target's mind. One of the key features of the Dusk Dominion is relations with spirits; with first-level cantrips, the fae can speak to spirits or discover any that might be hovering near. She can also use her powers to unfasten bolted doors and trunks with a mere touch. Dusk is related to the element of air, and at first level, the fae can summon this element with the use of a cantrip.

Dusk, Level Two

Since Dusk has affinity with many spiritual things, perhaps it's natural that when casting an illusion about himself via a level-two cantrip, the fae appears as a ghostly apparition. He can also shapeshift into carnivorous ani-

mals that like to hunt at dusk, or even take the form of a holly bush. Fae using Dusk at level two are also capable of communicating clearly with spirits, controlling the element of air and causing barrenness in people or animals. One of the more potent powers of this level is Lesser Elfshot, which can inflict lethal damage in the form of strokes or paralysis. Moreover, fae skilled in this level of the Dusk Dominion can surround themselves and others with strong protective barriers, waylay enemies on the road and even teleport themselves across limited distances.

Dusk, Level Three

Level three in Dusk confers some powerful abilities on its users. Now the fae can also cast shapechanging cantrips on others, or force targets into making painful atonements for past crimes or even mere slights. She can strike out with the power of the wind via a weapon and even undo locks fastened by magical means. Long distances are much easier for her to cross, even with a companion in tow. The protective shields she casts are much more durable and can shelter a larger number of people, such as an oathcircle.

Dusk, Level Four

Dusk's powers are now quite formidable, and any fae who knows cantrips at this level is worthy of much fear and respect. His command of the element of air is remarkable, granting him the power to fly on the wind. The Elfshot he wields can cause aggravated damage to several targets at once, and he can also gain detailed information from the breezes through the trees about a land's past. Since autumn is the time of waning, the fae who understand Dusk at this level might choose to have an enemy's limb wither and die, not unlike the decaying leaves in fall. Also, only fae skilled with Dusk level four can Sain new members into the Autumn Court.

Dusk, Level Five

Few fae command the Dominion of Dusk at this level; those who do are among the most formidable of their kind. Legends tell of fae who can desiccate a foe's body with a single command, causing the enemy's body to scatter like leaves in the wind.

Cantrips

The cantrips listed here are available to all fae with ranks in the Dusk Dominion. Note that level-one

and -two cantrips are more common than those of higher levels.

Level-One Cantrips

- **Amends:** While the Dominion of Dusk can't control minds, it can nudge people into making acts of contrition and atonement. This cantrip makes a target blurt out a brief apology for something he did, even if he doesn't wish others to know of his actions. For example, if Lord Hovarth secretly stole his liege's cloak, he'd seem to "inadvertently" utter an expression of remorse for this act while under the spell of this cantrip. This can be quite embarrassing and a definite loss of face. The player rolls Dusk + Intimidation (difficulty is the target's Willpower).

- **Broken Mirror:** The fae can warp a human's perceptions to the point that she doesn't even recognize her reflection or shadow any longer. The target forgets her own identity and history if the cantrip is applied strongly enough. The player rolls Dusk + Manipulation (difficulty is the target's Willpower). One or two successes is enough to add +1 to all Willpower roll difficulties as the target looks into her own reflection and sees a stranger. Three successes

strips the target of memories of her childhood, of any dead relatives or friends and of any travels or pilgrimages. Four or more successes means the target remembers nothing except her first name. The effects of this cantrip last for one month.

- **Unleashing:** *Success:* Any mirror the target looks into cracks or tarnishes. If she gazes into a still pool or other body of water, the water ripples, distorting her reflection. Her shadow always looks malformed and indistinct. *Botch:* The fae sees the target's face whenever he looks into a glass or pool. This effect lasts for one year per dot of Mists the character possesses at the time of the Unleashing.

- **Soar:** This cantrip is perhaps one source of tales where fae leap incredible distances in a single bound. The player rolls Dusk + Dexterity (difficulty 4). Each success adds two feet to the horizontal distance or one foot to the vertical rise of the fae character's leap. For base distances, see pp. 227–228 of **Dark Ages: Vampire**.

- **Spectral Whispers:** Use of this cantrip allows the caster to speak to ghosts and spirits. The spirit isn't under any compunction to listen, but if she chooses to do so, she and the fae can



talk normally to one another, even if the target speaks a different language. The player rolls Dusk + Wits to invoke the cantrip. Only one success is necessary, and the magic lasts for one scene.

- **Speed of the Wind:** The fae moves with the speed of the wind itself. By using this cantrip, he gains one extra action per turn per success (so with three successes, the character gains one extra action per turn for three turns). If using this cantrip for simple movement, multiply the character's movement rate by the successes on the roll (meaning with three successes, the character moves three times his normal movement rate for one turn). The player rolls Dusk + Dexterity.

Unleashing: *Success:* Winds swirl around the character, ruffling his clothes and hair. Everywhere he moves, he leaves tiny dust devils in her wake. Torches flicker and candles blow out as he passes. *Botch:* The character moves too quickly for his own mind to comprehend. All Wits and Dexterity rolls suffer a +3 difficulty for the rest of the scene.

- **Spirit Track:** This cantrip allows the fae to find ghosts and spirits which may be nearby or those who have passed an area within the last hour. The player rolls Dusk + Perception to find lurking spirits or those who have passed by recently. Only one success is needed; the effects last for one hour per success.

- **Steal Breath:** A rather vile cantrip, this magic sucks the air out of the target's lungs. The caster may affect up to three targets at a time, if they are in close proximity (side by side or in a tight cluster). This cantrip causes one level of bashing damage per success, and the target must make a Stamina roll to take an action in that or the following turn (if the target suffers damage). The player rolls Dusk + Stamina.

Unleashing: *Success:* The character's shadow widens to fall over all of the targets, leaving them feeling chilled and exposed. The targets' breath leaves their mouths with choked wails, and the shadow greedily drinks in that breath. *Botch:* The fae's own shadow turns on her, stealing her breath. The character suffers a +2 difficulty on all Physical actions for the rest of the scene, and suffers bashing damage as described on p. 162.

- **Study Façade:** Fae use this cantrip to observe the casual thoughts and foremost concerns in the mind of another. To use this ability, the

player rolls Dusk + Perception (difficulty is the target's Willpower). This cantrip cannot reveal thoughts, opinions or beliefs that the target keeps secret or hidden in his mind. If the player botches the roll, not only does the cantrip not work, the target is aware that the caster tried to invade her mind.

- **Twilight Shadow's Reach:** Shadows lengthen at sunset, and the clever fae can reach through them to grasp faraway objects. The player rolls Dusk + Dexterity. For each success, the character can extend his reach 10 feet away to grasp or place any item that he could lift with one hand. This cantrip cannot be used to attack.

- **Unlock:** This helpful cantrip unlocks doors, windows and other objects that have been fastened by non-magical means. To invoke the magic, the player rolls Dusk + Intelligence.

Unleashing: *Success:* A wisp of smoke extends from the character's finger or mouth to open the lock. Alternately, the character's shadow might do the deed. *Botch:* The door's lock refuses to open for anyone, whether or not they have a key or are on the right side of the door, for one day. Any attempt to open the door causes the room to darken menacingly.

- **Whispered Past:** This cantrip is somewhat erratic. It allows the caster to obtain a general psychometry reading about a person, place or object with regards to what has happened in the past. Only one person, place or thing can be the focus of the cantrip at any given time, and the Storyteller should think carefully about what to tell the caster. The player rolls Dusk + Wits. A total of three successes is required; fewer means the fae can't see beyond the veil into the past. A botch indicates that the fae's descriptions are wildly inaccurate, though others may still choose to act upon them. More than three successes allows the fae to provide highly specific information or details. Successful visions into the past might reveal previous owners of objects, events that have occurred on lands in question or where a person has come from. The visions may seem unrelated, but are certainly facets of the same fact or event requiring the proper interpretation. Storytellers should feel free to be a little cryptic with this cantrip.

- **Words:** Language is a weapon in the hands of the fae. They twist meanings of words to suit their oaths, glibly trapping humans in their own complex methods of communication. This cantrip

allows a fae to temporarily speak, write and understand any single human language; it cannot be used to understand the Courtly languages of the fae (although a level-three version of the cantrip can). The player rolls Dusk + Linguistics. The fae can speak and write the chosen language for one hour per success.

Level Two Cantrips

- **Barren:** Much like Dawn can grant fertility, this cantrip can take it away. The effects of Barren work on a single person, or a small area of plants such as a garden. The plants or target don't die or wither away, but they don't produce new plants or offspring, either. The player rolls Dusk + Strength.

- **Befriend Spirit:** This cantrip allows a caster to present the best face possible when dealing with ghosts and spirits. The player rolls Dusk + Charisma. Only one success is needed, allowing the player to lower the difficulty of all Social rolls by -2 for one scene when dealing with ghosts and spirits.

Unleashing: *Success:* The fae becomes partially translucent, as though a spirit himself. While he is still completely solid, his touch feels light and spectral. *Botch:* The character becomes completely insubstantial and mute, even to spirits. He is still visible, however. This state lasts until the following sunset.

- **Daunting Distance:** A fae can cast this cantrip on herself and up to two other people. Their movement speed (though not their number of actions) is effectively doubled for one scene, as they move with the speed of wind. The player rolls Dusk + Stamina.

- **Evening Mist:** Fae use this simple but effective cantrip for hiding, as it creates a dense, humid fog around the fae using the cantrip. The caster is immune to the effects, but anyone within roughly a five-foot radius increases the difficulty any sight-based Perception rolls by +2. To invoke this cantrip, the player rolls Dusk + Stamina.

- **Forgotten:** Fae are perennial thieves, and this cantrip allows them to indulge without fear of quick retribution. If a fae steals something, then successfully casts this cantrip, the owner conveniently forgets about the stolen item. The player rolls Dusk + Wits; the degree of success determines the duration of the owner's memory lapse.

Successes Duration

1 success One day
2 successes One week

3 successes One month

4 successes A year and a day

5+ successes Permanent

- **Leaf in the Wind:** If successfully cast, a gust of wind actually picks up an opponent, carrying her a few inches from the ground and dropping her somewhere else within the caster's line of sight. The target takes no damage, but she is considered to be out of melee range. The player rolls Dusk + Strength. This cantrip can affect up to two targets in close proximity.

Unleashing: *Success:* The wind is accompanied by tiny, nearly invisible figures that pick up the target and drop her unceremoniously where the fae directs them. Looking directly at these figures tears at the target's mind, filling her with fear and dread. *Botch:* The fae is whisked straight up and out of sight, and dropped to the ground at least a half-mile away, suffering dice of bashing damage equal to his Dusk + Mists rating.

- **Lesser Elfshot:** Using this cantrip, a magical "dart" flies from the fae's hand to strike the target (range is 20 yards). The successes from a Dusk + Dexterity roll count as lethal damage; normal armor does not count against it, but anti-fae charms might, at the Storyteller's discretion. In addition, an aware opponent (one who can see the attack) may dodge the attack (difficulty 6, successes subtract from damage). After it strikes, the dart fades away. Neither the dart nor the wound damage is visible to mortal eyes — think of the effects of a heart attack or stroke when describing the injury.

- **Mourning:** This cantrip takes the concept of atonement a step further. When cast successfully, it causes a target to become despondent and sorrowful over a specific misdeed. The target will take to his bed, tear his clothes and spend all his hours moaning and weeping. The player rolls Dusk + Manipulation (difficulty is the target's Willpower), resisted by the target's Willpower roll (difficulty 8). The degree of success is determined by the table below.

Successes Duration

1 success One Dusk juncture

2 successes One week

3 successes One season.

4+ successes A year and a day

Unleashing: *Success:* The target literally has a pall of gloom hanging over him; lights dim in his

presence and the sun never illuminates his face, even at high noon. *Botch:* The character brings the lethargy of mourning with her. Anyone in the fae's immediate vicinity must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) not to begin crying. Prolonged exposure to the character (three hours or more) drains a Willpower point. These effects last for one week.

- **Transport:** This is a wondrous cantrip which allows a caster to teleport herself a distance of no more than 10 feet in any direction. The fae need not be able to see where she is going (although if she can't, a botch might well transport her into a solid object). The player rolls Dusk + Intelligence.

Unleashing: *Success:* The character steps backwards into her own shadow and vanishes, or disappears in a gust of swirling wind. The shadow or wind also presages her reappearance. *Botch:* The character disappears, but fails to reappear for at least 24 hours. When she does reappear, she is confused, frightened and fatigued (she loses 2 points of Willpower and 1 each of Mists and Weaving).

- **Twilight's Glamour:** Eyes play tricks in the fading light; with this cantrip the fae takes on a form of shifting shadows. Though solid enough, the fae appears to be nothing more than a trick of the light to the casual observer. Even a determined searcher is liable to doubt his eyes. The roll is Dusk + Wits. Each success subtracts a success from any visual Perception rolls. The magic remains until the next Dusk juncture.

- **Waylaid Traveler:** When a fae doesn't really wish to harm someone, but does want her to waste time, this is an excellent and useful cantrip. It causes a target to simply wander around in circles until the effects fade at the next sundown. Even in home territory, the victim won't recognize familiar landmarks. The target won't wander off cliffs or otherwise knowingly tread on anything dangerous, but she's subject to hidden traps or a nest of adders just like anyone else. The player rolls Dusk + Wits (difficulty is the target's Willpower). Up to six people can be affected at once, one per success.

- **Wind Armor:** When this cantrip is cast, the fae is surrounded by a vortex of wind. His clothes billow, His hair whips wildly and opponents have a hard time hitting or grasping him. The player rolls Dusk + Dexterity. For every success, all physical attacks lose one success, just as if the fae were dodging. Curiously, the wind has no detrimental effect on the caster. The armor lasts for one scene.

Level-Three Cantrips

- **Atoning:** Not only does this cantrip cause agonizing sorrow and remorse, the unfortunate target also spends a good chunk of her life doing whatever is necessary to make amends to the caster. The slight must have been something specific that the target did willfully, however. If the cantrip succeeds, the target will act as a servant and even perform acts she finds disgusting, such as gathering fewmets. Note that the target won't do anything definitely suicidal, but she does almost anything else the fae asks. Once the cantrip's duration expires (as determined by the table below), it cannot be cast upon the same target for the same offense. To invoke this cantrip, the player rolls Dusk + Manipulation (difficulty is the target's Willpower).

Successes	Duration
1 success	One week
2 successes	One season
3 successes	A year and a day
4+ successes	Until released

- **Grace of the Shadows:** The fae's form fades out of view for a split second, avoiding a blow or attack. The player rolls Dusk + Dexterity (difficulty 8). Success indicates the character automatically dodges an attack, but he must be able to see or sense the attack coming.

- **Journey:** As with Transport, the fae uses this cantrip to teleport. At this level, however, she may take up to three others with her to a distance of up to 20 feet. To cast the cantrip, the player rolls Dusk + Intelligence.

- **Unchaining:** This cantrip works exactly as Unlock, except it affects magical locks as well. The player rolls Dusk + Intelligence.

- **Unspoken Vow:** The Autumn Court commits acts they would never voice, even to swear never to speak of them. This cantrip makes spoken vows unnecessary. Once an act has been committed, the fae may cast this cantrip to force all involved never to speak, write or otherwise communicate what they have done. If any subject tries, that subject's player (or the Storyteller) must first succeed in a Willpower roll (difficulty is the fae's Dusk + Manipulation). If the roll fails, the subject cannot push past the ban; if the roll succeeds, the oathbreaker can speak, but must then soak lethal damage equal to the fae's Dusk rating (if he is capable of soaking lethal damage). This damage

manifests as spontaneous bleeding from the nose, ears and mouth, and severe pain throughout the body. To invoke the cantrip, the player rolls Dusk + Manipulation (difficulty 5 + the number of people involved; maximum difficulty 10). The effects of this cantrip are permanent, but it can only be attempted once per event.

Unleashing: *Success:* All who are bonded with the Unspoken Vow gain a brown birthmark on the same place (a shoulder, hip, arm, etc.). This birthmark itches if a subject even considers trying to break the vow. *Botch:* The fae is subject to the effects of the Unspoken Vow, but none of the others involved are. If the fae ever speaks of the topic, she suffers *double* the usual amount of damage and may not soak.

• **Wind's Eyes:** The character can throw her perceptions to the winds, looking down on the world like a bird. She needs only to concentrate, and she sees the ground as though flying 20 feet above her current location (which of course allows for a much wider field of vision). The player rolls Dusk + Perception; the effects last for one turn per success or until the character terminates the cantrip.

Unleashing: *Success:* Anyone near the character hears rushing wind and the cries of birds of prey as the fae looks down upon the world. She hovers a few inches off the ground while the power is in effect. *Botch:* The character is thrown 20 feet off the ground

POWERS AND ASSOCIATED DOMINIONS

The following table gives a quick overview of the key powers of each Dominion. Note that all Dominions can generally cause damage, mitigate damage, provide a means of quick travel, grant the ability to hide and alter shape or appearance; some Dominions, though, are better at these tasks than others. The powers listed below represent the specific focus of a particular Dominion. Only first- and second-level cantrips are listed; they are among the most common cantrips available to starting characters.

Specific Power	Dominion	Sample Associated Cantrips (Level One and Two)
Blight crops	Night	Blight Garden, Blight Field
Cause forgetting	Dusk	Forgotten
Control minds	Day	Decree, Befuddle
Create darkness	Night	Gloom, Nightshade
Create silence	Night	Hush
Direct healing	Dawn	Weep, Immortal Tears
Discover truth	Day	Candor's Light
Find spirits	Dusk	Spirit Track
Find treasure	Day	Seek Treasure, Plunder
Fly	Dusk	Soar
Human appearance	Day	Summer's Glamour
Inspire others	Day	Luminous Splendor, Merry Meet
Invisibility	Dawn	Obscure
Open locks	Dusk	Unlock
Power over Air	Dusk	Call Air, Control Air
Power over Earth	Dawn	Call Earth, Control Earth
Power over Fire	Day	Call Fire, Control Fire
Power over Water	Night	Call Water, Control Water
Predict the future	Dawn	Thricetold Fortune
Put to sleep	Dawn	Sleep, Slumber
Read minds	Dusk	Study Façade
Reveal hidden things	Dawn	Reveal
Scare people	Night	Scare
See the past	Dusk	Whispered Past
Shield Minds	Night	Mindveil
Talk to spirits	Dusk	Spectral Whispers
Travel	Dusk	Daunting Distance, Transport

(or into the ceiling, if indoors), suffering dice of bashing damage equal to her Dusk + Mists rating.

- **Yesterday's Tale:** Similar to Whispered Past, this cantrip is a much more vivid and accurate look into what went before. The player rolls Dusk + Perception. One success gives a general impression of the target's past. Two successes reveals at least one fact about the target's past. Three successes gives an accurate and precise look into the target's history. Four or more successes gives as much information as the fae wants about what has happened to the target in the past. Storytellers should be as honest as possible depending upon the number of successes, but they should also remember past events aren't always as they seem on first glance.

Level-Four Cantrips

- **Bauble of the Mind:** The fae can extract a memory from a target and encase it in a small, hand-held object (often a gem or a parchment). That memory can then be seen or even felt by anyone holding the bauble. The player rolls Dusk + Charisma (difficulty 6 normally, or equal to the target's Willpower if he is unwilling). Each success allows one minute of memory to be encased in the bauble. Anyone holding the bauble can see the memory with a successful Perception + Kenning roll. If the bauble is ever destroyed, the memory returns to its rightful owner.

- **Cloud-Dancing:** With this cantrip, the fae can rise into the sky and hover or fly at running speed, carried on the wind. The player rolls Dusk + Strength. Thereafter she can remain aloft for an hour per success. What is perhaps more astounding is that the fae can "rest" (stop the clock as it were) on any "surface" such as a cloud or thick smoke, provided the player succeeds at a Dusk + Dexterity roll (difficulty 6 for a stable fog bank, 9 for roiling storm clouds or dispersing smoke column). Movement or other strenuous activity may require additional rolls. Conceivably, the fae can drift on a cloud for hours spying out the movements of enemy armies or hiding from searchers on the ground.

Unleashing: Success: Shadows and clouds follow the character, swirling around him in a maelstrom of light, darkness and vapor. From time to time, tiny bolts of lightning dance over his body. **Botch:** The character grows so heavy that he can't even more, let alone fly. The player must make a Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 7) for the char-

acter to crawl, and walking is quite impossible. This effect lasts until the next sunset.

- **Fall's Curse:** This gruesome cantrip withers a random limb, making it useless, though no health levels are lost. The player rolls Dusk + Wits (difficulty 7), with one success required. The player then rolls a single die; even numbers indicate an arm is withered, odd numbers a leg. The victim loses two dice from his pool on all Dexterity rolls, and if the limb withered is a leg (or otherwise used for mobility), his movement speed is halved. The limb heals in three weeks unless the victim is subjected to magical healing.

- **Greater Elfshot:** This cantrips works as per Lesser Elfshot, except that the missile appears as a arrow, has a range of 40 yards and inflicts aggravated damage. Again, the player rolls Dusk + Dexterity, and each success inflicts one level of aggravated damage. (Note that using Dusk, only level-four and -five cantrips cause aggravated damage at range).

Unleashing: Success: As the victim expires (or if she survives), she babbles about a world composed entirely of shadow and smoke, where obscene monsters constantly hunt for a way into our world. Most denizens of the Dark Medieval believe they are seeing Hell during these visions. **Botch:** The target falls prone, but suffers no damage. Instead, she suddenly blurts out the fae's true name, his whereabouts and any Echoes he possesses.

- **Memory of Trees:** While in contact with a tree, the fae can discern what has transpired in the vicinity, even back to when the tree was a seedling. As she searches the past, the fae falls into a reverie where she loses all awareness of her true surroundings, feeling the wind in her boughs and the worms twining around her roots; she also "sees" to some distance (100 yards or so) around the tree. Long-standing patterns (frequent happenings or buildings) make more of an impression on the tree than a singular event. The player rolls Dusk + Perception. The difficulty varies; searching an oak for a longstanding meeting place might be a 4, while noticing a given human's passage through the forest requires a 9. Successes add to relevant details perceived. The search through years may only take 10 minutes, but to perceive the world as the tree does has a peril of its own. To return to one's self requires a Willpower roll (difficulty 3 + initial successes on the cantrip). Strong outside stimulus like shaking

or an attack lowers the difficulty by -2. Failure means the fae lays nestled against the tree for an hour (at which time the player can roll again); a botch indicates nothing short of immolation will rouse her mind for 12 hours.

Level-Five Cantrips

- **Second Chance:** This extremely powerful cantrip makes use of the fae's strange relationship with time, allowing the fae to turn back the clock a few seconds. Only the most powerful fae ever learn this cantrip, and Unleashing a similar effect usually results in the fae disappearing from time and space altogether. The player spends 1 Weaving point and 1 Willpower point and rolls Dusk + Wits (difficulty 8). If the roll succeeds, the character rewinds time back to the beginning of the current turn. The character may now act first, but if he chooses to hold his action, all other actions proceed as they did the first time, with the same rolls giving the same results. As soon as the character acts, changing the order of events, characters may take different actions than the first time around.

Unleashing Dusk

When the Dominion of Dusk is Unleashed, the effects are at first subtle and barely noticed; then, they crescendo into an eerie, haunting melody that none can ignore. As the Unleashing begins, a cool wind whistles through the trees near the caster. Her voice begins to crackle and become more high-pitched. Her eyes burn not with warmth, but with a chilling amber fire, and the fae's skin turns a dull umber. Those who listen may be able to hear the whisper of what may be spirits babbling nearby. Small clouds of dust rise near her feet and circle her body. Even these not so unpleasant effects last for several hours, usually until the next sunset.

If the Unleashing hurtles out of control (that is, the Unleashing pool dice successes exceed the players' Dusk + Mists successes), however, the above outcomes are magnified. The wind around the fae becomes so strong that those nearby struggle to remain standing. The caster's voice is so shrill it hurts the ears. The Unleashing stirs feelings of loss and loneliness, as if one were facing doom and unable to stop himself from hurtling headlong into it. Unlike Night, which causes despair and hopelessness, the pain of Dusk is that of knowing full well what horror lies ahead and being

unable to turn aside. These effects usually last until the next sunset.

Should a botch occur while Unleashing, the Storyteller can pick from a number of unpleasant events that will affect the caster and possibly her friends. Generally, the higher the level of the Dominion used and the more dice botched, the more excruciating the effect. These events are *meant* to be horrendous, so that players should take seriously the consequences of messing up an Unleashing. Here are just a few ideas to illustrate how painful this situation can be. The Storyteller should use the original purpose of the Unleashing as a guide to determining the consequences.

Botches: Dominion of Dusk


Level One: To the caster, the world around him appears shadowy and dim; roll Dusk + Mists (difficulty 6) and add the number of successes as a difficulty penalty to the caster's Perception rolls for the rest of the scene. If this takes the difficulty of a roll over 10, the character automatically fails.

Level Two: For a full day, the caster and those nearby hear the roar of wind in their minds, drowning out all thoughts (+2 difficulty to all rolls requiring thought and concentration). Wherever she goes for a week, the caster hears spirits of the land whispering dark prophecies and muttering menacingly at her.

Level Three: The caster and those nearby are gripped by a bitter agony (identical to the effects of the cantrip Nettlethorns). In addition, the recovering caster has a vision of herself as an old, feeble crone in the last hour before death. A vision of such a lonely end would disturb anyone; it is even more disturbing to a hale immortal. The vision haunts her for days afterward.

Level Four: The caster and all who stand near suffer a searing, jagged pain in their chests or heads. The effect is similar to Lesser Elfshot, except the effect cannot be dodged and the lethal damage is equal to the caster's Dusk + Mists rating. In addition, within the day the caster unexpectedly suffers from the Dusk 4 cantrip Fall's Curse.

Level Five: A strong dry wind blows across the land, draining open water, sucking the moisture from every pore and leaving the ground parched.



The wind is centered on the caster and lasts for 10 minutes; a Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty is the caster's Dusk + Mists) is required to move in the face of the gale. Up to 1,000 feet away, the wind's desiccating effect inflicts dice of lethal damage equal to the caster's rating in Dusk + Mists. Within 20 feet of the caster, the damage is aggravated. If the caster dies, those near him see his body wither to a dried husk, its limbs rattling momentarily before breaking apart and disintegrating in the windstorm. Soon the air calms, leaving mummified corpses, dusty fields and crops drier than November leaves.

A DEATH NOT IN VAIN

Here's an interesting optional rule for Storytellers. If death appears imminent for one of the characters, and she has the opportunity to cast one final cantrip, why not allow her to expire as a legend? Consider giving the dying hero (or villain) three automatic successes in addition to the player's roll. Any extra successes add even more kick to the fae's magic. A character using magic as her last act before death probably calls on some heavy forces of nature to boot. Make sure that this action is memorable to the story and chronicle, for the survivors' good or harm.



The hearth was warm and inviting.

Hestia stepped across the threshold of the house and made her offer. The woman of the house, tired of tending the baby and happy for a bit of peace, agreed, never knowing that she was fulfilling a compact that dated back to the days before her mother's mother's grandmother was a babe in arms.

Hestia took the babe up, sat down by the hearth, stoked the fire and sighed contentedly. She shut her eyes and clutched the human child close to her, ignoring the child's mother's questions about her name and where she was from. She'd make up answers to those questions later, perhaps. For now, she held the baby and basked in the oath.

When she opened her eyes again, the fire was naught but embers and the baby was in his cradle again. The woman was asleep next to her husband. Hestia looked about confusedly, and then remembered where she was. Hours must have passed, but it had felt only moments to her. *Fire and babes know not time*, she thought, and stood up to look around.

The door was open, and a short, squat man stood in the doorway. Hestia's eyes narrowed at him; he bore the scent of the fae. She sniffed, and smelled cold rain and ash — a Winter-kin, then.

"What do you want?" Hestia spoke in the crisp, staccato tongue of the Summer Court. A human listener might have mistaken it for acorns popping in the fire. She didn't expect the fae in the doorway to understand, but wanted him to know who she was.

To her surprise, however, he answered the question, though not in the Summer tongue. He spoke the Winter Court's garbled language, a sound like seabirds fighting over a scrap fish. "I'm here to fetch the babe," he said. He took a step into the room, and Hestia could smell blood on his teeth.

"I'd sooner burn," she said, and dropped the Mists, standing there in her full glory as Hestia, Mistress of the Hearth. Gold coins fell from her black hair as it cascaded down her back, and her eyes changed to the blackened-red of hearth coals. The Winter-kin smirked, but advanced again.

Hestia raised her hand, and called on the Dominion of Day. "Go," she said clearly, in a voice like burning leaves. He turned and fled, and Hestia glanced over toward the cradle.

The human mother stood, holding her babe, gazing at Hestia with terror in her eyes. She probably hadn't even see the Winter fae. "Get out!" she shrieked.

Hestia had been stepping forward to explain herself, but now she doubled over in pain. As powerful as the firstborn were, a mother's fear was more powerful still; for there was no pain a mother wouldn't bear for her babe. Hestia stumbled to the door, her feet leaving trails of ash and soot on the floor behind her, and ran into the cold night, the sounds of the baby's wails — the baby she had comforted and rocked to sleep only that night — ringing in her ears.



CHAPTER FIVE: KINGDOMS AND QUESTS

Geographers, Sosius, crowd into the edges of their maps parts of the world which they do not know about, adding notes in the margin to the effect that beyond this lies nothing but sandy deserts full of wild beasts, and unapproachable bogs.

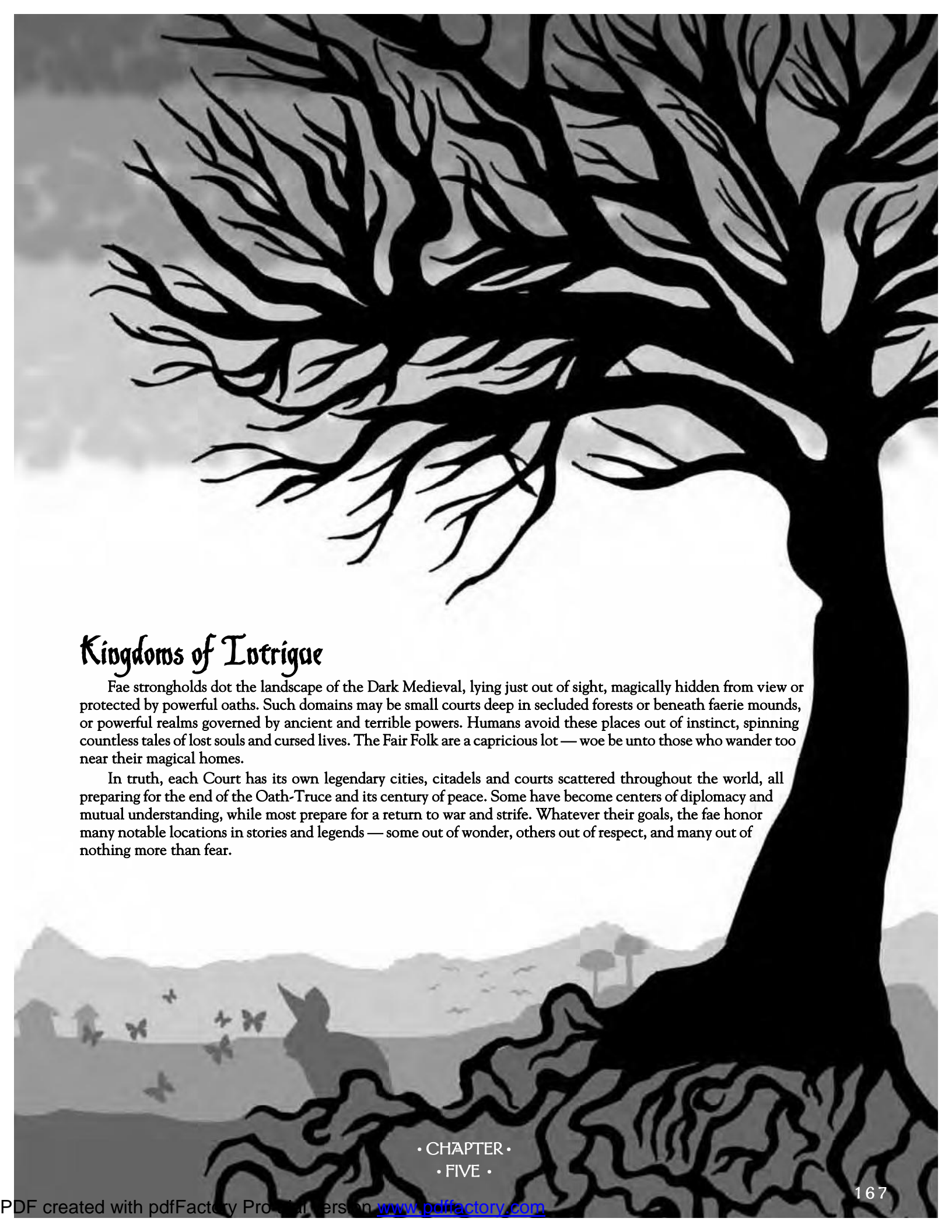
— Plutarch

The ending of the Oath-Truce has thrown faerie culture into disorder as various Courts, factions and individuals attempt to push their own agendas and worldviews on the rest of fae society. While such arguments and debates garner considerable attention, it is important to remember that the world is larger than courtly intrigue, and vast expanses of the Dark Medieval go ignored by much of faeriekind.

As tensions mount, sites of great power or strategic importance loom large, while others gradually disappear from the world. New players have entered the game on all sides, filling vacancies left in the Seasonal Courts at the end of the War of Seasons; and the fae find themselves sharing the Dark Medieval with magical beasts and other threats.

The time has come to venture into the unknown, to reestablish connections between distant kingdoms and retrieve lost and forgotten treasures. The gateways to the faerie realms again open to the mortal world, and young fae look to claim their places in history.

• DARK AGES •
• FAE •



Kingdoms of Intrigue

Fae strongholds dot the landscape of the Dark Medieval, lying just out of sight, magically hidden from view or protected by powerful oaths. Such domains may be small courts deep in secluded forests or beneath faerie mounds, or powerful realms governed by ancient and terrible powers. Humans avoid these places out of instinct, spinning countless tales of lost souls and cursed lives. The Fair Folk are a capricious lot — woe be unto those who wander too near their magical homes.

In truth, each Court has its own legendary cities, citadels and courts scattered throughout the world, all preparing for the end of the Oath-Truce and its century of peace. Some have become centers of diplomacy and mutual understanding, while most prepare for a return to war and strife. Whatever their goals, the fae honor many notable locations in stories and legends — some out of wonder, others out of respect, and many out of nothing more than fear.

The Grand Bazaar

Wandering through the deserts of Northern Africa and the Mid-East, the Grand Bazaar offers sanctuary from the sun, sandstorms and certain death. Those lost in endless sand dunes or hiding in the barren wastes of the desert may see this oasis and tent city as a blurry mirage on the horizon. All things can be found there, for a price — fortune, fame and treasures beyond imagining, but also poverty, torture, death... and worse. The opportunities are endless, but the Bazaar is like a glorious tapestry that lies lightly over a viper pit.

More than anything else, the Bazaar provides a home to the most notorious thieves, swindlers, black marketers and slave drivers the Autumn Court has to offer, all using the nomadic tent city as a base of operations or place of refuge from untold pursuers. Powerful oaths bind the city and govern the methods by which business and trade are conducted, with dire consequences for the ignorant or incautious.

Coming and Going

Since the Bazaar constantly drifts across Northern Africa, pinpointing its location at any given time is problematic. Most who stumble upon the tent city do so accidentally. Anyone wandering in the desert for more than three nights may see what looks like an oasis in the distance and stagger, starving, into the city through the illusion — even if the city is really thousands of miles away. The Bazaar itself forever roams the deserts, and other wanderers of the endless sands are apt to find it.

This method of entering the Bazaar is unreliable, and therefore not an option for those seeking the city in search of some precious item or mercenary for hire. Other entrances to the city exist, controlled by Autumn Court merchants throughout the Dark Medieval, each willing to negotiate passage for the right price. Certain Autumn fae, and even less savory Solstice fae, have hidden doorways or passageways at the backs of their shops that connect to adjoining shops in the Bazaar itself. While this is more common among merchants in Africa and the Outremer, rare shops throughout Europe share this mystical connection to the Grand Bazaar. With enough investigation and bribery, an entrance can often be located within a few days journey, and a fee negotiated.

Merchants do not offer return trips, and another deal must be negotiated to leave the tent city though these routes — or those adventurous (or foolish) enough can attempt to wander out into the desert and find their own ways home. This sometimes proves difficult, though, as fae attempting to leave the Bazaar may again stumble upon the city after several days journey through the desert.

Finding what you Seek

Fae seek out the Grand Bazaar for several reasons, normally involving some treasure or item of crucial importance. Merchants and inns abound, of course, though

finding a specific merchant or vendor may take hours, if not days, due to the difficulty of navigating the constantly changing tent city. Magical rings, flying carpets, dancing scimitars and any number of other exotic and expensive items can be purchased or traded for, though thieves and cutpurses abound looking to take from travelers items they cannot steal from shopkeepers.

While precious metals and stones serve as currency within the Bazaar, many merchants prefer to deal in favors and oaths, which they feel are far more useful and profitable. For instance, someone wishing to purchase a ring allowing limited invisibility may promise to use her newfound treasure to spy on a meeting between two other merchants, or to steal a rare book from a lofty noble. Failure to fulfill this promise could result in the ring ceasing to work, or severing its owner's finger. More powerful treasures naturally demand more dangerous favors.

Of course, magical items are not the only things to be found at the Bazaar. With the Oath-Truce ending, mercenaries and assassins find their services in high demand; many of these sell-swords frequent the smoke-filled inns in seedier parts of the city. Fae of all Courts congregate here, either disillusioned by the goals of their Court's elders or looking to seek fortune on their own terms. Naturally, Autumn fae are the most prevalent.

Dangerous Business

The Bazaar and everyone in it holds to three Gold Oaths. Without these, the entrances to the city would close; it would cease to wander and slowly fade into the Mists. Trade is paramount in the Bazaar; those who attempt to prevent or interfere with trade find themselves alone in the desert, miles from civilization. Further, those who attempt to steal directly from a Bazaar merchant lose the use of both of their arms for the duration of one lunar cycle. Of course, this Oath does not prevent theft of goods *after* they are purchased, but only while they are in a merchant's possession. Finally, verbal agreements are binding anywhere within the Bazaar, so that each negotiation with each merchant carries individual penalties.

This last Oath gives rise to hundreds of smaller agreements and promises, each protected and given power by the third Gold Oath. Storytellers should feel free to create any number of stipulations in trade agreements to baffle or confuse the characters — or simply land them in serious trouble. Guides are available for a price; they are well versed in the standard pitfalls of the city and can help characters avoid trouble — though these guides often come with troubles of their own.

Underbridge

Humans avoid the darkest places in the world through instinct, and sensible fae talk about such places in hushed voices. These places are strongholds of the Winter Court,

GENIE OF THE LAMP

One of the most serious repercussions of the third Gold Oath are trade stipulations that call for "limited magical services." While they sound innocuous, such vagaries of language can spell thousands of years of imprisonment for the unwary. Breaking a deal involving such an imbedded clause may bind the offending fae into a magical object until such a time as certain conditions are met.

This has given rise to the myth of the "genie" in the lamp: A hapless fae was imprisoned in a "magic" lamp and sold to some human with the promise that one, three or more wishes would be granted, within certain parameters. The bound fae cannot be released until he has discharged his "limited services," and he must fulfill the terms of this new agreement before gaining freedom.

Such service generally ends hours after being bound into the lamp, ring or other object, though it is not unheard of for years to pass, or decades. It is rumored that some unfortunates rest on the bottom of the sea or under the unmarked sands of the desert — they may not be released for thousands of years, if ever.

spawning terrible stories of inhuman beasts feeding on the flesh of foolish passersby and travelers disappearing without a trace. Stories abound among villagers of evil creatures lying in wait beneath bridges, but such tales barely hint at the horrors that lurk just out of sight.

Every bridge in the world creates a portal to the twisted nightmare realm of Underbridge, a starless land of eternal night lit only by sputtering torches and eerie will o' the wisps. Emerging from under a bridge-like entranceway onto a muddy bank, brave or foolish souls find a landscape of countless bridges connecting islands of land suspended in all directions, including both above and beneath them. Nothing appears to support these small patches of rock and dirt aside from the network of variously sized bridges, lit dimly by torches or small campfires on banks overlooking the void.

Denizens

Bridges take many forms: Large stone causeways with sturdy gatehouses or towers, rotting wooden structures bound together with reeds that end in marshland hovels, even rope bridges strung between floating rocks. While not all of the islands are home to fae (or other denizens of darkness), many have some form of building, guardhouse or hut that monstrous creatures call home, frequently adorned with gruesome warnings to travelers — heads on pikes, human skins stretched and tanned, or scattered bones and partially cooked viscera around a greasy, sputtering fire.

The most gruesome members of the Winter Court call Underbridge home, some so hideous that they



TRODS

Gateways between the realms of faerie and the physical world such as the paths to Underbridge or the Grand Bazaar are called trods. These magical portals can take any number of forms, from simple doorways to long, treacherous trails. It is common for trods to open only at a specified time of day, or when a certain condition is fulfilled. For example, the road to a Spring kingdom may only appear at dawn, while the entrance to a Winter labyrinth may only reveal itself once blood is spilt on a stone wall. Most faerie realms can be reached by at least one trod, and often have magical connections to allied realms or magical pockets further removed from the physical world.

The first trods were created before recorded history, connecting places of great power and spanning the countryside. Through the study of these magical pathways, the fae developed ways to use the Dominions to create lesser trods, both to make travel faster and to hide their own realms from prying mortal eyes. The process has been refined over time, and many faeries specialize in crafting these portals—or simply serve as gatekeepers, such as in Underbridge.

Trods cut through the magical tapestry, creating order where there had only been chaos, and can therefore be dangerous. Careful crafting of trods limits these dangers, normally by limiting the size of a trod to the length of a single step. More ancient and less structured trods exist, however, with naught but wilderness or darkness on either side of a long and well-worn path. Those who step away from the path may be lost forever, or find themselves on the other side of the world several decades later, while those who follow trods to lost realms may themselves lose their way.

Information on crafting trods may be found on p. 127.

lurk in the shadows because the daylight world drives them into the Mists to avoid Echoes.

Not all of the inhabitants of Underbridge are cannibalistic monsters, nor are they all of the Winter Court. Guides trade their vast knowledge of the chaotic latticework of bridges and islands, and adept gatekeepers open and seal trods into the mortal world. While most are indeed Winter fae, a good number of particularly hardened and grisly Solstice and Autumn fae are counted among their ranks; rare Summer and Spring fae with malicious natures may also be found. Beyond the fae, monsters lurk throughout the midnight realm, lumbering or skittering across the bridges and flying through the endless void between islands.

Spanning Two Worlds

Each of the many causeways in Underbridge corresponds to a bridge in the mortal world, though the look and feel of

these bridges may be entirely dichotomous. A bridge of dried vines in the shadow world may represent a fortified bridge into a staunch castle, while a musty old bridge spanning a forest creek may mirror a massive edifice with impossible, alien architecture. As new bridges are built in the mortal world, new bridges, and entrances, appear in the darkness. As bridges are destroyed in the daylight world, however, their counterparts remain in Underbridge, their entranceways forever sealed.

The expansion of human civilization has caused rapid growth in this nightmare realm, as new trade routes and cities spawn more and more bridges. Winter Court fae find this to their great advantage, as each new bridge provides a new escape route or ambush point for the coming war. During the War of Seasons, Winter armies moved quickly through Underbridge to strike at points across Europe, forcing the other Courts to post guards on bridges or magically seal them. Now far too many bridges exist, and militant Winter firstborn have come scouting routes through the greatly expanded realm.

Portal masters have magics and rituals that allow them to open the trods between worlds, or to seal them. Such fae are in great demand as the Oath-Truce draws to a close; the portal masters have taken new apprentices to satisfy the desires of the firstborn. Some have even begun to teach the rudiments of moving between worlds to several apprentices at once, allowing these fae sanctuary from pursuing enemies and covert access to defended areas. Provided the apprentices survive their time in Underbridge, of course.

Crystal Fortress

In the northernmost reaches of Scandinavia lies an ancient fortress of ice, constructed when the world was young and hidden from sight for countless millennia. Some point to its discovery as the spark that would eventually ignite the War of Seasons, and those same scholars fear that it may prove the impetus behind the war's ultimate resurgence.

During a last-stand skirmish between a band of Summer fae searching for the legendary Land of Eternal Light and Winter Court savages who called the endless ice floes home, the rippling, colored light of the Nordlys, the Northern Lights, revealed a shimmering fortress of ice that was immediately claimed by both Courts. Hostility grew over time as the fortress changed hands each year, the Summer fae growing powerful during the summer months of constant light and the Winter fae gaining advantage during the winter months of perpetual darkness. As the War of Seasons raged, the secrets of the fortress became known to the other Courts, resulting in the historic Battle of Ice (see Chapter One).

Just before the Oath-Truce, the Summer Court held control of the Fortress and had worked tirelessly at solving its mysteries for one hundred years. Now, as the Oath-Truce comes to an end, they fear the coming night; for the savage Winter Court is sure to come in force as the light begins to fade.

Secrets of the Ancients

Scholars have not been able to determine who built the Crystal Fortress, agreeing only that it somehow predates the Golden Age and may contain the secrets of the origins of the fae and their magic. The hidden citadel, just north of the Arctic Circle, can be found in one of two ways. When the sun is below the horizon, travelers to the fortress must wait for the Nordlys to illuminate its crystal walls, causing the spires and archways to glow with colored auras. When the sun is above the horizon, travelers across the ice must stare into the blinding whiteness of the floes until the world goes dark with snow blindness, at which point the fortress appears in dazzling light before them.

The crystal walls themselves seem to be magically forged from ice or glass, appearing transparent and smooth to the touch. Two fae standing on opposite sides of one wall would not see one another, however, as the enchanted walls are actually as solid and opaque as thick steel. Towers and parapets reach impossibly high into the sky, and are connected by wispy bridges, while intricately sculpted, crystalline patterns decorate the spindly pillars supporting arched ceilings. The fortress holds no throne room, meeting hall, guard houses or dungeons. The citadel is ostensibly a palace museum with several living quarters surrounding a large central library chamber.

The fae use the term “library” because the walls of the multi-floored, round chamber are covered with inscriptions in an indecipherable language, all etched painstakingly and elegantly in the smooth, clear walls. So far, no scholar has been able to make any sense of the script, but many conjecture that it is the written form of some proto-language from which the languages of the Four Courts evolved. It has been suggested that the writing was only used for this one purpose — created solely to record the information contained within the Crystal Fortress.

Theories as to the meanings of the words abound. Some feel the text describes the origin of the fae and their true purpose in the world, while others argue that it is a written history of the earliest events in the Golden Age. More militant fae believe it teaches some long forgotten and powerful magic that spawned the four derivative Dominions, while those who seek to avert war hope it delineates how the Four Courts can peacefully interact and work with one another. Extremists even claim that there are four such palaces, each built by a different Court to contain secret powers that give dominance over the others. Whatever proves to be true, great power and advantage will be gained by the one who controls the citadel when the language is finally deciphered.

Encroaching Darkness

The Summer Court has held the Crystal Fortress for a century, knowing the day would come when the Oath-Truce would end and the other Courts would seek to take

its prize. In that time, no word has escaped regarding what progress the Summer fae have made toward deciphering the script, but the long silence has made their opponents nervous. Countless soldiers and scholars have lived within the structure for decades, with only the rare envoy sent to other Summer kingdoms. The Oath-Truce ends as the day grows dominant and the nights wane, leaving the defenders in positions of great power; but the nights will again grow long, and their enemies await the proper time to strike.

Ynys Witrin, the Isle of Avalon

Long a potent place of power of the Spring Court, the pathways through Avalon are slowly being lost to the Mists. The cave atop Glastonbury Tor leads into a complex series of tunnels that, at one point in time, led directly to Ynys Witrin. Ruled by Avallach the Wise, and long a major stronghold of the Spring fae, the magical significance of the tor has been weakened by the growing faith of the local populace and the Abbey of St. Michael at its pinnacle.

During the long period between the Battle of Stone and the start of the Oath-Truce, the people of Glastonbury began to lose their connections to the old ways, instead turning to Christianity and the One God. Avallach railed against the growing Church well before the faith of humans gained any real power; he felt that Christianity would ultimately destroy all the oaths the fae had built since the dawn of time. Though he was labeled paranoid by his fellow Spring-kin, the king kept close watch over the human situation in and around his kingdom.

As Avallach's fears intensified, a group of local mages asked for his aid in removing a mutual threat — a group of vampires intent on making Glastonbury their home (the story of the Glastonbury Compact is related in detail in Chapter One, p. 51). After their joint victory, Avallach noticed that the path back to his kingdom had grown considerably longer and more difficult in his absence. He feared the growing mortal reliance on the Church had weakened the connection between the mortal world and the faerie realms, and that his compliance with their goals further weakened the faerie presence in the world. His worst fears were proved true little more than a century later.

Avallach commanded his two most trusted servants, a water inanimae named Niamh and a changeling warrior called Gwynn ap Nudd, to strengthen ties with the mortals; but they have had little success. Stories have even spread that the fae have fled from the tor, and that their defeat came during the time of the legendary King Arthur. The fae of Glastonbury have not fled; they have instead receded into the heart of the tor, safe from the Echoes forced upon them above ground. If local faith in the Church continues to grow, Ynys Witrin may indeed slip into the Mists forever.

For more information on Avalon, see **Dark Ages: Mage**.

Amber Palace

From within an elaborate and expansive Amber Palace deep within the Baltic Sea, Jurata of the Autumn Court keeps watch over several coastal villages as a patron goddess, though the growing faith in the One God worries her. Still, many still practice the old ways, saying quiet prayers to the water inanimae at the sea's edge and floating offerings across the water.

Jurata's palace itself, though underwater, magically creates air for those fae who are not water or seaweed inanimae. Grand amber staircases spiral upwards from the main entrance hall, while fish swim idly by intricately detailed amber windows. The interior of the palace is lit with a soft, glowing light emanating from the amber itself (the aesthetically appropriate places are mystically darkened for contrast). While the grand doors open into the lake, leaving only a magical barrier between air and water, fae exit the palace by gazing intently out one of the many windows. Each window connects to a different beach along the shores of the Baltic Sea, and visitors to the palace may leave by these various trods any time they wish.

To entering the palace, the visitor must find one of the many pieces of amber littered across the beaches of the Baltic and use it to draw a doorway in the sand precisely at dusk. The edges of the drawing darken, revealing it to be the shadow of an amber doorway that slowly appears as the sun sets. Opening the door transports the visitor to the main entrance hall. The door vanishes when the sun fully sets, forcing a tardy would-be visitor to wait until the following night to attempt to enter again.

The palace has many faerie visitors seeking to use it as a means of quick travel to and from points on the Baltic Sea. Autumn-kin changeling merchants find the palace especially useful, as do the many Humanist scholars who reside within. The palace is not simply a crossroads, however, as Jurata requires all who enter to partake of her hospitality for one night before departing. Jurata makes a point of meeting her visitors at dusk when they enter, and keeps a close eye on the comings and goings through her realm. She remembers every face that passes through her palace, and quite a few find such information exceedingly valuable.

Faerie Mounds, Rings and Groves

While several major fae kingdoms and realms dot the Dark Medieval, countless pocket realms exist under the control of less powerful or noteworthy fae. Trods to these places of magic are often anchored to small dolmens or similar mounds of dirt, grass and rock — so-called “faerie mounds” — which most humans wisely avoid. Gateways to fae realms don't always appear in the same way, of course; they sometimes appear as circles of mushrooms, strange and mysterious copses of trees, or islands that appear only on misty mornings.

Of course, not all mounds, barrows, strange plant formations or secluded groves lead to faerie realms. Many are wholly innocuous features of the landscape, while others are used for different purposes by the fae. Some are used as roadmaps to find certain realms, while others allow far easier use of certain Dominions. Still others are enchanted to appear as entrances only to confuse and disorient enemies. Regardless, the fae take great care of these various sites, tending them and protecting them from mortal encroachment. A good number of Stone Oaths were forged to protect these places from the ever-growing presence of mortals, and intrusion upon such sacred ground is a terrible offense. Even the most devout Christian hesitates before passing too close to a suspected faerie mound or breaking a ring of wild mushrooms, and he undoubtedly says a small prayer before or after for protection from the Fair Folk.

Fading Realms

Nothing is permanent, as the fae painfully learned during the War of Seasons. New kingdoms have risen from the ashes of the old, and legendary places of power have receded into the Mists. Many of these forgotten kingdoms yet exist, deeply hidden in neglected corners of the world or set adrift from the tangibility of the mortal world. The long war prompted some fae to withdraw from the conflict, secreting themselves away from their peers, while the faerie neglect of humanity for so many years caused mortals to forget their oaths, letting entire kingdoms slip their moorings in reality.

Some examples follow of places lost from the memory of most fae, or so well hidden as to be nigh impossible to find. As the Oath-Truce ends, the Courts send envoys to seek out these realms and reestablish contact. Epic quests for lost cities and legendary warriors span both the mortal world and faerie realms, with representatives of each Court hoping to gain powerful allies for the coming struggles — or seal potential enemies away forever.

The Lost Forest

At the start of the War of Seasons, some fae refused to join in the fighting, calling the squabbles between the Courts petty and childish. As the war progressed, some of these worked toward establishing peace, and others gradually entered the conflict as the violence of the other Courts increased. One of the eldest and wisest of the Spring Court, an inanimae named Verdoren, refused to participate, instead choosing to withdraw from faerie society entirely until tensions eased. The Courts had fought in the past, and he had already caused his share of death and destruction.

Countless years have passed without contact from Verdoren's court, and some fear it has slipped forever into the Mists. The landscape has changed drastically in that span; and none are quite sure how to find his forest realm,

thought to be somewhere in the deep woods of France. Now, as the ending of the Oath-Truce threatens to plunge the fae into war once again, some fae would again hear Verdoren's wise words, a calm and steady voice from a time of peace long forgotten.

The Green Man

Verdoren had been a staunch defender of the Spring Court long before the name of Dame Sadijah was ever uttered. Tried in combat against fantastic beasts and in skirmishes with the other Courts, he grew weary of death. He claimed that as his trunk thickened, the storms became easier to weather. Had he accepted Sadijah's offer, he would have led the Green Blade into battle; but instead he withdrew to the shade and shelter of his forest and waited for the war's ultimate resolution.

During the Golden Age, Verdoren's court was one of the most important in all the realms, and he protected many settlements of humans near the borders of his wood. He forged strong oaths with the people of these villages, and they knew never to wander too far into the forests near their homes. Many worshipped him as a natural deity, a god of wood and leaf who brought rain to their fields and kept the cold winters at bay. As time progressed, some began to simply refer to him as the Green Man.

At the heart of his forest, the center of his court, there stood a sacred grove of trees surrounding a gentle brook. Rich with magical energies, the copse caused sprites to emerge from the wood and water in great numbers. The forest teemed with nymphs of all varieties, each performing small tasks and maintaining the many oaths kept with the mortals.

Verdoren Sained many of these sprites into his Court and protected them as a father. Most remarkable were his eldest "daughter" Asha, who herself had become an impressive warrior, and his eldest "son" Drythorn, a renowned healer. When Verdoren closed his realm off from the mortal world, all were given the option of leaving for other courts. All of his children chose to stay at his side.

A Valuable Ally

As the Oath-Truce draws to its inevitable end, the Spring Court — as well as the Patrons — seeks to reestablish contact with Verdoren. Those who wish to extend the Truce wish to hear his wisdom and advice, while those who wish to return to the old ways are curious as to how the world worked at the dawn of the Golden Age. Still others hope to convince Verdoren to return to the field of battle, or at least to gain the support of his veritable army of children.

Also of interest is the legendary grove said to be contained within his realm. If sprites have been emerging for all these centuries, there could potentially be thousands

of sprites or fae secreted away in the forests of France. Some speculate, however, that with Verdoren's withdrawal from the world, and subsequent lapse of his oaths, that the grove may have lost its power — especially as the waves of faith crashed across France in more recent years. Common opinion is that Verdoren is lost forever, and his realm has cut its tether to the mortal world.

The other Courts have some interest in Verdoren's court as well, if only to prevent the Spring Court or Patrons from gaining such a powerful ally and extensive resources. The Winter-kin have hunted down Spring fae questing for the Lost Forest, and the Autumn Court has made every effort to hinder those searching for information regarding Verdoren.

The Land of Youth

This mythical kingdom of the Autumn Court enforces a certain measure of humility upon all who hear of it; its fate helps to explain why the Autumn-kin have taken such care in creating and maintaining oaths in the centuries since this realm left the world. Once a powerful court off the coast of Ireland, the fae of this realm let slip their oaths with mortals. They felt the power of the faerie realms could never fade away, and that humans were merely playthings and lovers of little overall importance. Their disappearance has served as a warning to those who feel the fae can survive wholly apart from the mortal world.

Lost in the Mists

It was common practice among the Autumn fae of this realm to steal humans away from their homes to serve as lovers, servants or warriors. These mortals, afraid for their lives, would do as their fae masters and lovers requested. Some would be Sained as changelings, but most were returned when their keepers grew tired of them — often twenty or thirty years later, having hardly aged at all — giving rise to many stories of a Land of Youth populated by fickle and capricious faerie lords and ladies.

And truly, the fae of the Land of Youth, led by Diarmuid their King, were just as selfish as the humans painted them. They made oaths that mortals could never keep then forced them into service for a period of years before releasing them; and they would send these humans into battle against neighboring courts to watch them be cut down. When the One God came to Ireland, the people embraced the new religion — but still told stories of the harsh whims of the fae.

It was at this point that the Land of Youth started to fade, drifting further and further into the ocean away from its human playthings. As the War of Seasons raged, fewer warriors entered the field from the Autumn isle, until, after the Battle of Stone, none were to be found anywhere. The entire kingdom simply disappeared without a trace. No one even noticed until the signing of the Oath-Truce.

Wonders

All envoys to the Land of Youth reported it lost without a trace, and many who knew of Diarmuid's practices speculated that the old oaths had finally given way. The Courts were appalled that so powerful a kingdom, with so many legendary fighters and treasures, could have been lost because of the growing faith of humanity. Only one account of the kingdom was found from the Dim Years: a story of a man named Oisín.

Diarmuid had sent his daughter across the sea on an enchanted horse to find a husband, and she chose a young warrior named Oisín from among the Irish tribes. Many speculate that this was an attempt by Diarmuid to reestablish ties with the mortal world, but the plan backfired. Oisín had such a longing for his home that he stole the enchanted horse and escaped back across the sea. He told of wondrous treasures: a diadem that protected its wearer from all harm, a coat of mail that could not be penetrated by any weapon, and a sword that allowed none who saw its blade to escape alive.

While Oisín is long dead, the story has been passed down containing accurate descriptions of the Land of Youth, as witnessed by other Autumn fae. According to the legend, Oisín was gone for several hundred years but only spent a week among the fae. Some speculate that Diarmuid might not even know that the War of Seasons ended, and that there may still be some way of re-establishing contact with his kingdom.

The Frozen Lake

In the mountains of Burgundy sits a lake that is inexplicably frozen throughout the year, despite the local temperate climate. On the warmest days of summer, puddles do not even form atop the flat sheet of ice; and fires built on its surface do not seem to melt it. A group of werewolves has made its home around this lake, apparently attracted to the strange and magical frozen expanse — they know nothing of the two for whom the lake is an eternal prison.

The War of Ice

Tandoor's coup during the war (see p. 148) led to the disappearance of two fugitives, Davidian and Kapherah. The Summer and Spring inanimae fled the battlefield, knowing they could not return to their respective Courts and fearing the retribution Luxcian would inflict if he were ever to find them. What they did not account for, however, was the unlikely alliance of Halostian and Blind Nyx, which resulted from Davidian's and Kapherah's collusion.

The two camped at the edge of a lake in the mountains, hoping to find some way to address their situation. Their alliance ultimately a failure, Davidian blamed Kapherah for his fall from grace; and the two fell to arguing. They did not know that Blind Nyx had personally tracked the pair through the wilds out of pure hatred and spite, and they did

not hear her as she attacked. The fight was short and brutal, but it was not the Winter-kin's intent to kill. Using powerful magic to bind her prey, she sent a hideously deformed sprite to summon Halostian.

Sealed Fate

While it had originally been Blind Nyx's intent to grind the two inanimae into slush and drink them, Halostian suggested a crueler punishment. Along with three other firstborn of the Autumn Court, he forced Davidian and Kapherah to assume their elemental forms of water and ice, and siphoned their energy for a sinister rite. Halostian bound their essences to the nearby lake, fusing water and ice with arcane and complex rituals. Their minds still alive and active, but their bodies bound within the lake, the two inanimae have spent the last several centuries watching the world pass them by.

Very few fae know the ultimate fate of Davidian and Kapherah, and those Spring and Summer-kin who do seek ways of breaking the curse that imprisons them. Both Davidian and Kapherah are heralded as legendary fighters and strategists; and in hindsight, many feel Luxcian's reaction was extreme. A large settlement of werewolves now surrounds the lake, however, and any attempts to free the pair would require dealing with these violent and unpredictable creatures.

One notable attempt in AD 1215 prompted a brief war with the beasts that ended badly for all parties. The Spring Court had long attempted to penetrate the tightly protected area, at first attempting to replace the children of the werewolves' human kin with changelings. Such trickery was unerringly found out by the werewolves, who could sense the child was not of their kind; but ultimately a firstborn named Gervon managed to develop a relationship with a werewolf female that produced a changeling son.

Before the boy came of age, the Winter Court learned of the plot and attacked the wolves in their homes, hoping to destroy the young changeling before he could get close to Davidian and Kapherah. The Winter-kin drove the werewolves back, but their overt aggression made the beasts instinctively protect their human kin. Hoping to defend the child, an agent of the Spring Court approached the wolf leader after a failed attempt at parlay, telling him to hold out until spring, when their enemy's power would wane.

The Spring-kin had hoped the wolves could hold out, vowing to enter the fray at the turn of the season; but by March the Winter-kin had accomplished their mission and were in retreat. The wolves pursued, howling and proclaiming their victory, but the changeling child had been stolen away in the night by the Winter Court, effectively stalling the efforts of the Spring fae to restore the lost heroes.

(The werewolves, of course, have their own take on this story. See **Dark Ages: Werewolf** for more information.)

The Lost Forge

During the War of Seasons, the faerie realms connected with the ancient Hellenic culture enjoyed great prosperity. The peoples of ancient Mycenae and Athens respected the nymphs of the forests and streams, leaving small offerings and building grand temples to spirits and gods both real and imagined. Oaths were formed with entire civilizations as the humans told the stories of the fae and other supernatural creatures across vast territories.

The spread of Christianity has been particularly hard on the faerie realms hidden among the rocky crags and islands of the now-lost Hellenic culture. As churches and chapels were built over the entrances to kingdoms and courts, the humans slowly forgot their oaths and neglected their temples. The fae have fled to smaller islands that still cling to the old ways, but faith in the One God follows quickly on their heels.

One of the most pivotal domains in the time leading up to the Battle of Stone was the haven of a Summer-kin fire inanimae. His domain was simply called The Forge, and he was called by many different names. The Greeks often associated tales of his workshop with their god Hephaestus, while the Romans attributed such stories to Vulcan. Among fae, he was simply known as the Keeper of the Forge, and he rarely left the fires of his domain.

The golden treasures wrought in the fires of the Forge were legendary, and often spoken of as the possessions of gods—Poseidon's trident, which caused devastating earthquakes and tidal waves; Apollo's bow, which unerringly fired arrows of pure sunlight; Ares' chariot, which fomented chaos and discord among all who gazed upon it. Though most are now lost, the weapons he forged for the Summer Court often turned the tide of pitched battle.

After the Battle of Stone, the Courts retreated to their places of power and the intensity of the war decreased drastically. With no major battles, fewer fae sought the Forge, and its Keeper had even less interest in venturing out among humans. As his oaths were forgotten or ignored, the Forge broke away from the mortal world. Some believe that countless unclaimed treasures wait to be found, and more than a few quests have begun with the promise of legendary weapons for those who can find a way the Keeper's realm.

The Devil's Coins

Villagers spin countless tales concerning faerie gold. Bags of gold coins that disappear or turn to wood once the illusion fades, pots of gold hidden away or buried beneath the roots of a tree, even coins that find their way back to their owner when spent. Countless types of enchanted coins find their way into mortal hands, with various effects, as such objects are guaranteed to attract the attention of humans. Many such treasure items are malicious in nature,

using greed to lure unwary mortals into traps or to bind them unwillingly into an oath.

Three firstborn brothers of the Winter Court, knowing that, aside from lust, greed was humanity's most potent flaw, forged the Devil's Coins. They created hundreds of gold coins, each with a strange and hideous face imprinted on one side, and enchanted them to create trods into a hidden, underground realm. They then scattered the coins along roadways and paths across Europe.

If a human, or fae for that matter, picks up one of the coins during the hours when the sun lights the sky, nothing happens at all, and the coin can be carried safely for miles. Those who pick up one of these fateful coins during the night, however, are immediately transported to a dark and damp underground realm where gold coins cover the ground and malformed shapes move in the darkness. The brothers see their human captives as playthings, trapped in a world lit by sputtering torches. They chase their quarry through the maze-like caverns, relishing the screams, and eventually eat their prey alive—often as new victim looks on in horror.

The coins have been mostly lost over time—either melted down and recast, thus breaking the enchantment, or simply misplaced. Many undoubtedly remain hidden around the world, just waiting to be found.

Legends of the Fae

Some names resonate among the fae as belonging to great heroes, leaders, traitors or villains. The stories of these individuals have spread across the landscape of the Dark Medieval, inspiring awe and fear in the hearts and minds of fae from Scandinavia to Northern Africa. Most recognized are those who played key roles in the War of Seasons or in the subsequent Oath-Truce, but many other names are carried on the lips of faerie storytellers and minstrels.

Halostian

Origin: Firstborn

Court: Autumn

Background: Perhaps the most storied of the four Seasonal Court leaders in the War of Seasons, Halostian was known most for his cunning and intellect. Not as militant and overtly aggressive as Luxcian or Blind Nyx, nor as conciliatory as Dame Sadiyah, he worked the rivalries between the other Courts to his own advantage. During the war itself, Halostian won many Solstice fae to his cause, and often waited for his enemies to attack each other before entering the fray.

Unlike most Autumn-kin, Halostian focused much of his time on expanding his control over the Dominions; though he also spent considerable time studying the history and political intrigues of both faerie and human culture. At times he had been labeled Humanist,

Constantinian and Militant, shifting his agendas periodically to confuse and disorient his enemies — and his retainers. As much as he played a dangerous game of feints and bluffs with the Seasonal Courts, he played an



even more delicate one balancing the myriad threats to his power.

While Halostian often pitted his closest advisors and retainers against one another, each trying to shine more brightly than the next, he also gained their respect and admiration. Any would have leapt at the chance to displace him and rule, but none bore him open malice other than as an obstacle to succession. When it was reported that he fell at the Battle of Stone, many Autumn-kin wept; and as much as they feared him, his enemies also mourned the passing of a worthy adversary.

The last chapter in Halostian's life may not yet have been written, however. Though many clearly remember him falling on the battlefield, his body was never properly identified. Quite a few Autumn fae, as well as significant numbers of Solstice fae, still believe there may be some chance he survived the conflict, though the years of silence have planted seeds of doubt in even the most hopeful.

Some believe he has used the time to quietly observe the situation and develop a new strategy, not wanting to reveal himself too soon; others speculate that he has spent the years questing for some legendary treasure or forgotten ritual that will assure Autumn victory. Wild theories even pit Halostian and Drail against one another in a shadow conflict, each seeking to cajole the Solstice fae to his banner and gaining ever more spies and contacts throughout all Four Courts.

Tandoor

Origin: Changeling

Court: Summer

Background: Long a servant of Luxcian, with little or no real place in the hierarchy of the Summer Court, Tandoor rose quickly to prominence after the Battle of Ice. Though he was still often disrespected by Luxcian and other elders in the Summer Court, the opportunities he created for himself and all Summer-kin changelings proved one of the most far-reaching effects of the War of Seasons.

After discovering and foiling Davidian's insubordination, Tandoor enjoyed the command of a small unit of warriors. Success followed success, and he emerged as a quite capable military leader. Even more than his exploits at the Battle of Ice, his brilliant military career won ever more respect for changelings within the Summer Court.



The small taste of status fueled his ambition for more, and Tandoor fought his way up through the Summer hierarchy. When Luxcian finally fell, a power gap opened that many firstborns sought to fill. Though Tandoor knew he had no chance of leading the Summer legions, he saw this as a unique opportunity. Throwing his support behind a firstborn with sympathy for changelings, he continued his unprecedented rise in power.

Tandoor has become increasingly militant during the Dim Times and is anxious for the Oath-Truce to end. Without conflict with other Courts, he has had little opportunity to advance any further. His ambitions have grown along with his status, and he uses the admiration of his fellow changelings as political clout to fuel his goals.

Drail

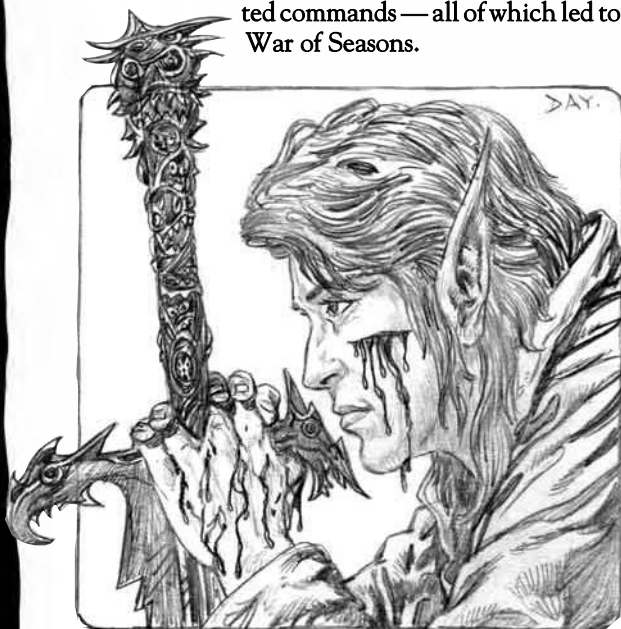
Origin: Firstborn

Court: Solstice

Background: Though his is one of the most infamous names in fae history, much of Drail's background is shrouded in mystery. While the Four Courts often find him responsible for the War of Seasons, the Solstice fae alternately look to him as the best or worst thing to happen to their non-Court in all of history. Even so, scholars disagree over whether this icon of subversive plotting ever existed in the first place, or if he is a falsehood given form and voice.

The most accepted story is that Drail was a child of Summer firstborns who rebelled against the oppressive structure of his Court, though others claim he is of Autumn descent and was too violent and feral for the Dusk folk. Either way, his Fostering made him question the ways the world worked. He became ambitious for power, and supremely disrespectful of those who kept it from him.

Drail was branded Solstice and exiled; he quickly disappeared from fae society, but developed relationships with other Solstice-kin while they traveled between courts as couriers and spies. Looking in the dark places of the world, he discovered Solstice assassins and mercenaries all with an open ear to his plan for a unified Solstice Court that would rule over the arrogant Seasonal Courts. As Drail gained support, he crafted oaths with beggars and thieves, couriers and courtesans, the lowest rungs of human society. Over time, he established a network of informants and plants willing to obey his carefully plotted commands — all of which led to the War of Seasons.



His plan supposedly backfired when a saboteur was caught and tortured by the Summer-kin, revealing Drail's shadow society and the pains he had taken to lead the realms of faerie to war. Revealed as the mastermind behind

the conflict, Drail was hounded by agents of all Courts and could no longer manipulate events from the shadows. The complex web he hoped would vault him to power torn away, Drail disappeared once again.

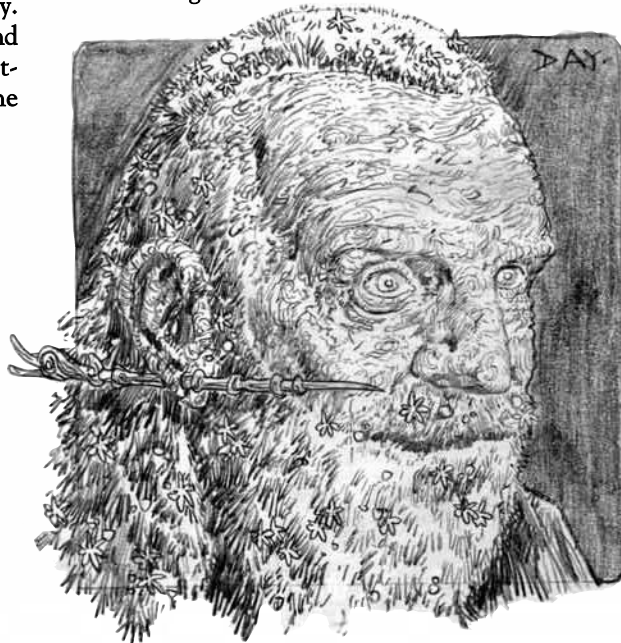
While firstborns claiming to be Drail surface from time to time, most suspect the Warbringer would never announce himself so overtly. Without definite proof of his death, time only works in his favor — and the end of the Oath-Truce offers countless opportunities to manipulate the fae into ultimately fulfilling his goals.

Avallach

Origin: Firstborn

Court: Spring

Once a powerful and influential king of the fae, worshipped by humans as a god defending the passage to the Celtic Otherworld, Avallach has been reduced to a shadow of his former glory, desperately fighting to keep his kingdom from slipping forever into the Mists. When Joseph of Arimathea first set foot in Glastonbury, disturbing dreams foretelling the destruction of faeriekind under the heel of a new god began to plague the king. Not understanding the significance of these visions, Avallach visited the fledgling Christian mission but was repelled by the faith of Joseph. He returned to Ynys Witrin in a panic, convinced his dreams spelled doom for the fae, and sent messengers to his allies warning them of this new threat.



For his troubles, Avallach became a laughingstock, called paranoid by his friends and allies who ignored his prophetic words. He tried to destroy the new faith, but his best efforts only served to drive more humans to the banner of the One God. Withdrawing from the War of Seasons, Avallach focused instead on the dealings of humans and the spread of Christianity, fighting against its expansion at every opportu-

nity. When his daughter Morgan came to him pleading for the life of a Christian king, he not only refused her request but banished her forever from his kingdom.

The last century has found Avallach held in far better esteem among the fae; he has even gained the title Avallach the Wise. Implored by many to attend the gathering that resulted in the Oath-Truce, the king refused to leave his kingdom, fearing it would no longer be there when he returned. As the fae have grown to realize the power of human faith, scholars and emissaries have arrived at Ynys Witrin hoping to speak with the king; they pore over his diaries and histories in hopes of finding some clue as to the future fate of faeriekind.

Salih the Hidden

Origin: Inanimae

Court: Autumn

Background: The sands of the desert are beautiful and seductive, seemingly soft and smooth, blowing gently in the breeze beneath a cloudless blue sky. But deserts are treacherous. The gentle breeze can become a sandstorm in minutes, while an unobstructed path might sink away beneath the feet.



Amidst the winding passages and huddled tents of the Grand Bazaar lurks a devil, as beautiful and perilous as the desert sand that birthed him. While many fear the complicated bargains offered by Autumn merchants and peddlers, and others fear the cutpurses and brigands who roam the streets, there exists a powerful and deceiving entity behind it all: a method, and master, who lurks behind the madness.

Salih has moved with the Bazaar as long as memory, and some speculate it was he who forged the oaths that govern the tent city. The other denizens of the Bazaar may

offer grand treasures and exotic beasts, but Salih peddles information. The inanimae supposedly knows the secrets of life and death, of magic and the origins of the fae, of alliances and conspiracies. His knowledge, however, comes with a heavy price; and his bargains make the contracts of the Bazaar merchants seem like childish word games.

Some who have dealt with Salih have died in pursuit of some bit of knowledge asked in trade, while others have traded their own memories, only to feel their newly won knowledge slip through their minds like sand through a sieve. Legends tell of fae who learned the secrets of the universe, but wholly lost the ability to use language when they attempted to convey their insight to others.

Not all bargains are so dire, and smaller pieces of information command less in return; often the payment is unearthing the secrets of others — which Salih then uses to fulfill previous agreements. The risks of dealing with the sand inanimae are great, and precious few come away from the encounter with more than they brought, but there are always those desperate enough for answers.

Lord Taulandryn

Origin: Firstborn

Court: Winter

Background: Rumors paint Lord Taulandryn as an inanimae born of the darkness itself, or some monstrous creature of the abyss such as a T'arrkel or other bestial aberration of Underbridge. Those rare few who have looked upon his face and survived tell barely coherent tales — and forever fear the dark. Legends speak of a changeling who gazed upon Taulandryn and later set her house ablaze while still inside, hoping to keep the night at bay.

The Winter-kin firstborn lives at the heart of Underbridge, deep in the void. The bridges to and from his domain are obscured by impenetrable blackness, though faint will o' the wisps dance in the dark shroud, seemingly



calling out in shadowy voices to any passersby in an attempt to lure prey into the darkness. A Summer firstborn named Tamarioc claims to have survived an encounter with the Midnight Lord, escaping only by Unleashing the full power of the Day Dominion. Most discount his story, however, as a vainglorious attempt at gaining fame and prestige.

This is Tamarioc's tale: He saw a tall man with pale, translucent skin that revealed blue veins creeping up his cheeks toward pitch black eyes. His black hair absorbed the light of the bright, pulsing orb Tamarioc had produced to cut the darkness, and a sort of halo of black flame made the air shimmer and the light dim. Stunned by the awesome and powerful beauty, Tamarioc felt the darkness press in around him, as though the shadows were tightening cords — and Lord Taulandryn reached out with a skeletally thin, clawed hand. Terrified, Tamarioc Unleashed the powers of Day and released a shockwave of fire and blazing light.

The most disturbing aspect of the tale is that Tamarioc was not in Underbridge itself, but merely crossing a bridge in the mortal world when he encountered Taulandryn. The explosion destroyed the bridge and set the fields ablaze for a hundred yards in every direction, but there was no trace of Tamarioc's attacker. Those who believe this story consider it a dire omen of things to come, and a sure sign that the might of Underbridge has grown drastically since the Battle of Stone.

Damiana

Origin: Changeling

Court: Solstice



Background: A child of prophecy, the strings of fate have both bound and supported Damiana throughout her very long life. The daughter of firstborns of the Spring Court, she was exchanged with the infant child of a pagan

priestess among the Germanic tribes. The priestess knew the baby was special and precious to the Fair Folk, and she took great pains to raise her as she would her own daughter — following the oath she made to Damiana's fae parents.

Ten years later, the village was attacked by Christian soldiers who destroyed the temple and killed all of the priestesses within. A farmhand, not knowing the child's importance, saved Damiana and ran into the wilderness with the girl. The moment the priestess died, her true daughter, now wise in the ways of the faerie Courts, screamed out in pain and died at her foster mother's feet. Searching in vain for their changeling child, Damiana's parents believed her dead.

It was fifty years before they would discover otherwise. Damiana had become a priestess herself, constantly moving to avoid the expansion of the Christian Church. She was plagued by waking visions, and her dreams provided hints at future events. Learning to trust these strange abilities, Damiana became a beacon to her people, obviously favored by the gods with long life. At 60 years of age, she foresaw the abduction of a baby by a powerful woman and resolved to protect the child.

Standing as guardian over the helpless infant, she came face to face with her painfully beautiful faerie mother. Each knew the other by sight and feel, and Damiana's mother whisked her away to the realms of faerie — the lost changeling returned, the child of prophecy! Damiana rejected her fae family angrily, bitter at having been denied her birthright and left to fend for herself. When told of the ways of the fae, of the Saining, she refused outright, not wanting any part of her eternally young and painfully beautiful parents.

Rebuffed by their daughter, Damiana's parents branded her Solstice fae, casting her out and claiming she had died a half-century before. Since that time, Damiana has become a true seer and prophetess, accessing the Dominions of the fae to see ever farther and more clearly into the future. Over the centuries, her reputation as an oracle has spread, and she has sought sanctuary from the growing threat of Echoes in the Amber Palace. Many fae seek her cryptic revelations and any insight she might provide regarding the world after the Oath-Truce ends.

Creatures Dark and Bright

More than just faeries walk abroad in the Dark Medieval, though the War of Seasons and the ensuing Oath-Truce often allow the fae to lose sight of the other forces active in the world. While contact with these beings is rare, the fae are not wholly ignorant of the intrigues of the vampires, nor are they unconcerned with the spread of mortal inquisitors. The past century has awakened the fae once again to the existence of these beings, and some have even taken it upon themselves to make contact in the hopes of gaining valuable allies for the coming conflict.

Vampires

Fae often view these creatures of the night with some condescension, a race of human parasites that live a sort of half-life and hide from the light of the sun. Any who have studied the Day Dominion see vampires as weak and fragile creatures, and the Summer and Spring Courts pay them virtually no mind at all. Even the presence of a Summer firstborn sometimes proves too much for these walking corpses, causing them to flee in panic.

Fae of the Autumn Court, however, take somewhat more notice of the intricacies of vampiric society. While they may see the machinations of these creatures as somewhat petty and pointless (they always seem to end the same way), the interplay between rival vampires at times offers entertainment, as though a vast and complex drama were playing itself out before their eyes. The fae quickly tire of such observations, though some feel the need to occasionally meddle in vampiric affairs.

The Winter Court has perhaps the most interest in the vampires, and generally has the most contact. Winter fae of Eastern Europe feel a certain connection to the Tzimisce, sharing many of their dark appetites and cold, depraved impulses. Some Winter-kin mimic the Fiends' methods, using their Dominions to warp and twist their victims, sometimes even creating horrific miens patterned after their flesh-crafted vampire neighbors.

Open hostility has erupted at times with vampires, normally when one of the parasites attempts to make its haven in or near a place of faerie power. The Tremere

A WINTER COURT CHILDREN'S STORY

Deep in the Carpathian Mountains, among dark and twisting caverns, lies a hidden cathedral made wholly of the flesh of humans. The archways and walls pulse with life, and the skin and muscle is tender and sweet from lack of strain. There were once two young changelings, not much older than you, a boy and a girl, who stumbled upon this delightful cavern. Lured inside by the scent of flesh, they began to gorge themselves, running along the corridors and eating of the floors and walls. When they had filled their stomachs, they fell asleep in that wonderful place, dreaming of another day of feast and play. But that day never came.

It is said a beast lives in that cavern, a sorcerer that tears the skin from humans to decorate its home. The boy and girl screamed as they woke, bound in cords of dripping muscle, their own skin slowly peeling away from their bodies. It is said they still adorn the walls of the beast's cathedral, half awake and half asleep, hungrily watching the beast lure in its prey like some twisted spider.



propensity for building havens on nexuses of magical energy has brought them into conflict with each of the various Courts, though such conflict seldom ends well for the vampires. Periods of cooperation are rare, though alliances have been made with members of the Autumn and Winter Courts from time to time. Most notably, Androjai, the new Krivê of Lithuania, has made a shaky alliance with several powerful members of the Winter Court in order to solidify his control over the region. These fae have levied heavy oaths upon the Malkavian, which they plan to enforce with the full extent of their powers.

Systems

- **Feeding:** Vampires cannot feed on inanimae, as they do not possess blood. A vampire who attempts to feed on a water inanimae receives only a mouthful of water for her trouble (woe, then, to the vampire who feeds on a fire inanimae). Fae blood of other Origins, however, generates potent effects. All system information given is for changeling blood, and effects last until all faerie blood has been spent. The blood of firstborn is twice as potent as that of changelings, increasing the following effects twofold. For example, changeling Summer blood adds two dice to soak sunlight and fire, while firstborn Summer blood adds four — and firstborn Autumn blood doubles the radius of its negative effect.

Summer blood adds two dice to soak sunlight and fire, but causes a soft, false sunlight to radiate from the skin, dealing one level of lethal damage per turn to other vampires. Spring blood causes drastic mood swings, increasing Charisma by 1 point when in good spirits but raising the difficulty to resist frenzy by +1. Autumn blood allows a vampire to read the surface thoughts of others (as *Auspex 4*), but all thoughts of those within a fifteen-foot radius intrude upon her mind (spend a Willpower point per scene to focus on any specific thoughts). Winter blood increases any one Physical Attribute by 1 point, but increases the need for blood so that any blood consumed yields only half the normal blood points. Solstice blood has no special effects.

- **Disciplines:** Fae who practice the Day Dominion are skilled at controlling minds and are resistant to mind-affecting Disciplines such as Dominate and Presence. Those practicing the Night Dominion are similarly skilled at shielding their minds and enjoy the same resistance. For example, a vampire with levels of Dominate cannot successfully use the Discipline on a faerie who has equal or greater levels of the Day or Night Dominion.

Disciplines which cause physical alterations such as the Mortis power *Wither* (Grave's Decay 3) and *Vicissitude* can be used as normal, but inanimae can revert to their elemental forms to nullify these effects.

- **Mists:** Cainites on the Road of Humanity are more vulnerable to the Mists. A fae's player need spend only 1 Mists point to Bestow Kenning on a Prodigal vampire.


Werewolves

Compared to their interactions with vampires, the fae have had far more frequent dealings with the various shapeshifters roaming the wilds, and specifically with werewolves. At points during the Golden Age and War of Seasons, the faerie Courts and the werewolves alternately fought with and against one another, forging temporary alliances and engaging in pitched woodland battles. Such interactions happened most often with werewolves living among the northern peoples, prompting stories of the Tuatha de Danaan among the Celts and the Vanir among the Norse and Germanic cultures. Some fae scholars have speculated that such mythic tales as Cuchulain's war with Queen Mebhdh and Beowulf's battle with Grendel are human attempts to explain dealings between the fae and the werewolves of those cultures.

Much of the conflict between fae and shapeshifters stems from competition over sites of great magical power or importance to one group or the other. Legendary battles have erupted over the rights to a certain hill or grove of trees, with neither side holding a definite advantage. Such disputes are infrequently settled through violence; more often diplomatic solutions are found during times of truce. The fae have forged many oaths with the werewolves over time, most often concerning the protection or avoidance of specific areas of wilderness or sacred ground.

Aside from territorial struggles, shapeshifters have at times taken sides in disputes between the faerie Courts; sometimes they have been tricked into fighting the most brutal battles, other times they have accidentally stumbled upon some fae conflict. The so-called War of Silver and Iron in the British Isles began when the Summer Court convinced the werewolves that the Winter fae were creatures of darkest evil bent on destroying the world. The fight against these twisted firstborn monsters, dubbed Fomorians, went better than any could have hoped, turning into a rout of the Winter Court and forcing them to retreat from the region for a time. Whether one of the werewolves discovered the faerie deception or the Summer fae involved tried to push their control over the creatures too far is not known, but the resulting conflict escalated quickly into a war between the recent allies.

The wolves entered battles armed with the same iron weapons they used against the Winter Court, turning the knowledge granted by the Summer-kin against the Court; while the fae responded in kind with weapons of purest silver. After a short period, the fae began to see such mongrel aggression as beneath them and withdrew from open hostilities, which typically prompted the battle-hungry werewolves to declare their victory. The few Summer fae who continued to harass the wolves from time to time were likely seen as the last remnants of some great force, but the Summer-kin had merely returned their attention to the seasonal conflict.



Small groups of werewolves have also fought for one Court or another as part of an alliance or fulfillment of an oath, gaining powerful friends and enemies in the process. The latter befell another breed of shapeshifter, the Ceilican werewolves, who had long been friends and allies of the faerie Courts. Their fickle natures and shifting allegiances won the animosity of both the Summer and Winter Courts, and the Ceilican have avoided all contact with the fae since that time.

Systems

Very few system adjustments must be made with regards to werewolves. The fae do not suffer the effects of Delirium, and players of fae characters need spend only 1 Mists point to Bestow Kenning on homid Garou. Also, while fetishes are similar to oathcrafted treasures in nature, the oaths used to create these items call upon Gnosis, and the fae cannot activate them.

Mages

Some fae speculate the magic of mortal sorcerers is simply a derivative of their own Dominions, or magical knowledge stolen and adapted for human use. The many tales of mages capturing faeries and performing strange rituals designed to siphon magical power out of their bodies support this latter theory. With this in mind, the fae make every effort to keep their magic hidden from mages, lest these human wizards find some way to steal their abilities away from them.

Mages' insatiable curiosity and desire to find places of magical power pit the fae against these mortal sorcerers far more often than the fae would like. While some of these wizards respect the fae and their realms, others seek to dissect and study faeries to learn their secrets — or worse, look to destroy the “pagan” fae with the powers of the One God. The fae have positive, albeit tenuous relationships with the former, more nature-oriented wizards; but these are overshadowed by their antagonism against the latter. Elders warn young and foolish fae against conspiring with these sorcerers, though some fae have developed cautious relationships with mages despite the risks.

Systems

Less-principled mages have long seen the fae as veritable fonts of Quintessence, and think nothing of grinding their bones or draining their blood as sources of Tass. For the most part, what mages consider “faeries” are often lesser spirits — sprites or semi-sentient monsters of the wild. On occasion, though, a mage may recognize and subdue one of the true fae and attempt to drain her quarry of Quintessence. While each Fellowship has different methods of extracting Tass, the results are usually the same.

The firstborn naturally provide the most magical energy. The blood of a living firstborn can yield up to 5 Quintessence

points once per week, while 10 may be extracted from a nonliving body. Changelings provide the least Tass. Their blood yields up to 2 Quintessence points per week, with 5 harvested by destroying the whole body. Inanimae are slightly more problematic, as their bodies have no blood. By manipulating their raw elemental material, either through severing body parts or catching inanimae while in their natural forms, 3 Quintessence points may be drawn per week. A dead inanimae yields 7 points of Quintessence.

Of course, capturing and restraining an unwilling fae often proves difficult, as his ability to Unleash his Dominions often leads to his escape or the mage's ultimate death. Foolish mages have caused earthquakes and massive conflagrations when an imprisoned fae's escape attempt went awry.

Inquisitors

Perhaps the newest and most dire threat to the fae is the growing number of inquisitors abroad hoping to stamp out pagan beliefs and destroy “demons” wherever they may be found. This zealousness has driven many faeries away from their places of power, and even pushed entire kingdoms into the Mists, as faithful servants of the Church root out what they see as evil. The event that ultimately led to the Oath-Truce was triggered, after all, by an inquisitor, awakening the fae to the power wielded by mortals — specifically faithful agents of the Church.

Conflicts with inquisitors often end badly for the fae, save those few backed by the power of significant oaths. Most prefer to flee from these agents of faith rather than be burdened with the inevitable Echoes a direct confrontation causes. Inquisitors are those mortals the elder fae point to when enforcing the importance of oaths upon newly Sained members of their Courts, and some fear that all humans have the potential for such power if left unchecked.

Systems

Inquisitors wield tremendous power over the fae. They may risk Conviction on Echoes rolls, and even spend Conviction to add successes to those rolls. Being human, they are subject to the Mists, but they may mitigate the effect in a manner similar to resisting Thralldom (see p. 162 of *Dark Ages: Inquisitor*).

Creatures of the Wilds

Besides the various supernatural beings walking the world, countless magical beasts lurk just beyond the edges of mortal thought. If the stories of villagers are to be believed, every dark place off the well-worn path is home to some slaving beast just waiting for its prey to stumble or falter. Minstrels and troubadours weave fantastic tales of demon-stags, winged horses and impossibly large falcons, while the stories of the saints even include references to lake monsters driven back with the power of faith and the

vanquishing of dragons. While many such stories are exaggerated or embellished for entertainment's sake, a fair number hide kernels of truth.

Feral Sprites

Sprites appear throughout the world in places rich with magical energy. As these beings are made of the same essential elements as faeries, they tend to seek out their fully formed brethren and develop relationships with them. This does not always happen, however, and many sprites are not bound to fae masters. These feral sprites can be malicious, helpful or indifferent toward their fae cousins, depending on many diverse factors.

Sprites may instead seek out humans for companionship, performing minor duties for them or protecting their children from harm. Such creatures are benevolent and kind; they may, as they grow in power and sentience, begin to instinctively create rudimentary oaths, asking favors of their mortal patrons in return for their services. While these oaths have no power to protect the sprites from Echoes, they do their best to enforce these agreements out of instinct.

Spurned sprites are more and more common, as Christianity spreads across the Dark Medieval. These poor creatures are either driven away from areas they called home for decades or even centuries, set adrift in the wilderness; or they are offended to the point that they grow vindictive and malicious. Such sprites can turn on their erstwhile patrons and cause all manner of mischief, even going so far as to lure hungry wolves or trolls to their patrons' doorsteps.

A sprites may also be abandoned, driven away by a disappointed fae master or even cut loose when its master dies suddenly. Often an abandoned sprite tries to find a new faerie to call master; but sometimes that is not an option, and the sprite might strike out on its own. Such creatures may try to fulfill their masters' last wishes, or complete final quests. Legends tell of extraordinary sprites who returned to their masters' courts with mythical treasures in their hands after their masters died trying to find those very items.

Truly feral sprites are the rarest, having had little to no contact with fae or mortals from the time they emerged from the ether. These creatures may be intensely curious when they meet their first faerie or human, or intensely hostile. Feral fae can become quite territorial, especially if they feel their homes are threatened. A sacred spring containing a powerful treasure may be guarded by dozens of feral sprites, each willing to sacrifice its life to save its home or the treasure in it.

It is possible to cajole these sprites into conversation, and even to adopt them as companions or servants. This of course depends on the temperament of the sprite and its individual situation, not to mention the charm and charisma of the fae in question. (For more information on

sprites and their Charms, see Chapter Three: Characters and Drama.)

Firebird

The firebird is a brilliantly colored creature from the Slavic lands of Eastern Europe. The rarity and beauty of this animal have spawned epic quests to capture one alive, most of which end in disaster due to the creature's magical aura.

The feathers of the firebird radiate a strange energy, causing all who draw too close to become hopelessly obsessed. Even a single feather can prompt a man to hunt for months in the wilderness, abandoning his family and farm. Live firebirds are worse, causing intense emotional swings in those who gaze upon them. Kindness leads quickly to love and then infatuation, while frustration becomes anger and hate. An innocent glance kindles the fires of intense lust or jealousy, and unease spirals into fear and paranoia. Kings have spent fortunes to acquire firebirds as pets, only watch their courts and kingdoms crumble in turmoil.

Though dangerous, some fae actively seek these creatures in the hopes they can magically shield themselves from the birds' effects. The feathers of the firebird are potent ingredients for any potions or powders that affect mood or emotions, and less savory faeries even use them as punishment for humans who have wronged them in some way.

Each turn of exposure to a firebird feather requires a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to resist the need to find more of the feathers, or a live bird. Each round in which a character gazes upon a live firebird requires a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to keep her surging emotions in check. Cantrips that shield the mind or calm the spirit can be used to block these effects.

Giants and Trolls

Two races of creatures often confused with the fae are giants and trolls. While some fae scholars speculate that these beasts are somehow connected to faeries (some form of distant cousins), there has been no conclusive evidence to back those claims.

Giants live in the far north of Scandinavia and have very little interaction with fae or humans. Their massive bodies, often well over 20 feet tall, are akin to heavily-muscled humans with rough, stony skin, prompting theories that they may be distant relatives of stone inanimae. Some have even shown modest control over ice, fire and other elements, further supporting such speculation.

The Winter Court mostly ignores these savages after several conflicts ended to its great disadvantage, though some of the Winter firstborn have considered extending a hand of friendship before the other Courts manage to win the giants' favor. The giants are somewhat slow thinkers and their light has all but gone out in the world, but even in small numbers their presence could turn the tables were the War of Seasons to resume.

Trolls can be found throughout the wilds of Northern Europe, but their unpredictable natures and violent temperaments make them far too risky to approach in friendship. These creatures resemble large, muscular humans, but coarse hair runs from their heads down across their broad shoulders and backs to a short, thick tail. Most fae ignore or avoid these beasts unless they threaten a human settlement protected by oaths. Winter-kin are sometimes known to develop tenuous relationships with trolls, often seeing them as pets or playthings to be unleashed upon the unsuspecting.

Systems: Giants can grow to immense size and are quite physically impressive. While humans can withstand seven health levels of damage, giants can withstand a minimum of five times that amount, and up to 20 times that for an elder warrior. They are more forces of nature than creatures to be used as simple combat antagonists.

Trolls, however, make for impressive physical opponents, although encountering one outside the deep forests of Northern Europe is exceedingly rare. Their traits are given below.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Brawl 4, Crafts 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Melee 3, Survival 2

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, -1 x 3, -2 x 3, -3, Incapacitated

Armor: +1B

Attacks: Fist for five dice (bashing) or by weapon (usually clubs or other heavy blunt weapons)

CONCERNING MAGES

Some mages have spent many years studying mythical creatures and various types of "faeries" in the hopes of gaining some greater understanding of magic. More often than not, their theories and conjectures are entirely wrong, as it is all but impossible for humans to adequately grasp the true nature of the fae or of most magical beings. Mages have a tendency to try to label everything in neat categories, even if those categories are entirely incorrect. In fact, much of their speculation on faeries comes from the study of beasts and sprites, rather than true fae.

In game terms, this means that, for the purposes of this book, the sections detailing faeries in **Dark Ages: Mage** actually refer to non-fae creatures that either mimic the magical abilities of faeries or have simply been confused with the fae by scholars over-eager to classify the unexplained. Feel free to use the creatures listed in **Dark Ages: Mage** and the **Dark Ages Mage Grimoire** as antagonistic creatures, or possibly as templates for sprites or trolls, but don't constrain yourself to the mages' perspective on what is and is not a faerie.

Fire Salamanders

The Greeks speculated that salamanders were akin to fire elementals, living and breeding in flames. This is of course untrue, as salamanders are small, smooth skinned creatures that prefer moist and cool places. A more magical breed of salamander, however, may have given rise to the stories of the Greeks: the fire salamander.

These creatures, while resembling their mundane cousins, are creatures of magic that live mostly in faerie realms beyond the natural world. When threatened, fire salamanders have a powerful defense mechanism — their feet set fire to anything they touch. While this of course excludes stone, metal and dirt, anything that could normally catch fire is immediately set ablaze. A terrified fire salamander set loose in a town could burn every building to the ground before it was stopped, making these creatures incredibly dangerous.

Some disreputable fae transport these animals from faerie realms to sell to unwitting humans, or train them as pets, keeping them in small metal boxes. While fragile and weak, fire salamanders can create a conflagration before anyone realizes the cause of the flames.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1, Perception 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Dodge 2, Stealth 4, Survival 2

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, -5, Crushed

Powers: Immune to Fire (takes no damage from heat or flame), Call Fire (at will, may automatically set combustibles ablaze by touch)

T'arrkel

The abyss of Underbridge spawns twisted, nightmarish creatures beyond the capacity of human understanding, creatures that thrive on pain and survive on the flesh of the living. Some say the T'arrkel are darkness taken form, while others speculate that the abyss of Underbridge leads to demonic realms that spawn these beasts. Whatever their origins, the T'arrkel prey on those who travel the complex pathways of Underbridge.

These creatures resemble the unholy offspring of a spider and a squid, having a hard, chitinous carapace and billowing tentacles. Shrouded in a cloud of magical blackness, T'arrkel are impossible to see in the dark unless they pass in front of something that reflects light. When seen at a distance, these beasts almost appear as black shadows or clouds. Up close, seen in torch light, the T'arrkel have sharp, obsidian fangs and shifting, clawed tentacles that seem to change in shape, constantly growing or melding back into the main body mass. (Most presented with the opportunity to examine the creatures this closely don't live to tell the tale.)

Fire and sunlight cause great pain to the T'arrkel and drive them away to find easier prey — or to regroup and descend upon their attackers in greater numbers. Blunt weapons have no effect on their soft and amorphous bodies, but bladed weapons can carve off pieces of the monsters — which subsequently dissolve into inky black ichor.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Perception 4 (in darkness)/1 (in bright light), Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 3, Stealth 5, Survival 2

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 3, -2 x 3, -3, -5, Dissipated (fire and sunlight inflict aggravated damage as to vampires)

Attacks: Tentacle slash for four dice (lethal); constrict for five dice (bashing); bite for 5 dice (lethal)

Powers: Shadow Form (When using this ability, the T'arrkel takes on a wholly amorphous and intangible shape; while in this form the creature cannot attack or be damaged; size and shape are also malleable, allowing the creature to fit through openings as small as a human fist and expand to the size of an elephant.)

Basilisk

In the deserts of Northern Africa, a dreaded snake despoils the land. Though diminutive in size, the foot-long basilisk more than compensates with its vile and corrosive nature. The creature's very touch causes plants to wilt and die, and its breath is said to burn through rocks. Those foolish enough to ignore its loud and distinctive hiss find themselves paralyzed after looking into its eyes.

Only active at night, the basilisk sleeps during the day in small caves or under rocks. When the sun rises, it retreats to the cool shade, giving rise to the myth that it is terrified of the cock's crow and retreats before it. The only known enemies of the basilisk are weasels and ferrets, which are immune to its poison and will chase it down into its daytime sanctuary. It is rumored that the spittle of a weasel is the only thing that can kill the creature.

The venom of the basilisk, which it can spit 20 feet, is a powerful toxin; it is sometimes used as an ingredient in faerie potions and draughts. The eyes of a basilisk are also powerful magical components for use in paralyzing powders, making the creature a dangerous but valuable prize.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Survival 2

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, -2, -3, -5, Incapacitated (weasel spittle deals aggravated damage)

Attacks: Bite for three dice (lethal), successful strike deals five levels poison damage (lethal); breath for two dice (aggravated)

Powers: Paralyzing Gaze (If a victim looks at the creature's eyes, the basilisk rolls Perception + Alertness [difficulty 5]; successes determine the number of rounds the victim is paralyzed. This action is reflexive.)

Mist Dragons

Stories abound of travelers and sailors who have entered unnaturally dense fogs for hours or days only to find themselves hopelessly lost or off course. These unnatural fogs are avoided by the sensible, for they alter more than just vision — they alter time and space. The unwary caravan that foolishly tries to breach such a fog may find itself hundreds of miles from its original location — or worse, having lost several years of time in the span of a night.

Villagers sometimes refer to this phenomenon as “dragons' breath,” and for good reason. Deep within these magical fogs are diminutive dragons, no larger than cats. Born not in the human world, but in the uncharted expanses between faerie realms, these creatures slip in and out of the mortal world, bringing the chaotic unpredictability of their homes along with them.

Equally at home on land as in water, these beasts are little more than foragers and scavengers, feeding on small rodents, fish, berries or seaweed. Not having true intelligence, they are not malicious; they respond much like raccoons or squirrels when confronted — they instinctively fleeing, though are willing to fight if cornered. Only their mysterious misty breath and ability to slip between worlds sets them apart from any other animal.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Perception 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Climbing 4, Stealth 2, Swimming 4

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, -1 x 2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks: Bite for three dice; claw for two (both lethal)

Powers: Move Between Worlds (The mist dragon moves between the physical world and the magical one at random, most often appearing in regions with sparse population.), Mist Breath (The breath of the mist dragon quickly creates an enveloping fog within an hour of its appearance in the physical world, roughly a mile in diameter; those entering the fog become disoriented, losing track of space and time. If the mist dragon leaves the physical world, all within the fog leave with it, only returning when the dragon does; this may be many years later and many miles away, at the Storyteller's discretion.)

Treasures

The magic of the fae goes beyond the casting of cantrips and Unleashing the potency of Dominions. It flows through plants cultured in faerie realms, items enchanted with fantastic powers, and oathcrafted masterworks

that have strange, unique abilities. Many such treasures are common among the fae — particularly magical herbs, powders and rings — while others are exceedingly rare.

Fae artisans craft new treasures each day, though the legendary relics of the Golden Age far outstrip these trinkets in scope and intensity. While a master craftsman may weave a shawl that kindles feelings of love in all who gaze upon it, a conch shell from ancient times may conjure devastating storms capable of flattening a city. What follows are some sample treasures for use in a fae chronicle, along with suggestions on how to craft new and exotic items.

Cantrips for crafting treasures can be found in Chapter Four: Dominions.

Plants, Potions and Powders

While ordinary plants have myriad properties both harmful and beneficial, those that grow in enchanted groves or faerie realms take on wholly unusual qualities that the fae use to great effect. Stories of rings of mushrooms with roots in other worlds have more truth than mortals know, though the time and process of harvesting these plants often determines the potency of their magic — or whether they retain any magic at all.

The fae use magical plants in many ways, such as enchanted apples that induce sleep when bitten or pipe weed that allows the smoker to see the invisible. Certain herbs and roots find use in draughts and potions designed to evoke specific effects, carefully brewed by fae versed in such arts. Similarly, faerie herbalists dry and powder such plants for a host of reasons — pouches of charmed “faerie dust” can serve a variety of purposes, ranging from simple enchantments to deadly poisons.

Rarer ingredients find use in faerie concoctions that may be difficult and dangerous to acquire. The eyes of a basilisk, for instance, can be used to create a powerful paralyzing powder, while the ichorous remains of a T'arrkel can be used to brew a draught that allows its drinker to fade into the shadows. Rumors of even stranger components, such as the teeth of a chicken or the breath of a fish, surround truly legendary potions — such as those that can raise the dead.

LET THE USER BEWARE

Though the fae tend to cherish these items, keeping them safe and hidden, some do fall into the hands of mortals or other supernatural beings. Faerie treasures and artifacts, while enchanted with magical powers, require no knowledge of magic to use. A magic ring will always charm its wearer, for instance, be that person fae, human or other. Faerie treasures are sometimes bestowed upon worthy humans for a time, or allowed to pass through a mortal family as heirlooms, but these items are closely watched and may be taken back if abused.

SAMPLE PLANTS AND THEIR USES

Acorn	Life, Immortality
Aloe	Grief
Cactus	Endurance
Columbine	Folly
Coriander	Lust
Fir	Time
Gladiolus	Love at first sight
Heather	Luck
Juniper	Protection
Nasturtium	Conquest
Peony	Shame, Anger
Poppy	Sleep
Sage	Wisdom
Snapdragon	Deception
Thyme	Strength, Courage
Yarrow	Healing

Faerie Dust

A fae must have the Gramarye Knowledge and a field of expertise in potions and powders in order to successfully create faerie dust. Creating faerie dust requires the correct materials; gathering the materials is an extended test that requires five successes per effect level of the dust on an Intelligence + Gramarye roll (difficulty 6). After the materials have been assembled, the fae begins the mixing and preparation process. The time required varies depending on what sort of powder the character is creating, but consider three days per effect level to be a good rule of thumb.

The player rolls Wits + Gramarye (difficulty 4 + effect level). Each success creates one “dose” of the potion. Failure means the batch has somehow been tainted and half of the materials damaged (meaning if the character were creating a level-two dust, and the player had accumulated 10 successes for gathering materials, she would now have to accumulate five more for the character to try the mixture again). A botch can have any number of effects: A fire-dust recipe might explode; a sleep-dust recipe might actually be a deadly poison; rage-dust might cause the target to start bleeding from the eyes uncontrollably; and so on. The character won't know exactly what the effects of a botched potion are (and won't even necessarily know that she *has* fouled up the process) until she tries to use the dust.

Most often carried in small pouches, faerie dust must make direct contact with its target to take effect. To throw a handful of powder at a target requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 6); and any distance more than about five feet will disperse the dust and nullify its effects. Strong wind makes such an attempt impossible. Other methods include sprinkling dust on a target from above;

filling a target's gloves or clothes with dust; sprinkling it on food; mixing the dust with liquids to make potions and draughts; or even throwing entire pouches, which explode on impact, to achieve greater distance.

Targets of faerie dust can ordinarily resist the effects by making a Willpower roll. The difficulty is 5 plus the level of the dust being used. Some sample effects follow.

Sleep (Level One) — Target falls into a deep, calm sleep for one hour per dose.

Lust (Level One) — Target has a sudden burning desire for the next person seen of appropriate gender.

Bliss (Level One) — Target feels blissfully happy for the remainder of the scene, lowering the difficulty of social interactions with this individual by -1.

Confusion (Level Two) — Target has difficulty concentrating, increasing the difficulty of all rolls involving a Mental Attribute by +2.

Forgetfulness (Level Two) — Target completely forgets the events of the previous hour as though the time had passed without memorable incident.

Rage (Level Three) — Target flies into a blind rage, attacking anyone in sight, be they friend or foe. This rage lasts for the duration of the scene.

Size Change (Level Four) — Target shrinks to 1/16 its normal size, or grows to four times its normal size, depending on the type of powder used. The effect lasts for one scene. Weaker versions of this powder can cause less drastic effects. For example, at level two, the target may only change to half or twice its normal size.

Pillar of Fire (Level Five) — Target is engulfed in a

pillar of flame causing six levels of aggravated damage. Willpower cannot negate this effect; the target must somehow avoid contact to prevent damage.

Invested Power

Aside from naturally occurring or cultivated treasures, many items exist that have been purposefully enchanted, invested with a certain amount of magic through the advanced use of Dominions. Craftsmen thrive in each Court who empower mundane items with magical properties, or simply create entirely new items with certain added abilities. Some enchanters focus their efforts narrowly, dealing only in rings, for example; while others have a broader scope, perhaps charming various types of clothing. With the end of the Oath-Truce rapidly approaching, more craftsmen are turning their skills towards martial treasures such as swords and armor.

Cabinet Stick

Level One

Stories abound regarding the secret fortunes of the fae, and their ability to disappear seemingly at will; this common treasure has contributed to many of them. Appearing as an ordinary walking stick or staff, the
stick



grants magical access to a cabinet or closet secreted in some far-away faerie realm. By tapping the stick against any cabinet, door, trunk or even the loose bark of a tree, its owner activates the link to a magical storage space. Once the mundane door is enchanted with this treasure, it may be opened once to move things to and from the magical "cabinet." When the door closes, the link is broken. Some fae have used this small pocket realm to hide themselves from danger, emerging from the same cabinet they entered hours later when the threat has past.

Cap of Neglect

Level One

Though these caps don't provide true invisibility, such magic is rarely needed. Those not actively looking for the wearer of this cap simply ignore the fact that she is in the room. As long as she doesn't draw any attention upon herself, such as by speaking or making sudden movements, the wearer of this cap can move about unnoticed. If someone is specifically scanning a room for the wearer or looking to find the source of a noise, the magic does not protect her.

Rings of Linked Sight

Level One

These rings are forged with special enchantments to create a magical bond between them. If the keeper of one ring holds it to her right eye, she sees the keeper of the second as though he were standing only a few feet away. Mists and shadow obscure the environment around the keeper of the second ring, but his form and actions are visible. If the ring's keeper holds it to her left eye, she sees what the keeper of the second sees, as though she were looking through his left eye.

Sealing Needle

Level One

Simple treasures designed as gifts to housemaids and seamstresses in return for oaths, these enchanted needles, when threaded, magically sew any tear or opening they are set to. Depending on the type of thread used, the needle will repair torn clothing, seal the openings on bags of grain or even close open wounds. The charm used to create these treasures is simple, and the needles work just as well on leather, silk or skin. While most uses for these treasures are innocent enough, Winter-kin have been known to use these treasures to seal the mouths, noses and eyes of their victims, or to cut them open and stitch them back together with rough hemp.

Arrow of Midnight Sun

Level Two

These enchanted arrows are favorites of the Summer Court. When fired into the night sky, these arrows burst into radiant light, illuminating a battlefield with the light of the noonday sun for a number of turns equal to the

player's successes on a Dexterity + Archery roll (difficulty 6). This light can be used to drive back creatures of darkness, or simply to create light where there was none. These treasures can be created for use only once, or for repeated use — though the latter requires the archer to find and reclaim the arrow after it falls.

Arrow of Toky Noon

Level Two

Counterparts to the Arrows of Midnight Sun, these arrows are favored by the Winter Court. When fired into the air during the daytime, these arrows darken the sky to the inky blackness of a moonless night.

Vulcan's Hammer

Level Two

Sometimes called a Dwarf's Hammer by those in northern cultures, this hammer is enchanted for the purposes of weapon- and armor-smithing. The tool magically increases the strength of the metal used in creating such items, allowing them to deal and withstand more damage. Any weapons forged with the use of this hammer never need sharpening and deal an additional level of damage during combat. Armor forged with the use of this tool offers an additional soak die. Similar hammers and other tools exist for magical aid in making jewelry, clothing, shoes and various other items.

Pegasus Bridle

Level Three

Whether the mortal stories of winged horses inspired this treasure, or vice versa, is a subject of debate for Humanist scholars. When placed on any animal, normally a horse, the bridle grants the ability of flight until removed. The beast cannot move any faster than it would normally along the ground, or carry any greater weight; and it becomes very skittish and unsure of itself, having no firm ground for traction. The difficulty of all rolls to handle the animal while in the air are increased by +3, and failed rolls may cause the rider to fall from the creature's back (resisted by Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty 6). Botched rolls cause the animal to throw the rider and fly off in a panic. Animals can become used to walking on air; this requires months of training combined with Charisma + Ride rolls (difficulty 7) each week from the player. After 10 consecutive weeks of training (with no failed rolls), the character no longer suffers the penalty for handling the flying animal.

Rooting Amulet

Level Three

This treasure was originally created by a wood inanimae to punish a queen who violated an oath and entered his grove. The fae crafted a beautiful amulet and gave it to one of the queen's courtesans as a gift for his mistress. The queen loved the intricately woven silver necklace and clasped it

around her neck. When next she placed a foot on the ground outside her home, her legs rooted themselves into the soil and her body and arms became the trunk and branches of a tree. Revealing himself as a faerie of the wood, the inanimae reclaimed the amulet and spoke words of warning to the queen's court about venturing too far into the nearby woods.

Since that time, such treasures have been made of rings, pendants, diadems, and even staffs and swords designed to root opponents to the ground. The treasure must make contact with the skin while its victim is standing on soft ground; those aware of the cause of their distress may make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) to ignore the effects of the treasure for one turn — long enough to remove the offending jewelry, or cease contact with the bewitched weapon.

Twin Glass

Level Three

One mirror magically split in two, the Twin Glass offers the ability to communicate over large distances. The two mirrors function much like a window, with their owners able to look or speak through one and be seen or heard through the other. Fae have used these treasures to keep in contact with spies or assassins, or to maintain contact with close advisors or allies. Never do these looking glasses actually reflect an image, however, making their enchantment obvious to even a mortal eye.

Gale Flute

Level Four

This small instrument is infused with the powers of the Dawn, capable of summoning everything from small breezes to violent storms. A single, soft note from the flute calls a gentle wind to the flutist. Playing for any longer increases the power of the wind, resulting in a gale after only a few minutes of playing. Continued fluting will bring the full fury of the wind and rain, creating a tempest of incredible power — enough to flatten villages. Such violent storms likely blow the instrument from the flutist's hands, or at least forces him to stop playing (Strength + Athletics, difficulty 7).

The wind generated by this powerful treasure is not wholly uncontrollable, however, and skilled musicians can learn to direct and control the tempest. Masters of the flute can direct gusts of wind at enemies, call tornadoes that tear through armies, or create a pocket of still air around themselves so that they can continue playing. Such control requires a Charisma + Performance roll (difficulty 8) with success measured on the following table.

Successes	Effect
1 success	Focus the wind in a general direction

2 successes	Focus the wind on specific individuals (increases target's difficulty for physical actions by 2) or objects
3 successes	Create pockets of still air around people or small areas
4 successes	Call small tornadoes in a general area (10 dice lethal damage, Dexterity + Athletics to reduce damage)
5 successes	Call tornadoes to target individuals or objects (12 dice lethal damage, Dexterity + Dodge to reduce damage)

Excalibur's Scabbard

Level Five

Though not truly the scabbard of the legendary Caliburn, or Excalibur, this rare treasure is so ancient and has such mystical properties that it has become associated with that powerful weapon. Any sword drawn from the scabbard is said to be unbreakable in combat, but the true power of this treasure stems from its healing powers.

While she is in physical possession of the scabbard, the owner's blood cannot be spilled. All lethal or aggravated damage from slashing or piercing weapons is ignored, and bashing damage is greatly reduced. The lowest health level to which the keeper of this treasure can fall from any form of bashing damage is Injured. Other types of damage that would not naturally cause the spilling of blood (such as fire, cold or drowning) deal damage as normal.

Oathcraft

Not all treasures may be used so freely — some require something in return. While they require a wholly different process to create, oathcrafted treasures open avenues of power more potent than mere enchanted items. Such potent treasures are not invested simply with magical energy channeled through Dominions, but instead a magical essence is bound to an object through use of oaths. Sprites are most commonly bound into these rare items, but it is not unheard of for oaths to bind Sained fae, nature spirits or even demons.

These treasures often carry with them the personality of the bound essence, be it for good or for ill, and can only be used so long as an oath is maintained by their wielders. Some more powerful oathcrafted treasures can even speak to their owners; they retain a measure of sentience. Otherwise, the bound essence falls into a state of sleep until the oath is broken and it is released. These weapons are incredibly rare as the art of oathcrafting is all but lost, and time has seen the oaths broken for all but the most meticulously cared for treasures.

Shatterhammer

Level Three

These formidable weapons were crafted during the height of the War of Seasons, and precious few are known to exist today. Sprites born of earthquakes or landslides are most often oathbound into these treasures, or even cursed rock or dirt inanimae. The essence of these earthen beings lends power to ordinary weapons, causing a ripple of concussive force to radiate through a target when hit. Such hammers have been known to shatter armor and bones, rupture internal organs, splinter large oaken doors, and even bring down stone towers.

Standard damage depends on the blunt weapon used to create the treasure, typically a war hammer or mace. Upon successfully damaging a target, the Shatterhammer causes an additional two levels of aggravated damage from internal injuries. In exchange, the weapon must be buried in the earth for one week out of each month. If a lunar cycle passes without the weapon being buried, the bound sprite or inanimae is released.

Sword of Drowning

Level Four

Also crafted during the War of Seasons, these weapons contain water sprites or inanimae who either gave up their freedom for the cause or were bound forcibly against their wills. Only two such weapons are still known to exist, though more may be hidden under the sea by fae biding their time until the Oath-Truce ends. The watery nature of their bound essences manifests when used in combat, causing water to pour into a target's lungs when hit. These attacks cause panic and paranoia as the target chokes

and sputters on sea water.

Standard damage depends on the bladed weapon used to create the treasure, typically swords or rapiers. With a successful strike (i.e., one that causes damage), the treasure forces sea water into its target's lungs, causing violent coughing. The target can perform no actions for the remainder of the turn and must make a Willpower check (difficulty 6) to avoid spending the subsequent turn again spitting up water. If three such Willpower rolls are failed in a row, or if there is a botch, the target falls to Incapacitated and dies if the water is not expelled.

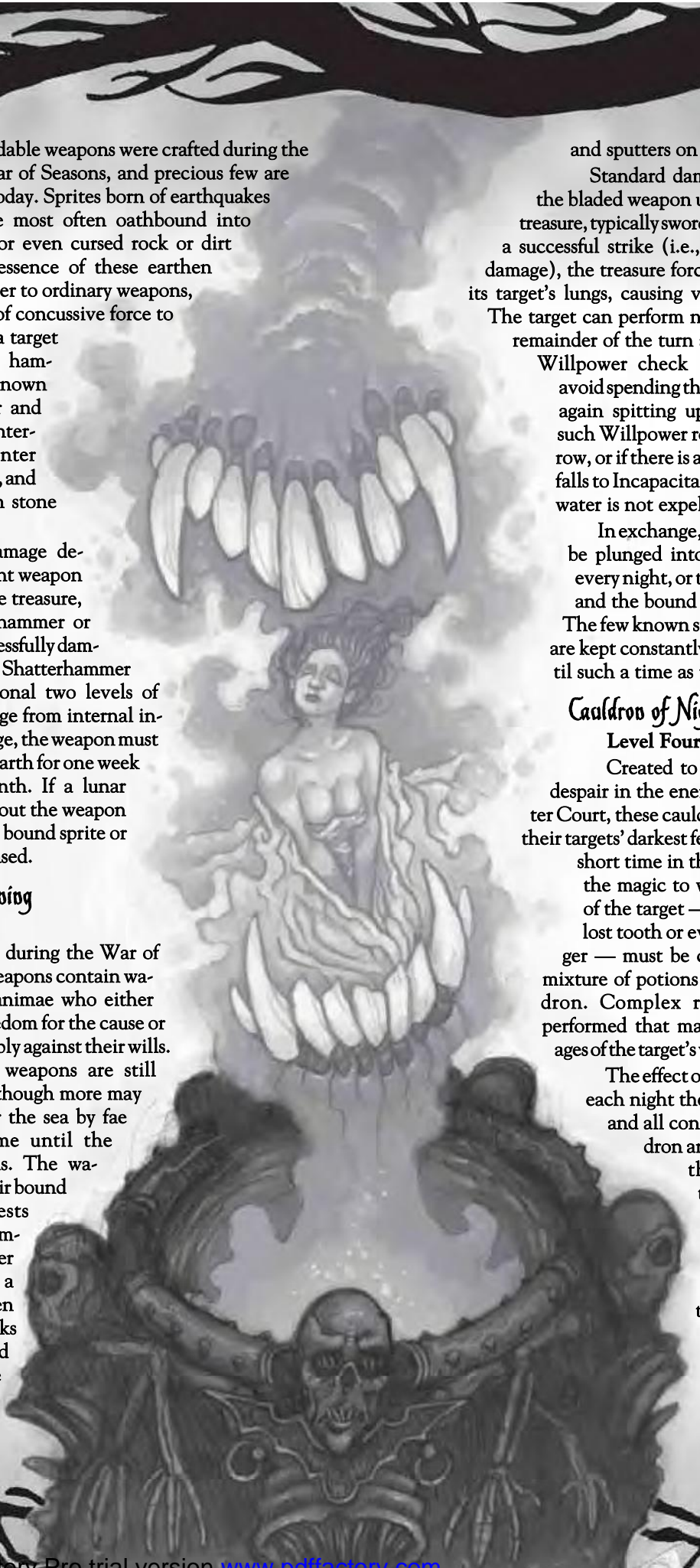
In exchange, the weapon must be plunged into sea water once every night, or the oath is broken and the bound essence released. The few known swords of this type are kept constantly in sea water until such a time as they are needed.

Cauldron of Nightmares

Level Four

Created to cause panic and despair in the enemies of the Winter Court, these cauldrons could make their targets' darkest fears manifest for a short time in the real world. For the magic to work, some piece of the target — a lock of hair, a lost tooth or even a severed finger — must be combined with a mixture of potions within the cauldron. Complex rituals are then performed that make flesh the images of the target's worst nightmares.

The effect only lasts one hour each night the treasure is used, and all contents of the cauldron are consumed with the effort. Even that single hour was enough to cause panic and despair among the Courts during the War of Seasons. A Summer firstborn was slowly eaten alive while para-



lyzed in his bed; a Spring kingdom was almost destroyed by rampaging giants; and an elder Autumn ritemaster was destroyed by doppelgangers of fae he had newly Sained.

Winter firstborn of considerable power are oathbound within these treasures, and the cauldrons must be cleansed with human blood after every use or the bound fae is released. Only two of these Winter treasures were ever discovered. The first was destroyed by the Spring-kin who first realized its abilities, and the second was taken by the Autumn fae for purposes of “study.”

Castor's Star

Level Five

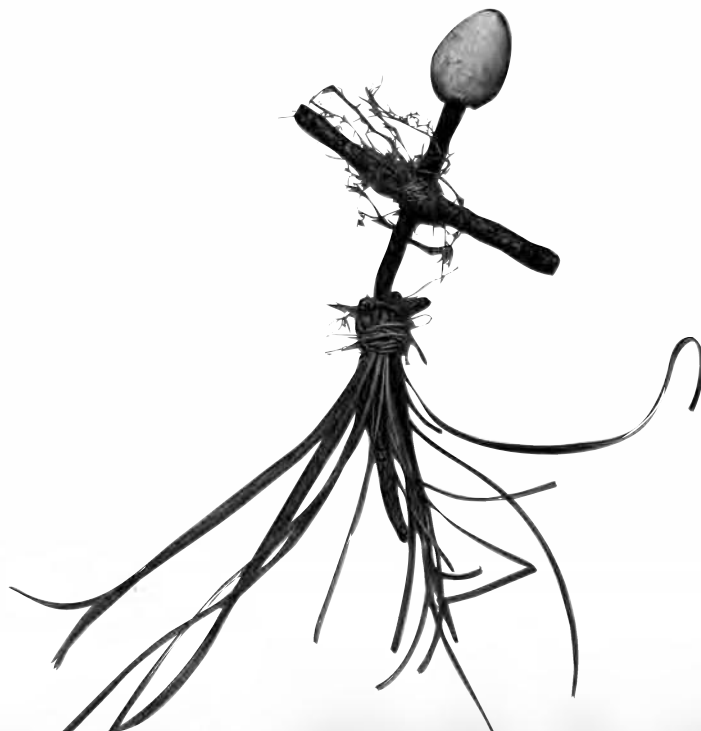
Fallen from the heavens during a lightning storm, trailing a crackling tail of light and fire, Castor's Star hums with a chaotic energy that desperately seeks release. When first recovered, the huge metallic rock was so charged with energy from the lightning that it glowed blue in the night and caused those who approached it to drop their metal weapons after a sharp jolt pained their arms.

Carried back to a long-forgotten Spring Court kingdom, scholars determined that the stone had some connection to the energy of lightning itself — so much so

that it caused uneasy feelings in anyone wearing significant amounts of metallic jewelry or armor. Inspired to harness the powers of this phenomenon as a weapon, three lightning inanimae were oathbound into the stone, amplifying its power and allowing a measure of control to its wielders.

When activated (a fae with a Dawn rating of at least 3 must Unleash the Dominion), Castor's Star glows with eerie blue light and hums loudly enough to be heard faintly from across a battlefield. Forked lightning arcs out in all directions, drawn to any sort of metal — from bracelets to daggers to chain mail. Everyone carrying metal on their persons within a 500-foot radius must soak three dice of lethal damage for each turn they have contact with their metal possessions. Those further away, but within a half-mile radius, take one die of lethal damage each round.

Castor's Star must always be exposed to the open sky, or the inanimae bound within will be released. It may not be covered by cloth or stored under a roof, nor may it be taken into caves or other enclosed spaces. Used to devastating effect during the War of Seasons, no record exists of it being seen for more than three hundred years. Some speculate that it is lost to the Mists within some forgotten faerie realm, while others believe its oaths were broken and it was destroyed.





Lyselle looked up at Garain defiantly,

lower jaw set. "I don't believe you."

Garain shook his head helplessly. "My love, I cannot show you. I cannot, not now."

"Because I could not bear it?"

Garain nodded helplessly. Her sneer was more than *he* could bear. "Please, just wait until the next full moon. I will take you to my realm—"

"To a palace? A faerie fort, where you are respected as a ruler?"

"As a soldier," he whispered. He gestured toward himself, without knowing why. The Dominion of Day covered him in the body of a human, no different than any other.

Lyselle turned her back on him. "You come here every night and take me. You've had my maidenhead and you've had my virtue, and you say you'll take me away from here—"

"And so I shall." Garain's voice deepened. He was growing angry. "I promised you I would take you to my palace and you would live like a queen, but you must be patient. If you saw me here, now, if you heard my voice..." He trailed off. His voice could bring ravening wolves to heel, could make the rocks cry. He didn't know what it would do to a jealous, lovestruck human girl.

"I don't believe you," she said, but her voice quavered. "I think you are a liar, a traveler who wanted only to take me and then run off to the next silly wench willing to spread her legs for you."

Garain ground his teeth. If his troops heard a human talking to him like this... "Why do you disbelieve me now?" He stepped forward and touched her shoulder. She tensed. "You believed me yesterday, why question me now?"

He couldn't see her face, but he watched her body, and it told the story.

"Someone told you to question me." She said nothing. "Someone told you I was lying." She hung her head. "Who was it?"

She did not answer, but Garain saw what her heart said. He saw the face of the Autumn-kin called Bepheth, and his heart broke like greenwood in spring. "So quick to disbelieve, and so quick to give favors to another?"

She spun to face him, ready to apologize, deny it, beg for mercy — Garain would never know. He stood there in his full glory, the Summer's Glamour melting away to reveal his true form. It was little different — unlike some of his Court, he was human enough. But then he spoke.

All around him, the trees leaned in closer to hear. The grass tugged itself up from the ground, and the creatures of the forest moved as close as they dared, straining to experience just a note of the voice of Garain the Tear-Bringer.

But Lyselle heard his words, and she fell to her knees, weeping silently.

Garain turned and walked away into the forest. Lyselle would weep forever, knowing what she had lost.

And although no tears fell from his eyes, so would Garain.



CHAPTER SIX: STORYTELLING

Then she began to boil the cauldron, which from the beginning of its boiling might not cease to boil for a year and a day, until three blessed drops were obtained of the grace of Inspiration.

— The Mabinongion, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest

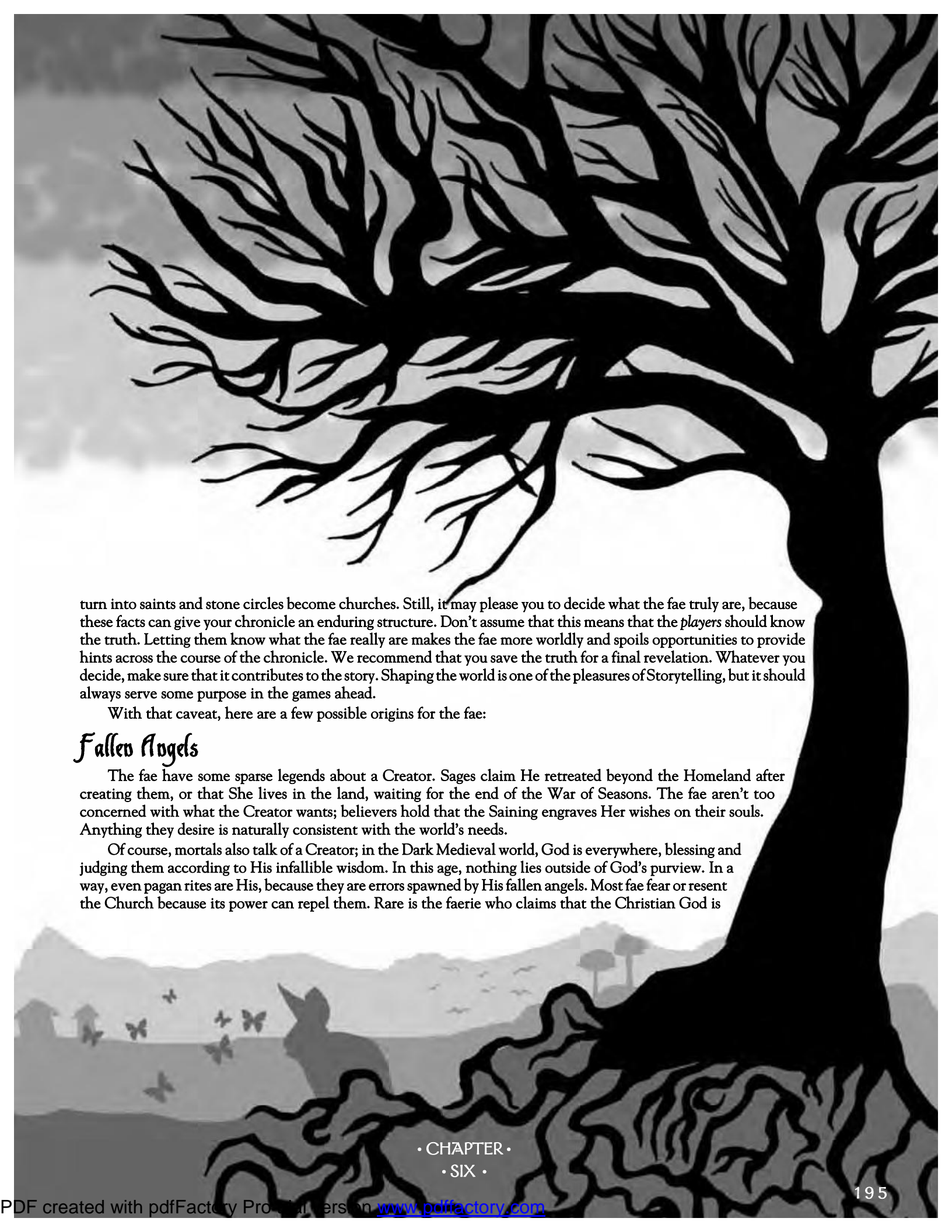
Dark Ages: Fae is about mysterious beings, but Storytellers can't just put themselves in the shoes of traditional tale-tellers. Unlike a traditional fairy tale, the game is told from the point of view of the fae, not their human witnesses. The Fair Folk's quests and plots seem ordinary enough to them, yet astound and terrify Dark Medieval mortals. This change of perspective is important to note, because it means that your players must regard one another as the audience while you provide the framework for them to play out new myths.

It all sounds rather high minded, but what it really means is that players and Storytellers can enjoy themselves in two distinct ways. Your group can relish the traditional satisfaction that comes from playing through adventure stories and developing your oathcircle's powers, but you can also play the story as if it were being told to others.

Strip away the inside knowledge you gain when you play the fae, and see if the surface of the chronicle is a fine tale in its own right. Storytellers need to find inspirations that give players a reason to play to these myths, for chronicles that are strange enough for fae legend, but sensible enough to play with.

A Strange and Wild Nature

Dark Ages: Fae doesn't reveal the ultimate nature of the Fair Folk. If you like, you can decide on the truth; but don't feel compelled to set every detail in stone. Real myths transform over time; goddesses



turn into saints and stone circles become churches. Still, it may please you to decide what the fae truly are, because these facts can give your chronicle an enduring structure. Don't assume that this means that the *players* should know the truth. Letting them know what the fae really are makes the fae more worldly and spoils opportunities to provide hints across the course of the chronicle. We recommend that you save the truth for a final revelation. Whatever you decide, make sure that it contributes to the story. Shaping the world is one of the pleasures of Storytelling, but it should always serve some purpose in the games ahead.

With that caveat, here are a few possible origins for the fae:

Fallen Angels

The fae have some sparse legends about a Creator. Sages claim He retreated beyond the Homeland after creating them, or that She lives in the land, waiting for the end of the War of Seasons. The fae aren't too concerned with what the Creator wants; believers hold that the Saining engraves Her wishes on their souls. Anything they desire is naturally consistent with the world's needs.

Of course, mortals also talk of a Creator; in the Dark Medieval world, God is everywhere, blessing and judging them according to His infallible wisdom. In this age, nothing lies outside of God's purview. In a way, even pagan rites are His, because they are errors spawned by His fallen angels. Most fae fear or resent the Church because its power can repel them. Rare is the faerie who claims that the Christian God is

DUAL ADVICE

This section has two aims. We offer suggestions on how to run a **Dark Ages: Fae** game grounded in the mythic setting and roles of the fae, but we hope you'll take what you read here and use it to ensure that the players develop engaging backgrounds for their characters. Just remember that the fae aren't bound by human conventions — even the ones we describe here. Don't be afraid to come up with strange and bold variations to fit your vision of the Dark Medieval setting.

Dark Ages: Vampire introduces the reader to the fundamentals of Storytelling. To eliminate redundant advice, we discuss a character-centered approach — an appropriate method, given that fae can take countless forms. Instead of trivializing these differences, we put them at the center of the story. The mythology that inspires the fae discusses headstrong, heroic individuals or unique, terrifying monsters. Use the advice in **Dark Ages: Vampire** to set down fundamental stories, but use what you read here to populate them with memorable allies, adversaries and walking enigmas.

her Creator, for why would a Creator vent such wrath toward His own work? A learned priest finds a simple enough answer: God created Lucifer, who fell to Hell; the remnant spirits of pagan times are the Adversary's stray servants, waiting to be cast out by the pious.

What if this were true?

In this scenario, the fae are angels who strayed from the Lord's commands. Instead of serving God, they play with the powers he gave them, unleashing havoc upon the Earth. This is consistent with Church doctrine, which holds that the world is the Devil's plaything. Changelings could be Nephilim: the spawn of a human and a tempted angel. Fae don't have to be lost servants of evil, however. They could be wounded angels, recovering their power on Earth until Judgment Day needs them.

This leads to several questions. Why did fae forget about their past? Did they swear allegiance to God or Satan before losing their memories? What part do they play in the divine or infernal plan? You can drop hints about the answers in your chronicle. A demon could upbraid your oathcircle for forgetting its true purpose. Unleashings could take on a decidedly hellish bent.

Saint Brigid and Other Conveniences

One common stereotype that exists about the rise of Christianity is that the Church simply crushed pagans under its heel and stole their ceremonies, but this isn't really the case. Conversion "by the sword" wasn't popular until Charlemagne's time. Christian chieftains and kings imposed the religion on their subjects, but this was no

different from pre-Christian times. Just as before, people adapted the new religion to their old beliefs until they forgot the names of old gods, but followed the new religion in their own distinctive fashion. While the Church brooks no competition, pagan converts aren't nearly as picky. At first, most accept Christ alongside their old gods with relatively little fuss.

Clever fae could use this to their advantage, setting themselves up as living saints or angels, then acquiring feast days to power their oaths. Storytellers will have to decide how effective a tactic this is. Aside from the opposition of the Patrons (impersonating a saint ignores the sanctity of the old seasons) members of the shadow Inquisition would be quick to put such blasphemies to the sword and torch.

Story: Meet the New Saint

The players' oathcircle visits a nearby fief to discover that the peasants honor a new saint, thanking him for bountiful harvests and warding off fear in his name. The local priest is barely literate and recently gave up reminding locals that the Church hasn't approved their new patron.

In fact, a recently arrived changeling of the Summer Court is responsible. He's appeared with a halo, conjured wine and roses, and feels especially clever after devising oaths that resemble the prayers of the pious. He reckons that Church rites will soon lose their damnable power over him. Unfortunately, even misdirected faith is powerful; the paltry gains he's made as the head of his own minor heresy have made the locals bold enough to drop old oaths with a monstrous Winter Court noble. Though Echoes pain the old, cold beast, she's determined to have her vengeance once the snow falls, so that the whole barony will pay for the indiscretions of the Summer fool. Can the oathcircle expose the false saint without drawing witch hunters? Can they soothe the Winter noble's rage long enough to come to a compromise?

Elder Gods

Another option is one that the fae themselves often believe: They are pagan gods. The fae have certainly bound humans to oaths of worship in the past. It's possible that the greatest Fair Folk held dominion over thousands of mortals, enjoying Gold Oaths in temples and sacred groves.

Legends blur the distinction between the gods and the Fair Folk. Some faerie races are said to be the offspring of gods, and ancient religions are definitely the primary source of faerie lore. Their elemental aspects make them apt gods, able to cast down thunder and fire as the legends demand. Inanimae are the gods of rivers, trees and ancient stones. Changelings are classic heroes: offspring of men and gods in the mold of Cu Chulainn and Achilles.

If the fae are shadows of the old gods, then the survivors of the Gold heritage will resemble the awesome figures of ancient poetry, like Zeus, Morrigan and Thor. Further down the hierarchy, fae play the part of local dryads and

svartalfen smiths. They don't need to believe that their pantheon literally exists. Humanity's reverence often serves even when they get the details wrong. On the other hand, the legends might be true: Olympus and Valhalla could be part of the Homeland, hidden with the greatest gods, waiting for the day when Christianity vanishes — or Ragnorak comes. Are the fae emanations of the sleeping gods, or the gods themselves, crippled by some ancient disaster or the fall of mighty oaths?

In any event, oaths become especially important. Many of them take the form of religious rites and festivals; fae work hard to keep them strong in the face of Christian encroachment. Storytellers will have to decide whether or not these rituals keep their power when they're re-dedicated to the Church. If so, elder fae maintain a tenuous grasp on the world as saints and old stories. If not, the power of these oaths is stolen when they change religions; fae have to fight to get them back.

The Djinn

In Islam, the djinn are beings of smokeless fire, with great powers of illusion. They can make pacts to fulfill a mortal's dreams, but the devout can resist their temptations. All in all, the myths describe creatures that have many of the Fair Folk's own powers. You may wish to model certain fae after these capricious desert spirits, or even use their myths to explain the origin of the fae. In these legends, the djinn were created alongside humanity as luminous counterparts to mortal clay.

Story: Strange Diplomacy

Awash with a faith born of religious strife, Iberia is home to a few hardy fae. One of these normally reclusive and powerful nobles visits the players' oathcircle, telling a tale of trods overrun by strange spirits who hail from Islamic lands. For all her power, the noble knows little about her attackers, so she offers rich rewards to the fae scholars who can survey the area and find a solution. When the characters arrive, they find the noble's old home guarded by mortals who have been enslaved by illusory gold and girded with Dominion-crafted weapons. To defeat the djinni who stole the noble's home, they must unlock the strange oaths that tie them to the mortal world: promises made around rings, lamps, mystic seals and verses from the Quran.

Dreams Incarnate

Another option exists, but it is nearly alien to Dark Medieval mind. Though the fae are difficult to comprehend and can be terrifying to behold, many do reflect the cultures they live in. Part of this comes from the effects of oaths, which bind the fae to human society. The fact that mere mortals can give the fae the power to resist Echoes is sometimes puzzling, but rarely questioned. It has always been so, and it is a part of fae nature to make oaths.

In fact, these oaths demonstrate that humanity can define the parameters of fae existence, even if they rarely have an even bargaining position. Still, humanity is the key to the fae's ability to adapt to the changing world. Fae who would cajole mortals into their plots and shadow armies can no longer avoid this truth. A very few Fair Folk wonder if they are not just avatars of untempered nature or ancient gods, but if they are somehow shaped by human will and fancy. For the most part, these are silent musings, but a few changelings have started to investigate the idea seriously. They are mostly thought to be mad, or offensive to the dignity of the Courts.

If the fae are partly or wholly spawned from human dreams, then the chronicle will be heavily shaped by human attitudes. Oaths are part of a war for the hearts and minds of humanity — one that the fae are losing. Storytellers can represent the waning place of the fae in human dreams by gradually weakening the power of oaths. Mortals inflict more severe Echoes, eventually banishing the mightiest nobles to the Homeland.

On the other hand, a chronicle of dreamborn fae needn't be gloomy. Increasing peril drives the fae to new lands. Perhaps the Danes' legendary Vineland would be a safe haven, but what if strange fae already dwell there? For a really wild game, you may allow the characters to radically change the world. They might bring back paganism in the heart of Europe or infiltrate the cult of the saints. They could encourage friendly heresies or even start a Reformation a few hundred years early.

Glamour and Philosophy

The Dark Medieval world is deeply faithful and not given to meditations about subjective truth, but this doesn't mean that these concepts are entirely unknown. The Church inherited much of the Classical intellectual tradition. Monks who search for theories that comply with Church doctrine copy the works of Plato and other philosophers in an elaborate hand.

Constantinians and other inquisitive fae can study the ancient scholars at monastic libraries. If you decide that fae spring from human dreams, you can use philosophy to spur characters on to a greater understanding of their place in the world. Don't get bogged down in the details of one philosopher or another; make these texts a part of the plot. An ancient Sophist may shed light on a hitherto unknown way to use Dominions or may inspire a fae scholar to discover more powerful cantrips. Furthermore, there's nothing to say that fae haven't written down their own secrets in Norse runes, Ogham or ancient Latin.

Story: The Name of Autumn

At a monastery in Normandy day and night have failed; the sun hangs on the Western horizon at every hour. The fields lie fallow, covered with the rot of fallen leaves.

This is the work of an Autumn Court faerie who hopes to drive the monks out so that she can take a single book from their library. She has the power to stride in and kill anyone who stands in her way but she fears the book's power. It contains the theories of an ancient Greek philosopher. This writer speculates that the dryads and naiads of his people are created by the human imagination and reasons that a philosopher-king could manipulate the beliefs of his subjects, turning the gods into instruments of his will.

In fact, the fae's oathcircle brother opened the book a year before and was struck with a terrible madness: He forgot his fae nature! Now he is the right-hand man of the abbot, and he urges the monks to stay on despite the unnatural dusk and dying land. The player characters must investigate the mystery of the book and return the oathbrother to sanity before the philosophy spreads, cursing the fae with forgetfulness and death.

Storyteller Characters

The Dark Ages setting has a rich and varied supernatural undercurrent, but you can find a strong foundation for your games even when you concentrate on a single type of supernatural being. You need to make the fae memo-

orable. This means that it's important to create interesting Storyteller fae for the characters to interact with.

Before we specifically talk about designing Fair Folk, let's talk about common problems with Storyteller character design. Never create a Storyteller character who makes the characters' actions unnecessary. If Baron ap-Cruach can fight and enchant everything into submission, then the characters' actions are meaningless. If he shows this off, then you're actively belittling the characters. Don't do this. Memorable characters always have some sort of vulnerability or need.

After that, make sure that your Storyteller characters have lives and motivations that aren't just ways to move the plot along. Baron ap-Cruach may be the guardian of Winter's Black Apples, but he didn't take the job in the hope that the oathcircle will come along to fight or parley for his treasure. He might be there as a matter of honor — or to show his chivalric love for another fae. He might have been hit by a curse, or might have lost a bet. This makes the character seem more believable and gives you more details to stir into the plot at need. The players will always do something you don't expect; a bit of character trivia may take center stage when, for example, the characters investigate the Baron's past and convince his true love to call him from the Black Apples.



Character Is Plot

Even though we've warned you not to let Storyteller characters overshadow the player's oathcircle, you'll find that the following section talks about Storyteller characters as the instigators of stories. This is no contradiction.

Most stories need someone, somewhere to set them in motion. Even political factions like the Patrons aren't just an ideology attached to a bunch of talking heads. Each member has personal reasons for wanting to reinstate the traditional procession of the Courts.

Paragons of Nature

Dark Ages: Fae doesn't obey any single real world cultural tradition, but it doesn't ignore those traditions, either. To bring your game into sharper focus, you'll want to draw on real myths and stories to make your Storyteller characters distinctive. Of course, the same advice applies to the players' characters, so don't be afraid to prescribe it yourself.

It's debatable whether or not the fae are a global archetype or something unique to Western Europe, but their qualities are to be found in mythic peoples all around the world. The details differ from place to place, but take a broad enough view and you can draw from a much larger collection of sources. We can break these down into two types: myths, which chronicle the fae when they were thought of as divine or heroic beings; and fairy stories, where the myths have faded into tales about the hidden fae and natural powers that the ruling faith and culture can't quite tame.

The Dark Medieval world's beliefs are in transit, moving from the myths of antiquity to the kind of stories that many of us are familiar with from childhood. **Dark Ages:** Fae leans toward the older myths, but doesn't entirely reject what comes later. Look at myths and fairy stories as opposite ends of a scale, and place the tone of your chronicle at a midpoint that entertains you.

Myths

Western fairy tales are odd descendants of pagan folklore, particularly its invocations to household and nature gods. Even though the most enduring elements are traditions about house fairies (what the fae of the game would consider to be sprite's work, really), we must remember the larger pantheon that they were once a part of. When we look at the fae through this lens we tend to jump to Norse and Celtic sources first, but **Dark Ages:** Fae is flexible enough to incorporate far more. Consider Greek, African and even Indian myths. In each of these cultures, a subset of gods presides over mysterious places; they can be treacherous for mortals to deal with, but have to submit to greater powers themselves — even when those powers are used by weak but clever (or lucky) mortals.

One benefit to this method is that you can find immediate plot hooks and setting details from the greater body of each culture's myths. This leaves room in the Storyteller cast for greater powers, up to and including Necessity, the Norns and other divine fate-keepers. In the **Dark Ages** setting, these are the most powerful fae, or may include other entities that are less easily categorized.

Pagan theology can be immensely helpful when it comes to constructing a vivid court or oathcircle. For instance, you may create a band of Winter fae modeled after the Norse *svartalfs*, subterranean creatures and skilled smiths who were born of the maggots that infested the world-giant Ymir's flesh. Taking a cue from this description, we can create an oathcircle that uses Dominions to bind worms and grubs to horrific effect, but which possesses enchanted weapons that might decide a major battle in the War of Seasons. Naturally, these fae lair in tunnels that look like they were eaten out of the rock.

Story: The Blackrot Knights

Remember, however, that the fae are not bound by the rules of human mythology; so feel free to contradict the myths or extend them in strange ways. The oathcircle described above may emulate mortal knights, but their mounts are maggot-infested and their sense of honor alien to outsiders. Such is the case with the Blackrot Knights, Winter fae who ride the Danish wilds, their dead mounts able to traverse mountains with ease. Local humans who remember the Old Ways brand them *svartalfs* from the old tales and eat raw, rotten meat on certain feast days to give the Knights their oath's due.

The oathcircle is bound to the Patrons' cause, and punishes all who trespass for the War of Seasons; but three nights ago a veritable cloud of crows entered the mouth of the circle's underground home. The Blackrots are masterful smiths, and the nobles of other Courts fear that they are forging weapons to mark a new phase in the Patrons' struggle. Rumors claim that the axes and sword that will emerge are to be used to slay the most vocal proponents of the war, regardless of affiliation. The Patrons will arm their own partisans and shed fae blood until peace reigns. As for the *svartalfs*, they're happy to see it done, to feed Ymir's grubs the blood of the violent.

On the other hand, Blackrot smithwork stands to turn the tide in favor of any Court that seizes it. The characters' superiors may direct them to steal the weapons from the Knights, or they may be called by the Patrons to defend the Blackrots from siege until their work is done. In any event, the twisting passages, powerful weapons and morbid fae themselves provide a worthy challenge.

Fairy Stories

Fairy stories are another source of inspiration, but they need to be used carefully. Fairy stories (and their final evolution into what we call "fairy tales") have gone through

considerable revision, especially in light of their Victorian revival and the well-meaning but bloodless revisions of censors from then to now. On the other hand, we shouldn't be so quick to dismiss fairy tales out of hand. Sources like *The Red Fairy Book* can inspire unique ideas for your chronicle as long as you use them with discretion.

Rhythm is a key element of fairy stories and a remnant of their origins as oral narratives. (In truth, we could see these origins in the old myths as well, but most of us don't speak Old Norse and the like, so we're bound to lose this in translation.) We see repetitive chants, rhymes, dancing and whimsical customs associated with fae powers. The tales themselves apply the rhythm to the story arc, so that evil enchantments and their cures follow the rule of three. While it isn't immediately obvious, this is a useful device for Storytellers. Rhythmic storytelling encourages a sense of otherworldliness. Be careful, though, because overdoing it will just make the story (and characters who speak in rhyme) look silly. Done correctly, however, this device can portray an alien mindset and a sense that the players have been transported outside of normal reality.

For example, a story like Rumpelstiltskin possesses all of the elements familiar to **Dark Ages: Fae**: An oath that binds the fae character to humanity, but has unanticipated consequences for mortal and Fair Folk alike. A "manikin" offers to help a poor miller's daughter after her father tells the king that she can spin flax into gold. The manikin secretly does the job for her, asking for more and more payment in return, finally culminating in the price of her firstborn child. She pays the price, but in his pride, the manikin gives her three days to guess his name and escape the oath. Now a queen, the miller's daughter sends spies around the country, until one sees the creature dancing and bragging that no one will guess his name: Rumpelstiltskin. The queen confronts him and asks his name three times, naming Rumpelstiltskin on the third time. The manikin is so incensed that he tears himself in two — obviously, hearing his true name triggered an Echo.

Like Rumpelstiltskin, fae in fairy stories are prideful and fond of meddling in human affairs. Combined with the peculiar rhythms of the actions and stories, they can serve as ciphers for specific themes, strange allies or single-minded antagonists.

Story: Rumpelstiltskin the Provocateur

Built of gnarled, sun-blasted branches, Rumpelstiltskin travels the Schwarzwald, playing deadly tricks on the destitute with his signature cantrip: the ability to draw gold out of simple craftwork. He's a proud creature, devoted to Summer's cause and determined to raise changelings for the War of Seasons. His simple tactics have netted a dozen new warriors while sowing chaos throughout the region's fiefs as they struggle to adapt to newfound wealth.

This is only the beginning of the inanimae's plans, for his faerie gold eventually loses its luster, returning to the simple straw and flax from which it came. A few lords have fallen into deep debt when the gold they spent to procure arms and luxuries proved worthless by the time it reached the cities. Next, Rumpelstiltskin plans to send his changelings to these destitute courts, offering longer-lasting wealth in exchange for a few critical oaths. The Summer Court will win oathbound territory and the leverage to claim their own capital in the Black Forest.

It's a mad scheme, bound to draw the ire of inquisitors, vampires who claim dominion and most importantly, mortal bandits and conquerors drawn to the economic woe. Rival Courts would like to stop it, and even Summer fae may oppose such an extreme plan; but Rumpelstiltskin's changelings and his own formidable powers make stopping him a dangerous task. On the other hand, the inanimae's arrogance could lure him into a foolish bet, going so far as to allow challengers three chances to confound him — no more, no less.

Human and Fae Roles

After mining folklore and myths, you'll want to get a general idea of what your Storyteller characters do and who they are. Archetypes (not just Nature and Demeanor) are helpful in this regard, especially for Storytellers who need less depth and more functionality. While you may indulge in uncovering their every motive, the fact is that your allies, antagonists and interlopers are there to move a story along. Deal with that before you take pleasure in creating the other details.

The following archetypes are a few examples out of the many that exist. Use the ideas below to formulate your own, then apply the following format to create vivid characters who develop the story. These roles are meant for fae and humans, but they can be just as easily applied to vampires, werewolves and other creatures.

The Trickster

Trickster figures are practically universal, but that means that there are numerous variations, from Loki Firehair to Shakespeare's Puck. Resist the temptation to make the trickster a simple jerk who hoodwinks the characters for no good reason. In that vein, it's especially important to remember that the Trickster can be beaten.

Trickster stories take two forms. First, the trickster tests the intelligence and resolve of the people through theft, fraud and other kinds of deception, usually for personal gain. In these stories, the Trickster is usually defeated but can't be completely banished; he's a constant threat. In other stories, his tricks overcome the greed and stasis that plague his society, forcing lords and laws to change their ways. Often, the Trickster comes up with an unconven-

tional solution to problems that can't be dealt with through negotiation or violence. In all cases, the trick leads to a revelation about something greater, such as a secret crime or the inevitability of change.

In Dark Ages: Fae, Tricksters can have any level of power, from thieving sprites to wily elder Patrons, though they rarely hold any sort of official power. A life of deception doesn't allow time for the stable identity a prince needs. You can use the trickster to challenge characters who are too caught up in their Courts and masters, or you can use him as a pure antagonist, representing forces the characters must keep at bay.

Image: The Trickster is a shapeshifter, but in many stories he has one favorite or constant feature that follows him from form to form.

Traits: Tricksters tend to have high Social and Mental traits, especially Manipulation, though a few are weirdly ugly and have a low Appearance. Their Physical traits are less developed; in most stories they are relatively helpless once others pierce their deceptions. Their supernatural powers include shapeshifting, illusions and the ability to conjure objects — especially riches to entice the venal. Among fae, the Day Dominion is especially suited for deception.

Story: A wandering faerie bilks the characters out of a prized possession — or even a companion. This firstborn

Trickster was hired by a powerful fae noble, who guards the characters' prize with all the force she can muster. The noble is too powerful to confront with sheer force, so the oathcircle must become tricksters themselves, preying upon the noble's pride and eccentricity to steal the prize back. Fortunately, the original thief has purely mercenary intentions. He won't go with them, but he will teach them his skills for the right price.

The Outlaw

In an age where collective, back-breaking labor only manages to keep people a hair's breadth from starvation, Outlaws are feared and hated. The Dark Medieval is not a time when wanderers and bandits are seen as daring, romantic rogues, but night marauders who only avoid death by preying upon others. In England, Outlaws are called "Wolf's Heads," because the Crown pays the same bounty for wolves and bandits.

The Outlaw is an untamed survivor; she lives by breaking the laws that allow normal folk to survive. Where the Trickster manipulates human confidence, the

Outlaw attacks insecurity. She represents the dangerous places where normal men and women dare not travel, from a king's forest to haunted battle sites and pagan ruins. Having rejected society's laws, she spits at piety and savors violence. Any compassion she possesses is fleeting at best, and prone to fail whenever it is



contradicted by self-interest. The comparison with wolves is apt, for she finds more in common with an unthinking predator than a soft, civilized householder. On the other hand, she may simply be a foreigner who's chosen to live on the outskirts of the law to survive.

The archetypal fae Outlaw belongs to the Winter Court, but plenty of exceptions exist. She is impatient with oaths and social niceties. Other supernatural creatures will seem to be Outlaws to the fae, from the mage who raids oath-banned groves to the savage acts of true "Wolf's Heads:" werewolves. The Outlaw knows that her crimes merit death and torture in normal society; so she stays to the fringes, but fights to the last once the authorities hunt her down. On the other hand, her self-reliance makes her a welcome ally when the characters have been ousted from polite society, so they may find themselves coming to her for help. She may be untrustworthy, but she's willing to work for pay.

Image: The Outlaw doesn't much care about her appearance, and it shows: Her clothes are ragged, her speech is rude and her weapons are at the ready. Outlaw status is sometimes a matter of perception; she may have strange customs and clothes from foreign lands. For the most part, her demeanor combines savagery with desperation, because she knows that her survival is precarious.

Traits: Outlaws need high Physical traits to deal with wilderness hazards, but tend to have low Social traits because of their strange or rude manners. Supernatural powers generally enhance their toughness, stealth and battle prowess; the Night Dominion helps with this.

Story: A bestial faerie from the Winter Court survives the death of her oathcircle and flees to territory held by allies of the Patrons. She hunts humans to the point where they abandon their oaths — they believe that the local Fair Folk have betrayed promises to do no harm. The angry fae are on the verge of leaving the Patron cause, but await a visiting Vanguard oathcircle to investigate and render assistance. The characters can be members of that oathcircle; they may hunt the old Winter outlaw down, or join her, doing enough damage to thrust local fae back into the War of Seasons.

The True Knight

The dream of the perfect warrior looms large in the medieval imagination, especially as romantic tales imbue him with larger than life ideals. Before the concept of the romantic knight, we have pagan warriors like Cu Chulainn, willing to die for their honor and filled with supernatural battle prowess. Naturally, the fae can meet and even exceed the legends, making the True Knight a plausible role model — and an implacable antagonist — for an oathcircle. Even the appearance of virtue has its rewards; the "Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon" are now among the richest groups of professional warriors in history.

True Knights don't pay scutage so that mercenaries can take their place on the field. They are in the front of

the battle line, rallying their companions. Most can wear their device proudly, but a few become "black knights," covering their shields out of humility or penitence. A True Knight always keeps his word, even though it may force him to bring what he loves to ruin. His love affairs are subtle and never consummated, to spare his beloved the sin of adultery. Finally, he's perfectly courageous and never flees from even hopeless odds. It's a tall order; most knights would rather comfort themselves with simple soldiering and administration and leave this virtuous ideal to troubadour tales.

Remember that this is the Dark Medieval world, so a virtuous warrior needs to be acquainted with the ugly side of life. True Knights aren't stupid; they won't give oaths of service lightly, nor will they perform a sworn task that harms the innocent without searching for a compromise. The fae stereotype for such warriors lies with the "Shining Host" of the Summer Court, but Spring, Autumn and Winter all produce their share of ideal warriors. In an age where oathbreaking leads to new war, warriors who keep their promises may be the best hope for peace. On the other hand, these oaths can send True Knights against the characters, forcing them to deal with an implacable enemy unless they learn how to satisfy honor.

Image: The True Knight's war gear is usually immaculate, thanks to his own attentions or the work of a devoted squire. Still, there may be times when his oaths send him into the wilderness, and road dust and mud obscure his nobility. Despite his violent work, he's cultured and often willing to help his enemies find a compromise that will satisfy his honor and their needs. If the situation demands he fight, though, he doesn't hesitate.

Traits: Ideal warriors have high Physical traits and are masters of weapons. Social and Mental traits vary; he may be humble but intelligent, or like Cu Chulainn, may be charismatic but prone to lose track of the consequences of his actions. For the fae, any Dominion which strengthens his sword and armor is appropriate, along with cantrips to channel his righteous wrath. Of course, the dominant representation of this archetype is Christian. Since the fae are often at odds with the Church, this archetype produces driven, honorable adversaries for fae characters. Remember that the pagan ethos produces its own principled warriors, doomed to fight for their sacred oaths.

Story: With the war renewed, an Autumn Court warrior's old vow is reactivated, for he promised to slay Spring Court fae until his rival meets him in fair single combat. The Autumn knight cuts a swath of destruction through Spring territory as the characters discover that his rival is now a decrepit madwoman. Can they rehabilitate her to fight the duel before the knight does any more damage?

MENTORS AND RULERS

Some of the most memorable Storyteller characters the oathcircle will encounter are their teachers and rulers. We could define the common attributes of a sage or prince, but we risk ending up with uninteresting characters. For instance, Merlin isn't interesting just because of what he knows. Merlin is interesting because of how his history intrudes on his duty.

Likewise, ask yourself where a ruler or mentor's history and characteristics help her position and where they hinder it. Players prefer to take advice from well-portrayed characters, and do want to know where their guide's weaknesses lie. Completely unflappable, eternally prepared teachers and masters are boring and frustrating. Not only do they make it look like the Storyteller is strong-arming the plot, they also create resentment, tempting players to try to sabotage your plans. They want their characters to express themselves outside the stifling confines Lord Perfect sets up for them.

Lastly, these complications are story hooks in their own rights. The oathcircle may be pressed to fill a need created by their ally's foibles. The outlaw troll may need them to deal with the finer sensibilities of a nearby court.

So remember that the honorable noble may be so concerned with principle that she doesn't notice treachery in her own court. The proud sage may be consulting faulty sources, or like Merlin, may have acquired his lore from a source bound to endanger him.

In the end, though, these mentors and rules have their stations for a reason. Most of time, the characters should get a net benefit from the association. Just as flaws lead to good stories, virtues can come in handy at climactic moments, when great war leaders and wisdom will propel the characters to glory.

The Oathcircle's Purpose

Oathcircles are formed for a reason. This seems like an obvious thing to point out, but never forget it. Too often, characters just ramble from one story to the next. As Storyteller, it's your job to bring most events under the fold of a common theme and plot. You can and should make exceptions; sometimes, your players will just get tired of the relentless enmity of Prince Frost (or whoever) and want simpler challenges, a chance to roleplay peaceful moments, or even a touch of comedy. All the same, coming back to a common narrative is the difference between a typical roleplaying game and a compelling shared story. Unless you want to recreate the typical adventure game, make sure the

oathcircle lives up to its name: a band of fae, united by their vows to pursue a common purpose.

Distinct Characters vs. Flexible Powers

Just because they have a common purpose doesn't mean that your characters should be static. One common problem with Storyteller games is that the players don't take advantage of the freedom the rules give them when it comes to developing their characters. Lots of games have a concept called "niche protection," which holds that the group's warrior should never have a rival, the sneaky character should always be the most stealthy, and so on. While this is useful enough for less-experienced groups (it keeps down out-of-game rivalries and allows the Storyteller to easily gear challenges for specific characters), the powers and character development rules in **Dark Ages: Fae** allow for very flexible characters. The Day Dominion can influence minds and create fires; Night can bring stealth and victory in battle. Anybody who spends the experience points can master a sword. Don't artificially stifle character development to protect skill or power niches. It keeps the players from developing their characters in response to your story or using experience to back up change with traits.

The other challenge comes from the immense diversity that the fae possess. Between their oaths and miens, you might end up with a collection of characters with so many strange habits and physical traits that you'll be tempted to think that they're "special, like everybody else" — in other words, not that special at all.

How do you keep the players feeling that each character is distinct and special? The answer is threefold. Look at their histories, who they might know and where their travels have led them so far. Play Storyteller characters to react to the characters' reputations, so that they receive the measure of fame (or spite!) that they've worked to get. Sometimes, slaying the dragon is less important than being asked to slay the dragon.

Next, emphasize the relationships that they have with each other, especially the points of similarity. It's par for the course in many games that one character will teach another an Ability or supernatural power. Many chronicles make this a simple matter of acquiring and spending experience, but you should try to actually play out the process of learning to swing a sword or manipulate Dusk. When characters teach each other, then it becomes obvious who the past master of the trait is, giving the skilled character more social influence.

Finally, remember that Expertise and Specialties (see **Dark Ages: Vampire**, pp.142–143) make characters with equal skill radically different. Don't be afraid to offer additional rewards (such as a few bonus dice or a decreased difficulty) when a player comes up with an entertaining description of a Specialty in action. In fact, don't limit yourself to the character sheet; if a player consistently

describes her character's distinctive way of doing things, think about awarding bonus dice or a difficulty break.

Oathcircle Roles

It's sometimes useful to think of the oathcircle as a single character. Like any individual, it changes over time; so while it may be dedicated to a single purpose (such as halting the march of the War of Seasons), it will evolve to fit new circumstances. Look at the following roles as steps in the oathcircle's transformation. These don't come in any particular order; lords may wind up fugitives in a few sessions; sincere oaths can break. Every role has its own attached conflicts and provides an opportunity to deepen the story. Use these examples as is, and as a model to create your own. Sometimes, loose structures like the following are all you need to get the story started. Just add names and firm up the details.

Lords of Mortals

Traditionally feared and magically potent, fae easily settle into ruling mortals. Echoes are always a danger, but in an age where the oaths are the basis of civilization, fae can often find a way to use a mortal's vow to ward Echoes off. The oathcircle may make themselves "lords of the hill," even cowing nearby human nobility.

Conflicts

Despite their advantages, the fae must rule wisely, or else resentment comes to the fore. Mortals do break their promises, and when they feel threatened they gather allies. The Dark Medieval's low population and web of feudal ties mean that if fae aggravate the situation too much (or just offend a well-connected individual), word will eventually get to someone capable of bringing real force to bear. Not every priest knows an inquisitor, but some do. Certain Cainites are arrogant enough to believe that mortal kingdoms are only a façade to conceal their darkened domains. Antagonizing such a creature's ghoul (or the ghoul's cousin, nephew, confessor, vassal or mistress) is not recommended.

Even without supernatural interference, foolish rule can bring down suffering. If the oathcircle's vassals decide to revolt in number, their broken oaths no longer protect the fae. Echoes and the brute strength of numbers can overwhelm the characters.

What if they rule wisely? Then another danger rears its head: treachery. The War of Seasons is renewed; even followers of the Patron cause are targets, for the warlike fae won't tolerate impediments to victory or a peace that leaves them at the mercy of their enemies. Fae enemies (or those versed in fae lore) will try to uncover and sabotage the characters' oaths. They'll stir up unrest to make rule difficult, giving them time to plan an attack while the oathcircle is consumed with administration. For most medieval communities, this is as simple as threatening crops and livestock.

Remember the period; lost food can be a death sentence. Where subtle tactics fail, a supernatural enemy can resort to sheer terror. Dominions and other powers are the stuff of peasants' nightmares.

Key Characters

The **Mortal Lord** is someone would-be rulers will have to contend with. Legends give them the virtues of chivalry; history makes some of them out to be cowards and opportunists. Place the lord somewhere on this spectrum and have him react to the characters' overtures accordingly. Regardless of his virtues, he's concerned with two things: a fief that can feed his family and the ability to meet his obligations as a vassal.

Every community has a **Hetman** or the equivalent: a peasant who acts as an informal leader or representative. You can use the hetman to describe how the whole village feels; but if you anger him, even content peasants may rebel. Characters may try to replace the hetman with a more genial figure, but this is risky business. Aside from the animosity a botched attempt may generate, the hetman may leave without sharing vital local secrets, such as the other local supernatural beings he knows about.

If supernatural foes attack the fief, they'll probably send a **Spy** to look for weakness and sow chaos. The spy can be tracked through her needs; mortals require food, vampires require blood, and fae require protection from Echoes and a way to renew their Mists and Weaving pools. The spy usually has to camp outside of the community — in a hamlet of 30 someone's going to notice a new peasant — but a few may come disguised as visiting heralds or entertainers. Large cities (like London or Buda-Pest) are the sorts of places where spies can "hide in plain sight."

Wanderers

The traveling chronicle is a popular choice. Through their characters the players get to act as tourists of the Dark Medieval age, and you get to throw as much of the setting (including all those **Dark Ages** books you bought) at them as possible. Just don't make it an incoherent trip, filled with simple antagonists. If Konstantin the evil Greek vampire and Heidelberg the evil German wizard are the players' sole experiences of Athens and Worms, then the characters might have been better off staying home.

Conflicts

Fortunately, the Middle Ages blesses the Storyteller with all sorts of possible conflicts. It's a stay-at-home age; people distrust wanderers unless they're pilgrims, and outlaws haunt the roads. Toll-collectors and foresters all exist to make the characters' lives difficult. At the root of all this is the decentralized structure of medieval society: Thousands of small communities devote most of their surplus production to equip an elite class of professional killers. Despite the moderating voice of the Church, the culture

does not extend trust easily. One never knows who the enemy will be next, and a web of vendettas informs their opinions of others. In these times, customs vary wildly from region to region, so foreigners can easily give offense. Worst of all, a committed wanderer has no lord. Who can vouch for her trustworthiness?

Aside from these dangers, local supernatural denizens are usually quite territorial. You might immediately think of vampires and werewolves in this context, but remember that all supernatural beings have their sacred spaces and healthy senses of caution. Unless the locals are fellow fae, the oathcircle may have no idea how to enter without giving offense. After the fall of the Oath-Truce, fae are also liable to be on their guard.

Fortunately, visitors have their virtues. Wanderers can shake up the status quo. Fae aren't necessarily bound by local oaths, and may be able to solve problems that the locals can't handle. The oathcircle may also supply some needed talent in the face of war, internal dissent or disaster.

Key Characters

Informants serve two purposes: They provide local color and they tell characters the vital details about the local area. Remember to play informants so that they represent the culture (though not to the point of parody) and so that they have a reason to know every fact they share. Don't make the informant omniscient, either; Moll the scullery maid probably doesn't know much about Gwynn ap Nudd, the lord under Glastonbury Tor. She might just have some legends and hearth lore to share, however. When it comes to investigating supernatural influences, these myths and half-truths are often the best place to start.

No matter what form it takes, the **Watch** usually doesn't like the looks of anybody who comes off the road. Whether they are posted guards, toll-keepers, or foresters keeping the king's land from trespass, they're the opposite of informants. They relay information about the characters to influential locals, spoiling secret journeys and tracking them in case they're out to cause trouble. They ask inconvenient questions and make dangerous speculations about the oathcircle's intent to the most dangerous listeners.

In an area where night-folk dwell, a **Local Supernatural Being** will take great interest in any exceptional travelers. No matter her origins, she'll be devoted to her own projects, some of which the characters' very presence may help or hinder. A destitute wizard sees the oathcircle as a handy source of mystical power. Inquisitors see the last remnants of an old, pagan blasphemy (these antagonists are better filed under the Watch, as they aren't supernatural beings at all). She usually has several mundane allies, including members of the Watch. She may even use the informant to spread misinformation

War Bands

The Oath-Truce is done. It's time for bronze blades, fire and frost. Willing or not, the oathcircle may find itself fighting the War of Seasons or more obscure conflicts. (Do yourself a favor and look at **Spoils of War** for information about martial conflict in the Dark Medieval.) While the renewed War of Seasons is the central conflict of **Dark Ages: Fae**, other supernatural and mundane conflicts may call for bold warriors. If the characters are Truce-Bearers, they can travel the land to fend off aggressors from any side, gathering enemies with each victory.

Conflicts

The characters can serve as champions for the cause, taking up arms in the front lines of a battle. Remember the ancient tradition of dueling champions. According to old custom, an entire battle can be decided by a few individual duels. This was so favored in classical times that the Roman army had to specifically ban it; but even then, the custom was never entirely extinguished. The players' oathcircle could be these champions. If they win, the enemy force is oathbound to leave the field.

Then there's all-out war. This is where oaths come to the fore, because it's likely that fae armies will put humans in harm's way. Echoes are a powerful strategic tool, but they can easily turn on their users. Needless to say, smart fae ensure that their human proxies obey their oaths while they try to undermine the enemy's. On the other hand, some courts (especially those ruled by hardened Winter fae) dispense with human involvement as much as possible. They prefer to use sprites or Dominion-created horrors on the field. You can give the characters a taste of power by giving them their own troops to control, using the systems in the **Dark Ages Storytellers Companion** or **Spoils of War** to determine their success.

One of the signature features of medieval warfare is the siege. Mortal sieges are easy for the fae to break; air, thunder and fire bypass the enemy keep's walls. Holding a keep against a supernatural attack is far more difficult. In such cases, fae strategists must employ their Dominions carefully to counter possible attempts to breach walls and poison supplies. Food isn't a particular concern for fae, but the mortals under their command will suffer.

The medieval tradition of hostage-taking finds some favor among the fae, but Fair Folk are notoriously hard to contain. Nevertheless, some faeries are especially precious; oathbound to Golden or Legendary lieges, their captures can force serious concessions. Furthermore, some hostages may be oathbound to stay until their ransoms are paid; they are chained by their honor. The fae don't especially value gold, so territory is the primary currency here. The oathcircle may have to rescue such a hostage, or may become prisoners themselves. Some courts obey traditions that keep hostages comfortable, but others may employ torture or magical compulsion.

Key Characters

The **Enemy Leader** may be a fool with an army or a skilled strategist. If she's the former, you should detail who then makes it possible for her to have a viable force. The characters usually won't confront her until the end, but they will match wits with her from a distance, trying to guess and counter her tactics. Another area to detail is the leader's sense of honor. An honorable foe asks for time to bury the dead, honors truces and conducts the grim business of war with the utmost civility. Other leaders distinguish themselves with their heartlessness. They defile the bodies of their enemies, break truces at a whim and kidnap loved ones to force victory. Defeating such a malicious foe is a treat for the players, but don't make every enemy this vile or you'll cheapen the experience. A variant on the enemy leader is the **Champion**, the enemy's greatest warrior.

A **Captain** is the face of the characters' army. The captain tells characters about the temper of the troops, gives them updates about the raging battle and dies for the oathcircle's mistakes. The captain can be a crusty veteran or a fresh-faced noble's son whose grasp of military theory needs to be backed by blood. The captain can be subverted by Dominions and betray the oathcircle, leading his wing of the army to doom.

Don't forget to include **Bystanders** in any major military engagement. These peasants suffer when their crops burn or when Dominions are Unleashed upon the land. Fortunately, they can do more than pull the characters' heartstrings. The locals know the area's secrets. Even as passing armies ignore them, they learn secrets that clever characters can coax from them: troop movements and numbers, overheard plans (when the enemy leader forces peasants into service) and the like. In a magical world, bystanders may have strange allies: pagan witches and werewolves who intervene to save their lovers and kin.

Blood from an Ancient Stone

Blood from an Ancient Stone is a two-part story set near the ruins of Hadrian's wall, the divide between England and Scotland. Here, two minor courts hold a strained peace. Only the Oath-Truce prevents fresh violence from ravaging both. In the first act, the legacy of that peace bond threatens contentment, and the oathcircle must intervene. But hidden forces coax danger from the uneasy truce. In the second act, we see the region after the fall of the Oath-Truce. Common wisdom declares that violence begets violence, but the true danger slumbers in the land, waiting to be provoked by bloodshed.

Theme and Mood

The theme of this story is secrets: Secret oaths, secret honor and secret desires. The fae rulers of each court indulge in deception and intrigue, but all of them sit atop a greater, more dangerous secret still: The Bloodgraal, an

CHARACTERS

The following characters are central to the story. More detailed descriptions appear at the end of this chapter, but here's a brief rundown to familiarize you with them.

Sithech: Firstborn of Winter and rightful master of the Stones of Night's Kin, now a hostage of the Throne of Woven Staves.

Malgirich: Sithech's second in command, a first-born fae who rules the Stones of Night's Kin in his stead.

Viryd: A Spring changeling of the Throne of Woven Staves who is enamored of her hostage, Sithech.

Garmyn: A Spring firstborn and a powerful warrior of Woven Staves.

Lord Adam MacDomongart: The poor mortal lord of Dromongard.

Elaine: Lord Adam's daughter.

Andrea and Cinatha: Witches from the North who sense a great evil rising in Dromongard.

King Croagh: A legendary monster and Winter inanimae.

artifact that allowed their predecessors to carve domains from the werewolf-infested wilds. The local fae give little thought to it, seeing it as nothing but a bloody myth. They should know that myths are real; in due time, the Bloodgraal will confirm it.

The mood of the story is dread. The obvious threat is a prelude to unimagined danger, but you should ensure that foreshadowing elevates the feeling of urgency, even as the characters deal with more mundane business.

History

In legendary history, the Winter Court and the Summer Court warred on one another in the British Isles with a ferocity that beggared the War of Seasons itself. In those days the fae were self-styled gods and demons, who mortals worshipped at a grievous price. Bloody standing stones rose in honor of these fierce fae; buoyed by oath and worship, these ancients stood their ground. Ferocity had its price, however, and the fae, known as the Fir-Bolg, were corrupted by their own battle-rage. The Fir-Bolg were too monstrous for the world; with all the supernatural powers of the Isles turned against them, they fled to the deep sea and secret places beneath the earth. Humanity spat out their names as curses. Tainted by association, the remaining fae fought werewolves, Romans and eventually Christianity to retain their lands and honor. Even though the fae were punished for the Fir-Bolgs' crimes, they benefited from others' fear. Enemies were hesitant to test the remaining courts, for fear that hidden Fir-Bolg or their curses would respond.

Among these benefactors stood two small courts. Surrounded by human encroachment and territorial supernatural

SURROUNDING CONCERNS

Dromongard's courts are the closest supernatural presence, but not the only one. Fifty miles north, the Old Faith maintains a coven in an isolated hamlet. These mages see themselves as the natural protectors of the land, but dare not venture close to the courts. Their auguries predict doom for interlopers. Cinatha and Andrea have broken with the coven to raid Night's Kin for the Bloodgrail and cannot expect reinforcements, but if violence strays outside Dromongard the other five witches respond in force.

Oddly, no werewolves — even Black Spiral Dancers — hunt the region at all. Garou history records that during the War of Silver and Iron (see **Dark Ages: British Isles** and p. 46 of this book), two packs sacrificed themselves to defeat a "Wyrn-Giant," but its death tainted the land. Since then, werewolves have gone from avoiding the area to just forgetting about it.

Obviously, if you don't have **Dark Ages: Werewolf** or **Mage**, these details are unimportant. All you need to know is that the werewolves have some bloody history in the area and now regard it as cursed, and that a small group of pagan sorcerers have taken an interest in the fae.

beings, each claimed land on opposing sides of Hadrian's Wall. The presence of the courts pre-dated the wall, but when it arose, they found it to be a convenient barrier. Both courts could limit participation in the War of Seasons to occasional skirmishes while fulfilling their duties. When the Romans left, the courts were once again forced to confront each other. Their fighting grew more vicious; each successive generation lost its elders, until only weary youngsters were left to bind themselves to the Oath-Truce.

So it was that the Stones of Night's Kin gave the firstborn Sithech over to be a hostage of the Throne of Woven Staves, leaving Sithech's oathbrother Malgirich to rule the Stones of Night's Kin alone. This was considered to be a fair judgment, for the Winter fae of Night's Kin were blessed with a thriving mortal community who only paid lip service to the Church. The fief of Dromongard knew that it had dread protectors; successive barons reacted accordingly and ran their holdings quietly.

The Land

Mortal settlements are strangely distributed. The land south of the wall is technically fallow, but the wild plants are as bounteous as anything the peasants of Dromongard could grow. Yet they refuse to exploit it. The baron forbids it on pain of death, supposedly to avoid antagonizing his English neighbors. Brave youths who climb the ruined wall to look south claim it's just as well, because faerie lights drift about the place after dark. In the middle of this verdant patch a copse of ancient trees marks the Throne of Woven

Staves, named for the chair of intertwined oak saplings at its center. The land holds no permanent human inhabitants, but brigands do skirt the borders. The court leaves them alone except for occasional dawns, when Lord Garmyn hunts animal and human prey to diffuse his rage.

Northward, the land grows rocky as travelers enter Dromongard's boundaries. The winters carry an unnatural chill and the area is hard to farm, but the people do the best they can. Dromongard Keep crouches on a rocky hill, its antique wooden walls complemented by two rickety stone towers. The baron's poor home lags behind the standards of the time; Lord Adam's money is tied up in scutage and a dowry for his daughter, Elaine. In the crooked shadow of the tower, a small church houses an unenthusiastic priest who drags rote worship from the parishioners.

When the characters arrive, the peasants have just conducted a strange ceremony: They burned a scarecrow in the baron's livery and a crown of leaves. While it appears to be a condemnation of their lord, they're actually are uncommonly loyal to the baron. These sentiments border on paganism, especially the conviction that the Dromongard line "sacrifice themselves for the land." The other prominent local custom is to avoid the Gralpit, a sinkhole surrounded by narrow standing stones. If it were seen from above, the whole place would look like the fanged mouth of a lamprey. In its depths, hidden doors lead to the Night's Kin's halls. Peasants don't approach unless they are sent by the baron wearing his livery. Still, these unfortunate messengers are plagued by nightmares for the rest of their days.

Act One: A Hostage's Scheme

If the characters come to Dromongard, Adam senses their presence soon after their arrival (his hereditary association with the fae allows him some skill in Kenning) unless they are very subtle. He invites them to the keep and gives them the use of a leaky room — one of the best there — and nervously questions them over dinner. Elaine sings for them (she has a lovely voice), while he asks pointed questions about their stations and marital statuses, as befits someone desperate to marry his daughter into better circumstances.

After spending a scene with the baron or his daughter, have characters make Perception + Kenning rolls (difficulty 6); success means characters note a faint, acrid smell around them, like brimstone mixed with fresh snow. This is the legacy of their bloodline, left by an ancient fae to mark his mortal allies. Players who manage more than four successes note that the enchantment is a minor but ancient manifestation of the Night Dominion.

If the characters seem to be poor, universally ugly or cruel, Adam gives them minimal hospitality and sends them on their way. If they impress him and have (or pretend to have) noble titles, he urges them to stay, hoping that one of them will impress Elaine enough to arrange a courtship

GETTING THERE

The characters should arrive in Dromongard just before the mages' raid (see below) begins. Why they arrive is up to you. Let these suggestions serve as a guide:

- Pagan sorcerers plan some sort of raid on one of the area's courts. A stealthy fae sympathetic to the characters' cause overheard Cinatha and Andrea's plans to move on the area, but was forced to flee before hearing exactly where and why they would strike.
- They hear legends about the Bloodgraal, a terrible weapon used during the War of Silver and Iron. It is said to summon giants to its wielder. Allies or enemies preparing for the Oath-Truce's end want to acquire the weapon.
- Pursued by supernatural enemies, the characters are relieved to discover that their foes will not enter Dromongard or the surrounding area for fear of "faerie magic."

and, eventually, a wedding. Lord Adam is desperate to send his daughter into better circumstances, but Elaine is indifferent to the charms of most suitors.

Attentive characters note that a servant in the baron's livery rides north shortly after they arrive. This man alerts the Stones of Night's Kin of the strangers' arrival. Malgirich uses this messenger as his scout, binding him with a cantrip to control his body, use his senses and speak through him. If he discovers that the characters are fae, he reveals when they are alone that he controls the baron's man, then insists that they receive Night's Kin's hospitality.

Otherwise, the characters can discover the lay of the land themselves and enter the court of their choosing.

The Stones of Night's Kin

This court consists of the seneschal Malgirich, three other fae and perhaps a dozen sprites. In a series of underground tunnels, the characters find that Malgirich is uncommonly friendly for a Winter-Sained faerie. He serves the raw bounty of the hunt to the characters on the bronze platters illuminated by blue, smokeless flame. In the great hall, a red-flecked, black stone large enough for three to stand abreast on serves as Malgirich's throne. This is the Bloodgraal; Malgirich is pleased to regale travelers with its lore. Dominions cast on the rock reveal nothing; Malgirich isn't offended by the use of cantrips — he is happy that the characters are curious.

Malgirich pines for his oathbrother, Sithech, who is a hostage of the nearby Spring holding under the Oath-Truce. To polite characters, Malgirich reveals that Sithech's claim to the Bloodgraal (and thus, the court) is truer than his. Sithech was Sained "upon the Bloodgraal itself," while he was merely sent here to reinforce the ranks after a vicious

battle between Night's Kin and Woven Staves in AD 1103. The characters realize that this is unusual; custom would make Malgirich the chosen hostage. If they've earned his good humor, Malgirich will admit that even he doesn't know why Sithech volunteered to be taken.

The Winter fae are in good humor, if uncomfortably fierce. They enjoy tales of bloodshed from the court's violent past, and are obviously bored with other stories. Fae from other courts may be challenged to "friendly" duels. The Winter-kin will not kill, but they will exercise some sadism on anyone who accepts. If no one does, Malgirich is less inclined to tell his stories.

Malgirich recalls that the Bloodgraal is an artifact out of legend, brought by his predecessors when they fought Fomorians and werewolves for rule of the land. Songs claim its "black thunder" caused "naught but stunted grasses and chattering rats to find favor in the land." The stone was the altar of King Croagh, a master of Winter's sorcerous arts. Many mortals died upon it to power cantrips of war, until treacherous servants of Spring turned against them in order to curry oaths from the human army. The rebel forces slew Croagh, but underestimated the resolve of his Oath-kin. In secret, they forged an oath with the people to guard the line of the mortal war-chief in perpetuity as long as a mortal dared not raise a hand against Croagh's court. Bereft of mortal support, the Spring traitors eventually fled south.

The Throne of Woven Staves

The Spring court is surprisingly forlorn. Lord Garmyn and Lady Viryd rule here with five firstborn and a handful of sprites in their retinue. Lord Garmyn is rarely seen; he amuses himself with hunting bandits and beasts who stray too close to the court. Every evening, the meal is a raw stag he's hunted with his bare hands; the beast invariably has a terrified rictus and moss upon its coat. If he meets the characters on the perimeter of the court's domain, he'll gruffly invite them to the copse to talk to "the true life of the court," then be on his way.

When they enter, they'll find Lady Viryd and Sithech seated side by side, with the Lady upon the throne itself. They appear to be a lone beacon of pleasantries here; other fae have little to say, and the whole wood is nearly oppressed by signs of the Spring Court: painfully bright light, tangled blooms that snag the characters' clothes and an unwholesome, slimy touch of dew on everything. The characters are stiffly invited to stay in treetop quarters.

Viryd is as formal to Sithech as she is to the characters, but perceptive characters may note that there she feels a deeper attachment to her hostage than she cares to admit. If she is confronted with this, she'll leave for her chambers; the characters detect a hint of sardonic satisfaction in Sithech's reaction. Other fae of the court wait for him to defend the Lady's name, but the hostage does nothing.

Guests are invited to spend three days in the court — no more and no less. After that, Garmyn is pleased to escort them away. The fae lord only relaxes his distant contempt if the characters ask to accompany him on the hunt. Characters are asked to drive off and terrify a score of bandits and camp followers who are a day's distance away. Decorum requires him to even invite Winter fae, but he watches them closely. If they anger him, he subtly arranges for a "hunting accident" to badly injure (but not kill) them. He tests changeling characters the hardest; Viryd's actions have convinced him that the milkings suffer from too much human sentiment. He dares them to inflict acts of savagery upon the brigands.

On the hunt, Garmyn is a little freer with his feelings. Even though he doesn't say what is going on directly, socially skilled characters will quickly pick up the gist of it.

He tells characters why the Stones of Night's Kin deserves contempt. In the ancient wars, the Winter general Croagh turned Fir-Bolg, and the Spring fae were forced to slay him. Croagh was a coward who would not fight his equals, but inflicted his rage upon the mortals who served Spring. Eventually, Garmyn's people prevailed, leaving a few Winter-kin and "that impotent rock" to their hiding place. The mortals would have flocked to Spring oaths, if Night's Kin hadn't promised their war-chief land in perpetuity. Now the humans suffer in barren Dromongard, but as far as Lord Garmyn is concerned, they deserve it.

The Witches' Hunt

Two days into the characters' visit, the witch Andrea stages her raid upon the Stones of Night's Kin. She and Cinatha raise a party of beasts; wolves, bears, great stags and boars assail the court at the Gralpit. Andrea accompanies the beasts, while Cinatha hides, using mystic scrying to

survey the battle. Cinatha keeps her distance; if Andrea falls, she can fight on another day.

Two weeks ago, both sisters dreamed that a great stone giant would rise from Dromongard to bathe in a lake of blood. They boldly made for the region and blundered into Garmyn. Andrea was smooth-tongued enough to placate the fae lord, and when she related their dream he knew they spoke of the Bloodgraal and gave them directions to the Winter holding.

Both mages are terrified that the fae will awaken the "giant" if they know where it lies, so spells and self-discipline prevent them from telling the fae why they're attacking, even under the influence of torture or most cantrips.

The beasts have been trained to attack the mystical "scent" of the fae, and do not discriminate by Court. If the player characters are at the Stones of Night's Kin, the wolves and boars attack them.

If they are at Woven Staves during the attack, Lady Viryd asks them to intervene. The peace agreement prevents her from sending so much as a sprite across Hadrian's Wall. Garmyn boasted to her that the witches would prove that her "foolish love's line was weak, and end this attachment to Winter." Against her better judgment, she wishes to preserve her lover's honor for the day when they will co-rule a united court. Garmyn is enraged, but the Oath-Truce prevents him from taking action outside of a duel. Characters are free to refuse (and probably should — Garmyn is a potent warrior).

If all else fails, have the beasts attack the Throne of Woven Staves as well. In this case, the witches' ignorance of local fae politics means that to be on the safe side, Andrea sends animals to wherever the "fae scent" lingers. This betrays their deal with Lord Garmyn, but the mage believes

A CRUEL ROMANCE

Viryd and Sithech are lovers. Sithech has always seen the liaison as a cruel game to punish his old rival, Garmyn. While Lady Viryd initially agreed to the assignation to pry secrets from the Winter holding, she has become attached to her hostage, wooed by Sithech's false claim that he intends to unite the two courts in an equal peace.

Garmyn originally approved himself, thinking that the double intrigue on the lady's part would make Sithech betray his court. Now he believes that her attentions border on treachery. Thus, he agreed to help the two pagan mages harass the Night's Kin and capture their stone throne. He doesn't care why the crazy mortals want it, but he knows its theft insults Sithech's lineage. He hopes to use the hostage's subsequent rage to maneuver him into a duel, where Garmyn will be pleased to slay him.

RUNNING THE BATTLE

The witches have bound three beasts for every player and Storyteller character. The battle should be exhausting, but not fatal; Andrea should be the worst threat. She fights at the lead, to invade the court and destroy the Bloodgraal as swiftly as she can. Unfortunately, the stone is unbreakable by any force she (or anyone else in this story) can bring to bear. As noted, Andrea says nothing of her mission, and torture cannot compel her. Days of questioning with Dominions might break through the spells that guard her mind, but if she can, she continues working magic to reinforce them.

See **Dark Ages: Vampire** (pp. 311–312) for game statistics for animals. If they are too weak, remember that the mages can make their servants stronger, tougher and faster.

that she can avoid his wrath with magic. Garmyn is especially enraged, but stays in the bastion to defend his people.

Sithech's Return

After the battle, Viryd tells Sithech that Garmyn assisted the raid. If he can see the oathcircle, he asks them to tell his fellows at Night's Kin. Otherwise, he convinces Lady Viryd to send a sprite despite the courts' treaty.

Lord Malgirich is enraged, and sends a few of his own sprites to harass Spring fae and deliver a demand that representatives from both courts meet at the Wall the following midnight. After some commotion (including efforts to drive off the Winter sprites), the courts meet. The characters are invited to attend as impartial witnesses and heralds, so that they can pass on any judgments to other Courts.

Malgirich demands Sithech's return, and Garmyn readily agrees — he believes that the hostage will refuse in order to maintain his connection to Lady Viryd. Sithech agrees without a single glance backward. Angered beyond tolerance, Lady Viryd Unleashes her Dawn Dominion at the assembled Winter fae, shaking the very earth, but still avoids harming Sithech directly.

This is a time for revelation. Sithech claims his love was false and urges her to "try his kin" as the Winter fae brace for battle. If she kills any of them, it violates the Oath-Truce; both courts are then obligated to destroy her. The characters must intervene to save Viryd from herself, for Lord Garmyn does nothing, hoping that Viryd will die and rid his court of weakness. If they restrain her for a few turns, she calms down.

Sithech returns to his stone throne; Garmyn (and Viryd, if she survives) goes back to the trees. Unless they have been grossly rude to either court, both invite them to stay until the Oath-Truce falls.

Act Two: The Bloody Stone Rises

As the Oath-Truce's end approaches, both courts call in favors; their numbers are augmented by young warrior-fae eager to gain prestige and skill.

Remembered for past services, the players' oathcircle is called to witness another summit at Hadrian's Wall. This one lays out the rules of war. Lords Sithech and Garmyn attend in battle gear, each supported by a single second. Unless the characters have committed some unspeakable offense, either court might ask them to act as peacekeepers and arbiters. Note that Truce-Bearers who push that agenda openly are laughed aside; the courts are eager to resolve their grudges.

Garmyn immediately proposes a duel of champions, which Sithech snidely refuses. This is expected; the Winter lord's powers are more eldritch than physical. Otherwise, several issues concern this war council. Both readily agree that Dromongard's mortals are the true prize, for they can

PLAYING THE INTERLUDE

You can decide that the time between the end of the first act and the fall of the Oath-Truce is anything from days to months. Feel free to let the characters roam the wider area and consult **Dark Ages: British Isles** for local details that benefit your chronicle.

- When animals sally forth to support the mages' raid, local werewolves send a scouting pack to investigate. Dromongard has a reputation for being tainted and dangerous, but this comes from old, hazy legends. If the werewolves discover that the place isn't as fearsome as they've been led to believe, this pack may foreshadow a future invasion. The characters must scare the werewolves off — no easy feat, that — but not to the point of wanton violence or new packs will come to seek revenge. Storytellers with access to **Dark Ages: Werewolf** might consider that of the Ten Tribes, the Fianna are the most likely visitors — but Black Spiral Dancers do caper about the Pictish ruins.

- Shortly before the Oath-Truce falls, spies from the Summer and Autumn Courts come to investigate the region's defenses. Dromongard's mortal battlements are a joke and its fae are few and divided, making it an ideal target for fae who eagerly await the coming war. Will the oathcircle betray the local courts, or warn them of the danger?

- The depressed old priest who heads Dromongard's rickety church receives three visitors: French Templars who think the land could be developed to their benefit. The "poor knights" have plenty of money and can arrange a decent marriage for Elaine, but their plans include a large refectory and more priests (and unfortunately, an increased threat of Echoes). The knights hope to convince the old priest to advise Lord Adam that their proposal is holy. The baron is afraid of angering the Winter fae but wants to see his daughter properly wed and cared for. In addition, the Templars may be more occult than they seem. They could be Messianic Voice mages or thralls of Prince Mithras (later rumors accuse them of worshipping a bearded Persian idol, after all). Or, if you have access to **Dark Ages: Inquisitor**, perhaps they are not Templars but Poor Knights of Acre.

- Aside from justifying the ability to control so many animals, this story includes two Old Faith mages as a deliberate loose end. You may decide to send in the rest of the coven, or have Cinatha seek to continue her sister's mission alone. This can serve to provide foreshadowing for Act Two. If the characters don't investigate Dromongard's folklore, she might do it for them and present the evidence they need to survive King Croagh's rise.

A LADY'S WRATH

Viryd doesn't care about the lords' terms. She wants Sithech *dead*, preferably after a bout of torment. Characters who visit see that she is obviously wroth over her former lover, to the point where any characters allied with him may be in serious danger. Her vassals initially challenge any characters friendly to Sithech to duel, but failing that, she visits her Dominions upon the hapless characters shortly after the battle begins. If it takes too long to kill Sithech, she'll boldly break all the rules of war to find revenge.

shower the winners with protective oaths. Neither side wants to "ruin" the humans, so what remains is to decide how to fight without disturbing them. Both lords are open to suggestions. They haven't fought in a long time and are a touch unsure how to proceed. If the characters wish to remain neutral (or as "referees"), they may push for that standing here. At the very least, they are asked to convey news of the battle and tally any broken oaths so that the appropriate Courts may respond.

After that, technical issues must be determined. Are the combatants allowed to summon other allies? Involve foreign mortals and supernatural beings? Solstice mercenaries? Garmyn wants a straight-out fight; Sithech wants room to slink through the enemy's defenses. Will quarter be asked or given? Sithech wants the option, but Garmyn would prefer a fight to the death. The Spring lord remarks that his lady would see Sithech dead. These negotiations also allow you to control the scale and circumstances of the battle through in-character negotiation.

War Breaks Out

Each side agrees to allow the other a day and a night's preparation; but after that, the battle is joined. Characters may choose any side they wish (or none at all), but fighting against their own Courts marks them as traitors. Sithech tries to bend the rules here and there. For instance, he may throw mortals in front of an enemy war band, then erase their memories with his Dominions, claiming that he hasn't really "spoiled" them. Characters have to be clever to catch him in the act.

Malgirich and Sithech have six other fae in their war band, evenly split among changelings, firstborn and inanimae. Garmyn and Viryd have 10 soldiers, all firstborn, and twice as many sprites. The Throne of Woven Staves would appear to have the advantage, but their enemies have oaths with the people of Dromongard and are slightly cleverer with their Dominions. They must use the former advantage very carefully, because using mortals as shields is probably against the rules. Similarly, they cannot actually fight to hold territory, for fear of exposing themselves to mortal view. The principal battles are fought with units of

sprites, then individual battles between fae champions. Afterwards, both sides return to safe territory to recover and boast. Malgirich and Viryd hold their respective courts with defensive Dominions, while their partners roam with the war bands.

Each side is cautious, unwilling to lose through attrition. Still, the Woven Staves seem set to eventually prevail.

Dromongard's Blood-Tale

The Throne of Woven Staves is eager to uncover what oaths protect the enemy, especially if the Night's Kin are caught using mortals in the war. The Spring fae only have a few weak Iron Oaths with local bandits and nearby foresters, but the Stones of Night's Kin has several Stone Oaths with Dromongard's people.

Like most Winter oaths, these are simple affairs: Mortals are never to enter the Gralpit unless they wear the baron's livery; in return, the fae may not enter the baron's keep. Outside of their church, humans must never speak of the Christian God in a voice louder than a whisper, or they will be devoured within a fortnight (and the Winter-kin promise not to eat the impious villagers). Finally, mortals must never eat plants that grow south of Hadrian's wall, or hunt any creature there; in return, the people will never have to take up arms against any beast or foe that originates there. (Note that they may be compelled to use other means — such as Echoes — but they can never be asked to use weapons).

Unknown to even the Night's Kin, the people have other oaths. These are sworn to Croagh, the creature that led their ancestors here to fight Fomorians and Garou. Mortals remember him in the rhyme of the Blood-Tale:

*King Croagh lies in cold deep earth
but his child's death gives him new birth
He rises, wroth, from his stone caul
to slaughter Shining, Earthborn, all
Blood will answer Croagh's will
Lord's blood that a stranger's hand will spill
When ravens will feast on Dromon's line
Croagh sleeps again, in his cursed mine.*

Croagh fought hard for Dromongard. He used mortal warriors' blood to fuel potent Unleashings and ate the livers of disobedient commanders. The ancient inanimae had black, rocky skin flecked with red — iron, or the blood of his victims. His excesses eventually destroyed the local Spring and Winter alliance, but not before he secured a place for his own Winter fae. First, he made the mortal war-chiefs swear that no inhabitant of their newfound territory would slay those Sained along Croagh's line, or else he would sow destruction upon their lands. Then, Croagh promised the assembled warriors that if roused, he would not complete his vengeance personally. Instead he would ravage the land until others extinguished the chieftains' bloodlines. Before sleeping, he Unleashed a minor working upon the line of chieftains so that he could smell their lineage in their sweat and tears.

As the War of Seasons dragged on, the warlords' lines thinned; only the baron of Dromongard's family remains. Lord Adam knows enough of the legend to realize that he must protect the Night's Kin, or else risk himself and his daughter. In addition to the rhyme, the legend is preserved in local folklore of varying obscurity. You should make up tales of varying accuracy, enhancing them with enough clues to give your group a reasonable chance of guessing the truth. If they investigate, they'll discover stories that say Croagh fled this world, but this isn't true. He sleeps in the form of the Bloodgraal, only to stir if his Sain-descendant — Sithech — is slain.

Give the characters a chance to discover this just before the next event.

Sithech's Doom

Eventually, Lady Viryd decides to take matters into her own hands by targeting Dromongard's peasants. In the days to come, a strange plague (Unleashed by Viryd's Dawn Dominion) infects a dozen mortals; in death, their skins are a livid green. As the plague strikes mortals down, Viryd sends an oathbound bandit to their households with a simple message: "If you wish to live, abandon the village." Unless the characters intervene, this has the desired effect: Most of the mortals flee to the outlying hills, and the Throne of Woven Staves can press its numerical advantage to the fullest. Only Lord Adam, Elaine and his senior vassals remain, but the vow of the Gralpit holds; Night's Kin fae cannot enter the baron's keep without breaking their oath.

This especially pleases Garmyn. It gets troublesome humans out of the way, and Viryd's treachery will be punished by the other Courts. He does his best to affect an air of regret and tells the characters that they must do their duty and report the violation — but that he must seize even an unfair advantage to bring this conflict to an end.

Thus, Garmyn leads his forces straight to Sithech. The characters only have a slim chance of saving the Night's Kin's chieftain, because Lady Viryd and two of her vassals

IF VIRYD FALLS

If Lady Viryd dies before the war reaches this point, then you'll have to find another way to make Sithech vulnerable. You may decide that the Throne of Woven Staves' numerical advantage just outweighs the enemy's advantages. Remember, however, the Lord Adam may find out about the conflict thanks to his contact with the Stones of Night's Kin. If you have him react by sending the peasants away, Spring forces don't need to worry about avoiding mortals and can press their attack more easily. This lets Lord Garmyn threaten Sithech without Lady Viryd's intervention.

WINTER'S CHAMPION

One of the characters can solve the impasse by volunteering to duel Garmyn in Sithech's stead. This must carry consequences for Sithech as well. If his champion loses, he could be forced to take a sentence of exile in lieu of his own death. The characters can mediate affairs and suggest such an alternative. You should provide suggestions where necessary to keep the story running smoothly.

Lord Garmyn is powerful enough to threaten an entire oathcircle; the fae who fights him is nearly certain to forfeit her life. You can run this in two ways. First, a character might decide to nobly sacrifice herself to Garmyn's spear, knowing that she has no chance to win. If this is the option you choose, make sure that the character's death is meaningful and appropriate, a sacrifice that will be remembered in faerie legend.

Alternately, you could decide that the fight isn't so hopeless after all, and give Garmyn a special weakness. For instance, he may not be able to bring himself to fight a member of his own Court, so appointing a Spring-Sained character as Sithech's champion forces him to muzzle his own prowess. If you choose this option, make sure that you foreshadow it, weaving the weakness in to Garmyn's prior behavior.

will attack (but unless sorely pressed, will not kill) any characters who try to aid him. Alone, Garmyn can skillfully slay Sithech.

If the characters discover the truth about the Bloodgraal in time, they can try to convince Garmyn and Viryd to stay their hands. Unfortunately, this plan has several problems. Lady Viryd will be satisfied with nothing less than a death to avenge her betrayed love. Lord Garmyn is skeptical of the peasants' tales. After all, the fief has been under Winter's sway for so long that the myth could be a deliberate lie, meant to restrain attackers.

If Sithech discovers that his death will bring doom upon Dromongard and the region, he'll use it to blackmail the Throne of Woven Staves. If they can't kill him without destroying themselves, he feels free to violate truces, send regular forays onto Spring land and generally harass the enemy court until they must withdraw.

The characters have one other option: They can try to imprison Sithech by force, then take him from Dromongard to a court willing to keep him held, but safe. Use the characters' allegiances to suggest a suitable prison, but remember that Sithech has been a hostage before; he's good at worming his way into his captors' favor.

King Croagh Returns

The Bloodgraal stirs every time Sithech is wounded. Anyone who observes the stone when Sithech is injured sees it writhe, the imprint of hands, feet and a brutish face pressing against the surface of the stone.

If Sithech dies, the horrid sound of scraping, screaming rocks peels through the Stones of Night's Kin's warrens as the Bloodgraal warps into Croagh's huge, rocky form. He begins to kill immediately and randomly, passing by some bystanders to smash others with his stony fists. In practical terms, this means that you aren't forced to kill characters who encounter him. He always spares Lord Adam and Elaine, the last descendants of the mortal war-chiefs that he once commanded.

Croagh is not meant to be run as an antagonist as much as a force of nature. True to the myths, he takes time to seed the land with his corruption, tainting the earth with a blight that prevents crops from growing until he is slain or goes back to sleep. Characters can draw him away from his bloody task by attacking or taunting him, but must flee in turn once the Stone King chases them.

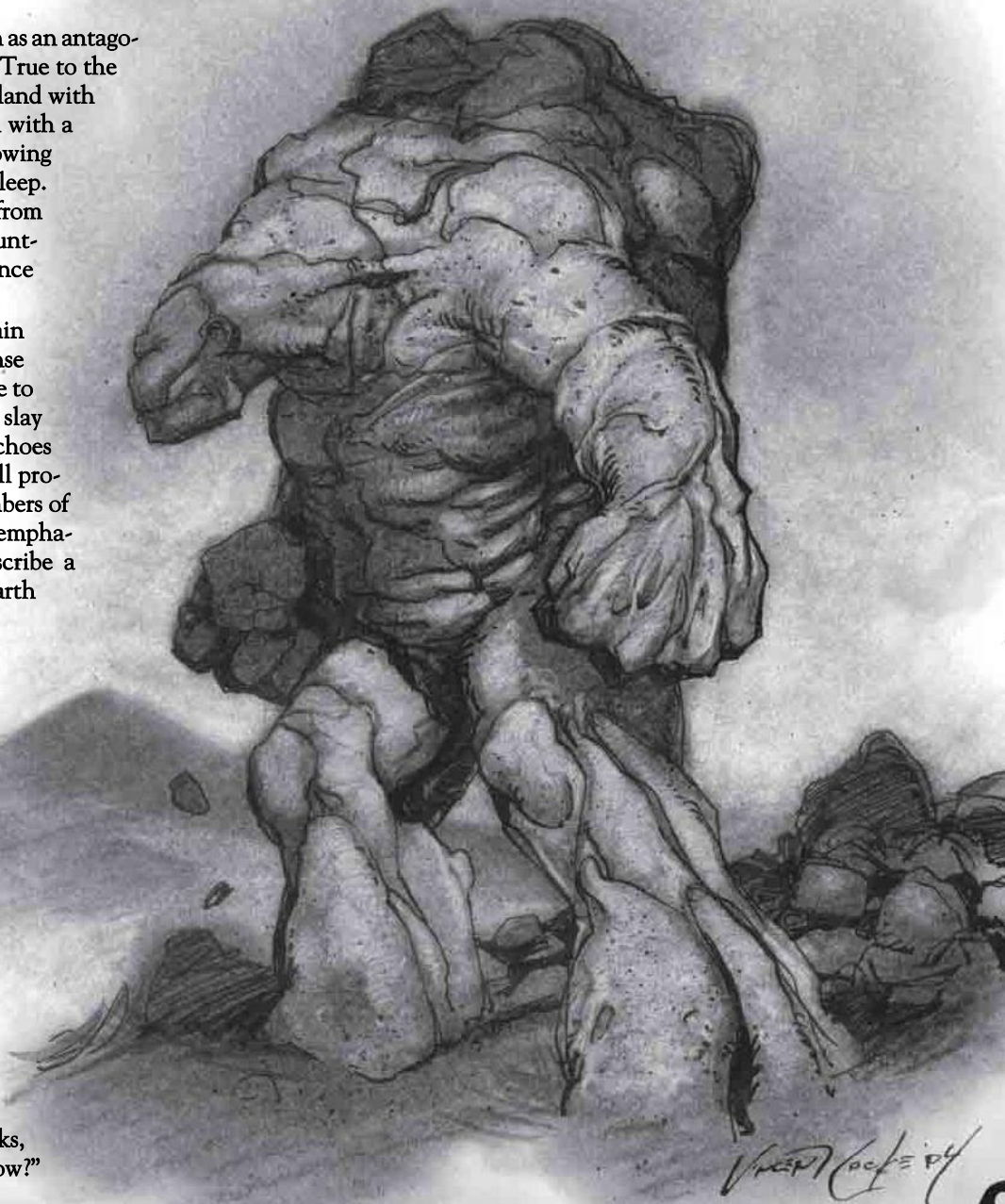
Croagh is mad, but has a certain animal cunning and a lingering sense of sadism. He wants his vengeance to linger, so he doesn't immediately slay every creature he encounters. Echoes are less effective because he is still protected by his vow not to kill members of Dromongard's line. Remember to emphasize this resistance (you can describe a peasant ineffectually using her hearth lore to repel him), so that the players will take note and look for a solution. If the characters still aren't sure why Croagh is ravaging the land, the Winter beast bellows his own Blood-Chant and makes raving allusions to the oath he has risen to fulfill.

Blood for the Stone King

Of the two ways to defeat Croagh, the first is simple and brutal: kill Lord Adam and Elaine. With the line of Dromongard extinguished, Croagh stops his rampage. Then, in his gravely, booming voice he asks, "Who will carry my blood-debt now?"

He makes a simple offer: He will Sain a new descendant, so long as another mortal takes the place occupied by Lord Adam's line. The oaths are renewed, and Croagh returns to the Gralpit and his slumber.

If one of the player characters is a Solstice fae, Croagh can Sain her into the Winter Court (while the normal Saining process requires an entire year, Croagh Unleashes the Night Dominion and performs the Saining, something that most fae wouldn't even think possible). From there, she can either take command of the Stones of Night's Kin or go her own way, knowing that if any harm comes to her, the



INNOCENT LIVES LOST

Storytellers, remember to emphasize that Lord Adam and Elaine are fundamentally decent people. They've done their best to rule Dromongard fairly. Lord Adam is honorable and just in his dealings despite his own poverty and earnest desire to see Elaine properly wed and cared for. Elaine resists her father's plans because she has a genuine love for the people, and doesn't want to leave them under the rule of a husband who would misuse them.

Lord Adam will sacrifice himself for his people, but thinks that marrying his daughter into another family should make killing her unnecessary. He's wrong; the oaths don't respect Christian concepts of kinship. If necessary, he'll fight to the death to save her, sending her to a nearby convent or friendly demesne while he holds off would-be killers. To complete their grim mission, the characters could be forced to lay siege to a more formidable stronghold than poor Dromongard Keep.

people of Dromongard will suffer. If it comes to this, Garmyn presses for peacemaking oaths, including an agreement that some of Dromongard's mortals fall under Spring's influence. This creates a stable peace, unless the new Winter ruler decides to press the threat of the Bloodgraal to her advantage.

Afterward, the characters could try to move Croagh's Bloodgraal shape to a safer place, like the bottom of the sea or a Patron domain. Thanks to Croagh's potent Dominions, the Bloodgraal is tremendously heavy and nearly indestructible; if an attack is damaging enough, he will almost certainly arise, punish the attacker, then return to the Gralpit to sleep.

The characters can also exploit the Stone King's tie to Dromongard's heirs. If they trick Croagh into killing Lord Adam or Elaine, then the Stone King violates his oath and makes himself vulnerable to Echoes.

To succeed at this gambit, they need to counter the old Night spell that marks Dromongard's line. Unweaving this requires patience and skill; though minor, the Unleashing is meant to last for centuries. On the other hand, there is a simpler solution. Like any scent, the Dromongard's mark can be masked with other, stronger smells, whether they're created by Dominions or mundane perfumes. If this ruse is suggested, Lord Adam will willingly sacrifice himself, charging Croagh with his sword and decrepit old warhorse to strike a few brave blows before dying.

Next, the oathcircle has to coax the area's mortals from their hiding places to confront Croagh, reminding them of the ancient rituals that can banish him from Dromongard.

If he is pursued with enough vigor, Croagh runs to the seas and secret worlds where the other Fir-Bolg lair, waiting for the end of the world.

Resolutions and Future Stories

If the characters avert Croagh's revenge, both sides agree to a truce. If Croagh rose, Garmyn and Lady Viryd (or their successors) are humbled enough to agree to a longer, lasting peace. Remember that if Sithech lives (and he hasn't been imprisoned), he'll be tempted to use the Bloodgraal's threat to secure more power. Again, the characters must use diplomacy and cleverness to ensure a peaceful resolution.

On the other hand, the oathcircle can sponsor one court to victory. News of their actions reaches other Courts; they acquire enemies among the Truce-Bearers and Patron Council, and friends in the victorious Court.

The matter of broken oaths also needs attention. If Lady Viryd's indiscretions become known to fae at large, an oathcircle of warriors from all the Courts arrives to dispense justice. Characters could spirit Viryd away, turn her in, or fight for her in courtly arguments and trials by combat.

The peasants' oaths should also be noted; the war tested them to destruction. Many of Dromongard's humans reject the old ways and turn to the Christian faith to protect themselves. Cured of his apathy, the village priest sends word of the fief's trials to nearby monasteries. This could draw the shadow Inquisition, especially Red Order monks who study fae lore.

When a creature such as Croagh rises, the supernatural world takes note. Werewolves may follow the scent of corruption to Dromongard and demand proof that the Stone King is gone. Far-seeing mages sense the land's Quintessence twisting at Croagh's command, as do the blood wizards of the Tremere. Both could send investigators and plunderers to exploit the "wild magic." If characters help make Dromongard strong and rich, influential vampires (such as Mithras' direct vassals) will be eager to exploit it.

Even without supernatural interference, outsiders are likely to investigate. If Dromongard no longer sends tribute and scutage, then Lord Adam's liege sends a knight and his retinue to press for lost dues. If word of Adam's death spreads far enough, opportunistic bandits and neighboring lords will try to take the land for themselves, either by enticing Lady Elaine to marry, using treachery (accusing Elaine of witchcraft is a likely tactic) or with sheer force.

In all cases, Dromongard has some hard times ahead; but the players' oathcircle can use this instability to carve out its own territory, forge new oaths and increase its standing among its favored factions. The danger easily matches the rewards, but that's the way of the Dark Medieval age.

Characters

Here are the critical characters of the story. Note that instead of assigning game traits, we've described them in terms of how their powers and talents compare to those of the characters. This way, you can choose to run the story at any stage of your oathcircle's chronicle.

In addition to the characters specifically named here, a number of unnamed fae (including sprites) are present to act as warriors, courtiers and champions. These characters should be either less capable than the characters or just on par; your oathcircle's visit represents a critical infusion of talent and heroism in Dromongard's contentious fae society.

Sithech of Stone Heritage, Lord of Night's Kin

Origin: Firstborn

Court: Winter

Nature: Jester

Demeanor: Gallant



Lord Sithech is the last of a line of Sainings that descend from the legendary Croagh. Lord Iyr-Sigorn, a Golden Age faerie who'd been initiated by the Stone King, inducted him into the Winter Court. Iyr-Sigorn died in combat with the Spring Lord Garmyn's predecessor before the Oath-Truce; later in that battle, young Garmyn gave Sithech a vicious mystical wound that withered his arm. It humiliated Sithech when his people were forced to send the Throne of Woven Staves a hostage to cement the peace, but on consideration, he realized that the circumstances could very well grant him his revenge. Instead of sacrificing Malgirich or another vassal, he decided to go straight into the Spring lion's jaws to take some satisfaction from Lady Viryd's human weakness and Lord Garmyn's rage. He thoroughly seduced Viryd with promises of love and a

united peace, backed by a few discrete cantrips and his own considerable charisma.

Sithech exceeds the characters' power. He is especially talented at subtle cantrips of curses, fascination and stealth. On the other hand, he isn't much of a warrior, and a skilled character could probably beat him in direct combat — until Sithech applies his wits and cantrips. Between his withered arm and his physical cowardice, he prefers to use trickery and complex strategies, leaving direct combat for others. To exploit his strengths, he's more personable than many Winter fae; his monstrous side is only truly exposed when he panics or feels that he can be cruel without retribution.

Sithech has a Militant agenda, but his experience with humans is an unusual thing for a Winter fae. Ultimately, he wants to drive away the Spring presence and apply the lessons learned at Night's Kin to the entire War of Seasons. Humans like Dromongard's hungry, beaten inhabitants will provide the power of oaths and Echoes to win new battles, while lieutenants like Malgirich and the lean, cold days of his beloved season prevent mortals from challenging them.

Image: Sithech's mien is tall and slender, with the bluish skin of a strangled man and a patina of frost on his features. Thanks to Lord Garmyn, his right arm is twisted and scarred. He wears his blue cloak over that side to conceal it, but his blackened, mangled hand still occasionally appears to adjust his frost-matted, gray locks. His wide, handsome mouth is filled with lightly pointed teeth; his narrow eyes flash red by night and nearly black blue by day. He has a kind of cruel beauty, like a mountain or battlement that tempts others to challenge it.

Malgirich of Iron Heritage, Captain of Night's Kin

Origin: Firstborn

Court: Winter

Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Barbarian

After Sithech was wounded and many of his fae slain, he gave 99 frozen human tears to Lord Krode (who offered a boon for any gem he couldn't mine himself) in exchange for reinforcements. Krode sent Malgirich and his goblins as payment. Dromongard was terrorized for the next three nights, until Sithech tortured Malgirich into obedience. Malgirich admired the move and has been loyal ever since. Over time he adapted to his new home and rose to the position of Sithech's seneschal. The Oath-Truce bores him, so he bides his time with nightly duels and drills around the Gralpit, supplemented by occasional forays away from Dromongard to spread terror in outlying communities. This keeps Dromongard's mortals isolated and lets the goblins search for rival supernatural intrusion.

Malgirich is a competent and sadistic warrior who's fond of eating the sword hands of enemies, but two or three determined characters can defeat him. He isn't very imagi-

native with his magic; he likes cantrips that enhance his toughness and the bite of his axes. He's forthright and even coarse, a fact that makes his speech prone to cause offense even as it attracts interest. Over the past century, he's honed his tale-telling skills to occupy his court and receive Lord Adam's servants. Still, it's a poor substitute for war, and he's eager to get Sithech back and return to the old days of blood and killing frost.



Image: Malgirich smells of rust; his four-foot tall muscular frame is covered with a battle harness, leather trousers and a boar's hide vest. His skin is gray except where blue scars cover it, and his disproportionately large hands easily grip two full-size battle axes. He is bald, but a row of five small horns surrounds his brow like a crown.

Garmyn of Stone Heritage, Lord of Woven Staves

Origin: Firstborn

Court: Spring

Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Defender

Lord Garmyn was Sained to be a warrior. Over the past century, he's kept his fighting edge, encouraged by his court's victory in the last major battle. His predecessor, Swargant, and Sithech's old liege killed each other that day, but Garmyn managed to maim Sithech with his master's spear before death completely unwove its destructive cantrips. He knows that it's only a matter of time before he gets to finish the job, but it's truly painful that the Winter lord abuses the hospitality of his home right under his very nose. Lady Viryd is under Sithech's spell and talks of making the court a haven for the Truce-Bearer cause, but that would deprive Garmyn of his reason for being. He sees himself as the aspect of Spring that overwhelms old, de-

crepit growth, destroying it with new life — his life and his power. He feels few mortals can withstand this kind of renewal, but he has some respect for the outlaws he hunts, who bet their lives on constant movement and change.

Garmyn is formidable, capable of defeating the entire oathcircle unless they use extremely clever tactics. He fights with a greenwood spear or his bare hands, advancing as inevitably as a growing vine clutching to a decaying tree. He enhances his already considerable prowess with cantrips like Sword of Earth. He lacks social graces and is a bit of an introvert. These traits prevented him from intervening in Lady Viryd's romance until it was too late.

If he is freed from his attachment to the Throne of Woven Staves, he becomes a powerful force for Spring, meeting challengers as he wanders. His personality prevents him from easily sharing oaths with mortals. In isolation, he tends to underestimate the power of Echoes. Neverthe-



less, if he survives he could become a critical fighter for whatever cause he champions.

Image: Garmyn is tall and powerfully built; he can run fast and easily in his coat of bronze scales. His black hair is short and spiky, except for a long, moss-covered beard. A harsh pinprick of daylight marks each brown eye. His mien casts no shadow and his hands are covered in small, black thorns. These give him a strong grip on his weapons and allow him to draw blood with a slap.

Viryd of Stone Heritage, Lady of Woven Staves

Origin: Changeling

Court: Spring

Nature: Penitent

Demeanor: Celebrant

One hundred and twenty years ago, Lady Viryd was raised by nuns in an isolated Scottish cloister. She never knew why the older Sisters were twice as harsh with her as with the other children, or why the Abbess demanded ascetic zeal from her to “get the devil out” until the age of 18 when her father came to claim her. Lord Swargant of Woven Staves didn’t ask permission; he took her away by force, leaving a dozen nuns wracked with madness. Their faith could not stop him because the Abbess — secretly Viryd’s birth mother — protected Swargant with her oath to raise Viryd. With a cantrip, the Spring lord stole Viryd’s mortal name, bound it in



a oak leaf and cast it into the ocean. He renamed her, and taught her the ways of the fae. When she pined for human love, Swargant ordered Garmyn to serve her. This disgusted him, but he obeyed until Viryd lost interest in this false love and eventually freed him.

This was one reason Viryd was vulnerable to Sithech’s advances. The other reason was that unlike her father or Garmyn, she had little interest in the War of Seasons. A quiet admirer of the Constantinian and Truce-Bearer causes, she wanted to find some way to end local conflict and guide both courts to more meditative and philosophical pursuits. Lady Viryd keeps informed of the outside world and sees that as old oaths between humanity and the fae crumble, the Four Courts and their customs need to adapt. Otherwise, the Fair Folk will be left aside as the Church and rising cities rule the future.

Lady Viryd’s ideals have not kept her from refining her abilities. She’s skilled in the Dawn and Day Dominions and is almost as creative as Lord Sithech when it comes to

applying them. She is responsible for the Throne of Woven Staves’ defenses and is capable of turning the land against invaders with relative ease. She could be bested by an intelligent oathcircle, but they would have to face her native brilliance and many indirect, cantrip-spawned threats to do so.

Image: Lady Viryd usually takes on her mien when angry or when she issues commands to the other fae of the court. In that form, her hair is green-tinted, and orange and green spirals (like old tribal woad) adorn her arms and neck. Small, white flowers grow wherever she has stepped in a matter of minutes. She retains a short, slim but muscular build and deep green eyes in her human and fae forms.

Croagh of Legend, the Bloodgrail King

Origin: Inanimae

Court: Winter

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Barbarian

Winter is the season of death, greedy to take life into its clutches and loathe to relinquish its chill to mortal fire or growing things. Croagh the Bloody Rock battled the Summer Court in some of the fiercest skirmishes of the War of Seasons. Both commanded an army of mortals and changeling heroes. Croagh’s command was the



harshes, and he thought little of using mortal flesh and blood as fuel for dark cantrips, or urging warriors into battle with terrible oaths. Croagh’s ruthlessness was repaid with success, but the long war drove him mad. When werewolves attacked the fae in the War of Silver and Iron, his greed for territory made him blight his own lands to keep any enemy from possessing them. Former allies hunted Croagh, lest he bring even more ruin than the rest of his Court.

As his enemies closed in and mortals assailed him with Echoes, he made his surviving vassals swear oaths to keep the land, used his powers to hide and armor himself for the ages, then slept, electing to wait for a time when his enemies would weaken and forget about him, taking comfort in the smell of his oathbound mortals and Sain-kin. The firstborn Iyr-Sigorn lied about Croagh to conceal his lord, and the sleeping body of the Bloody Rock became known as the Bloodgraal, a lifeless throne for the Stones of Night's Kin.

Croagh's oaths and actions are described elsewhere. As noted before, he is an unstoppable monster who cannot be defeated with force. He can be misdirected and his oaths can be used against him; and his terrible mien makes him more vulnerable to Echoes.

Image: Croagh is a walking stone nightmare: a 12-foot tall giant of red and black rock with crudely chiseled features. These features warp as he moves, so that a humanoid face sometimes gives way to that of a fanged cat, mythical beast or a horror that is difficult for mortals to look upon. Each thick finger ends in a sharp, black point. When he speaks, frozen pebbles fall out of his mouth, frosting anything they strike.

Lord Adam MacDomongart, Baron of Dromongard

Nature: Caretaker

Demeanor: Survivor

An honorable but destitute man, Lord Adam inherited his title and ties to the fae with some unease. Eighteen years



ago, his hunting party skirted the edge of the Gralpit. The fae lord struck his wife mad the next day; after giving birth to Elaine she died. He knows that long ago, his family made a bargain with a horrible creatures and that his line is doomed if he fails to protect the land, but doesn't want Elaine to bear the burden. To this end, he pays more

powerful lords money to avoid leaving for war and hoards the remainder for Elaine's dowry.

This has left him nearly as destitute as his villienns, who work the rocky cold fields for little reward.

Image: Lord Adam is a bit portly and unkempt, but still knows how to use a sword and bow when the need arises. His brown hair is peppered with gray and he frowns beneath a full mustache.

Elaine, Heiress of Dromongard

Nature: Caretaker

Demeanor: Pedagogue

Elaine is fairly neutral about the prospect of marriage, but is certain that she doesn't want to leave home. Dromongard is poor, but it's filled with mysteries that the various tutors her father hired to culture her never hinted of. She feels a genuine obligation to care for the people —



a trait she shares with her father — and wishes that her father would spend her dowry on improving the fief.

Her curiosity about the fae increased when she found a cache of books near the ruins of the Roman wall. These belonged to Lady Viryd, and contain the changeling's youthful observations of faerie life. Viryd hid them from her father but eventually forgot to reclaim them. Elaine believes that with this knowledge in hand, she can renegotiate the family's ties to the fae and enhance Dromongard's prosperity.

Image: Elaine nears the age of 18. In contrast to her slovenly father, she's dressed in fine linens and moves with

a stiff, studied poise. Her black hair is braided and her brown eyes have a resigned look in them.

Andrea and Cinatha, Twin Witches

Fellowship: Old Faith

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Judge

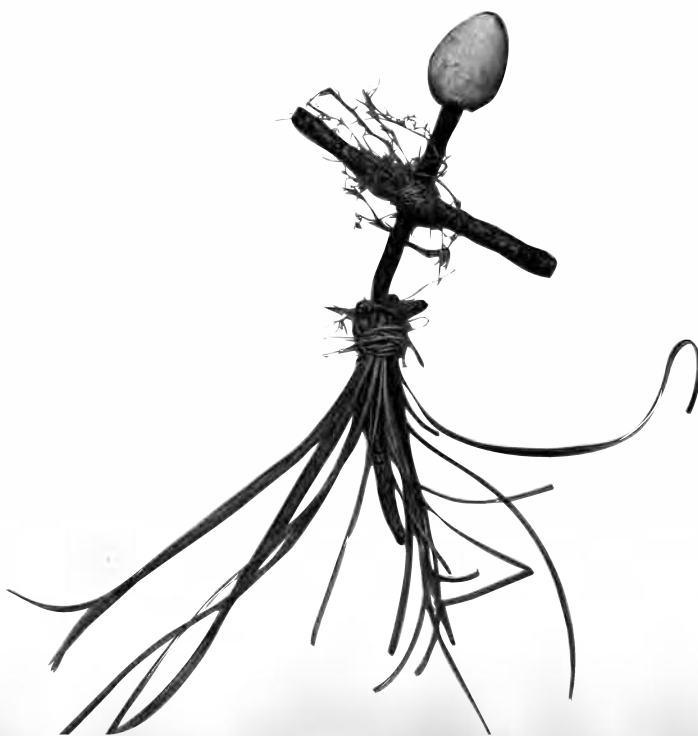
In a settlement known only as the Heath, mages of the Old Faith hold a modest cray and maintain the pagan rites of the Picts. Twenty-five years ago, one of the witches bore twins who grew up to display prophetic gifts. Andrea and Cinatha's powers were balanced by their erratic behavior: Sleepwalking and fits harried them for days after each "visit by the gods." The coven fears detection and keeps a quiet watch on the land, so they insisted that the sisters stay back while more experienced mages followed the omens. The vision of the bloody giant

was so terrifying that the sisters have decided to defy their companions and act alone.

Their powers have grown over time; they hope that they can bring the matter to a quick end, then use their success to make a case for more freedom.

The twins are Old Faith mages as described in **Dark Ages: Mage**. Fortunately, Old Faith magic is seasonal; if you don't have that book, fae Dominions will allow you to simulate their powers with few problems. As antagonists, each is a satisfying but not overwhelming challenge.

Image: Both mages have odd eyes — one brown, one green — and streaks of white in their matted hair. They wear coarse brown robes and keep knives and staves with them at all times, along with bags of herbs, idols and other magical tools. Their arms have spiral scars from the Old Faith's bloodletting rites.



Index

A

Age 82
 Agendas 27-31
 Constantinians 28
 Humanists 28
 Militants 27
 Patrons 28
 Truce-Bearers 28
 Amber Palace 172
 Ana, Queen 37
 Avallach the Wise 51, 177

B

Basilisk 185
 Battle of Ice 47, 170
 Battle of Stone 48
 Black Road, The 39
 Blind Nyx 45

C

Callicantzaroi Court 39
 cantrips 119
 cantrip progression 130
 Common cantrips 123-129
 Level One 123
 Level Two 124
 Level Three 127
 Level Four 127
 Level Five 129
 Creation new cantrips 122
 Character creation 88-90
 Chart 86
 Chill Court of the Water Wraith 37
 Coterie of Drail 31, 177
 Court of the Griggling Apple 33
 Court of the Valiant Forge 35
 Courts
 Autumn 70
 Spring 66
 Summer 68
 Winter 72
 Crystal Fortress 170

D

Damiana 179
 Davidian 47, 174

Devil's Coins 175

Diarmuid 173

Dominions

 Casting Cantrips 121

 Countering Dominions 130

 Dawn 146-155

 Cantrips 148-153

 Level One 148

 Level Two 149

 Level Three 151

 Level Four 152

 Level Five 153

 Influences 147

 Unleashing Dawn 153

Day 131-137

 Cantrips 132-137

 Level One 132

 Level Two 134

 Level Three 136

 Level Four 137

 Level Five 137

 Influences 131

 Unleashing Day 138

Difficulty Adjustment Bonuses 120

Dominions and Courts 129

Dusk 155-163

 Cantrips 156-162

 Level One 156

 Level Two 158

 Level Three 159

 Level Four 161

 Level Five 162

 Influences 155

 Unleashing Dusk 162

Night

 138-145

 Cantrips 140-145

 Level One 140

 Level Two 141

 Level Three 143

 Level Four 144

 Level Five 144

 Influences 139

 Unleashing Night 145

Powers and Associated Dominions 160

Unleashing 121

Drail 31, 176

E

Echoes 110–114
Effects 112–113
Examples 113
Gaining New Echoes 114
Enigmas Knowledge 91
Experience Costs 115

F

Fae realms 32
Faerie dust 186
Features 105–107
Greater 106
Lesser 105
Firebird 183
Fire Salamander 184
Flaws 97–101
Physical 97
Demonic 97
Frailty of the Flesh 97
Unearthly Mien 97
Mental 100
Chattel Appetites 100
Delicate Soul 100
Iron Tongue 100
Undereducated 100
Social 97
Child of Inanimae 98
Feared 97
Fosterling 98
Inanimae Parent 98
Known Echo 98
Oathbreaker 98
Supernatural 100
Crafted 100
Echo Intolerant 100
Dominion Ineptitude 101
Unseasonal 100
Fostering 126
Frozen Lake 174

G

Giants 183
Glastonbury Compact 51, 171
Grale 33
Gramarye Knowledge 91
Grand Bazaar, The 168
Gwynn ap Nudd 171

H

Halostian 44, 175
History 40–53
Holdings Background 92

I

Inquisitors 182
Systems 182

J

Jurata 172

K

Kapherah 47, 174
Kenning Talent 91
Bestow Kenning 101
Keshalyi Gatherings, The 37
Krode 37, 73

L

Land of Youth 173
Languages 42
Library Background 93
Lost Forest 172
Lost Forge 175
Lost/Locked 103
Danger signs 103
Curing 104
Luxcian 44

M

Mages 182
Systems 182
Merits 97–100
Physical 97
Angelic 97
Mental 98
Free Thinker 99
Gifted Teacher 99
Gift of the Bard 98
Mind of the Mists 99
Riddlemaster 99
Stable Mind 99
Social 97
Cherished 97
Prodigal Changeling 98
Supernatural 100
Attuned 100
Cantrip Affinity 100
Kenning Affinity 100

Mist-Born 100
Unleashing Control 100

Mien 105
Mist Dragons 185
Mists 101
 Imbalance 103
 Regaining 102

N

Niamh 171
Nicnivin, Lady 35
Nourishment 85

O

Oathcircles 83
Oaths 107
 Background 94
 Constructing Oaths 109
 Gold 108
 Iron 109
 Sacred 45
 Stone 108
Oath-Truce 24, 53
Ocean of Dust, The 35
Origins
 Changelings 58
 Firstborn 60
 Inanimae 62

P

Patron Council 28–31
 Austere Conclave 30
 Seekers 29
 Vanguard 30
Promise of the Faerie Well 34

R

Retinue Background 94

S

Sadiah 44
Saining 24, 81
 Acceptance 26
 Cleansing 25
 Naming 25
Salih the Hidden 178
Solstice fae 74
Sprites
 Background 94
 Feral sprites 183

T

Tandoor 48, 176
T'arrkel 184
Taulandryn 178
Treasures 95, 185
 Background 95
 Oathcrafted Treasures 189
 Castor's Star 191
 Cauldron of Nightmares 190
 Shatterhammer 189
 Sword of Drowning 190
Sample Treasures 187–189
 Arrows of Inky Noon 188
 Arrows of Midnight Sun 188
 Cabinet Stick 187
 Cap of Neglect 188
 Excalibur's Scabbard 189
 Gale Flute 189
 Pegasus Bridle 188
 Rings of Linked Sight 188
 Rooting Amulet 188
 Sealing Needle 188
 Twin Glass 189
 Vulcan's Hammer 188

Trods 170
Trolls 183

U

Underbridge 168

V

Vampires 180
 Systems 181
Verdoren 172

W

War of Seasons 24, 44
War of Silver and Iron 46
Wayland, Highsmith 35
Weaving 102
 Imbalance 103
 Regaining 102
Weddings 84
Werewolves 181
 Systems 182
White Lady, The 34

Y

Ynys Witrin 171

WORLD OF DARKNESS Dark Ages FAC

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE:
DEMEANOR:
CONCEPT:

COURT:
ORIGIN:
AGENDA:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength _____ ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Dexterity _____ ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Stamina _____ ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

SOCIAL

Charisma _____ ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Manipulation _____ ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Appearance _____ ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

MENTAL

Perception _____ ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Intelligence _____ ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Wits _____ ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Athletics _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Brawl _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Dodge _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Expression _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Intimidation _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Kenning _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Leadership _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Legerdemain _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Subterfuge _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

SKILLS

Animal Ken _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Archery _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Commerce _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Crafts _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Etiquette _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Melee _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Performance _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Ride _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Stealth _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Survival _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

KNOWLEDGES

Enigmas _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Gramarye _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Hearth Wisdom _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Investigation _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Law _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Linguistics _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Medicine _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Occult _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Politics _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Seneschal _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

ADVANTAGES

DOMINIONS

Day _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Dawn _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Dusk _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Night _____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

BACKGROUNDS

_____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
_____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
_____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
_____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
_____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

CANTRIPS

WILLPOWER

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

OTHER TRAITS

_____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
_____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
_____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
_____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
_____ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

MISTS & WEAVING

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
MISTS

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
WEAVING

HEALTH

Bruised _____ □
Hurt -1 _____ □
Injured -1 _____ □
Wounded -2 _____ □
Mauled -2 _____ □
Crippled -5 _____ □
Incapacitated _____ □

EXPERIENCE

OATHS: _____ ECHOES: _____

FEATURES: _____

SYSTEMS

Some of the more important and commonly used systems of **Dark Ages: Fae** are collected here for easy reference. Permission is granted to photocopy these pages for personal use only.

CHANGING FORMS

Inanimae switch between faerie mien and human shape with a Weaving roll (diff. 6); this takes 8 hours as the inanimae breaks down and reforms her body (this process heals *all* damage to the inanimae). A changeling brings forth his faerie mien with a Mists roll (diff. 6), and a Weaving roll (diff. 6) is needed to switch back to his human shape; either change takes 1 full turn. A firstborn has only her faerie mien and has to rely on the Day Dominion and the Mists to hide. Sometimes, however, it is easier for changelings and inanimae to simply make use of the Mists to hide as well. Botching any roll to switch forms locks the fae in her current form for a number of hours equal to her Weaving rating.

ECHOES AND OATHS

When a fae encounters an Echo, the Storyteller (or player) rolls the mortal's Willpower or five dice if the Echo isn't being wielded directly by a human being (diff. 7). The player rolls a number of dice equal to the character's Oaths rating (diff. 7) in an opposed roll against the Echo roll. If the character has the Sprites Background, the player may choose to add these dice to the Oaths pool (but may only use each Sprites die once per session). If the fae wins, the repellant fails to work on the fae and the character is free to do as she pleases, and is not affected by that Echo for the remainder of the scene. If, however, the Echo roll came up with more successes, the fae suffers an effect equal to the number of net successes. These effects are rated one to five and are listed on p. 111. Firstborn add one success to the Echo roll, and changelings subtract one (before applying the successes from the oath roll).

GAINING NEW ECHOES

Roll to gain a new Echo whenever a mortal sees the fae in her fae mien or the character is revealed as a faerie. The player rolls 10 dice, subject to the modifiers on p. 114. If the roll fails, the character gains a new Echo. If it botches, she gains two.

DAMAGE AND SOAK

Fae may soak lethal damage while in their fae miens.

Weapons made of iron inflict aggravated damage to fae in all forms (they may soak this damage, however). Worse yet, whenever a fae is damaged by a weapon of pure iron, she loses 1 temporary Mists point. Only pure iron causes aggravated damage and the magic-sapping effect; iron that has been mixed with other metals has no special power against the fae.

MISTS AND WEAVING

- Imbalance occurs if either Mists or Weaving is 3 or more points higher than the opposing trait.

- Spend 1 Mists point to: Bestow Kenning on a mortal (2 for a supernatural being), cloak a cantrip. Spend 2 Mists points to raise a Lesser Feature to a Greater Feature for one scene. Roll Mists (diff. 7) to cloak fae mien from mortals; this is *not* invisibility, it just makes the fae look human and is broken by any use of Dominions.

- Regain Mists by: Resting in fae realm (1 per day; see Holdings Background); casting Unleashings (regain 1 point per two successes); siphoning from Sprites (see Sprites Background).

- Spend Weaving to: Reduce Unleashing dice (1 point = one die), reduce Echoes (every 2 points lowers the effect level by one), control Unleashing (2 points reduces the severity of a botch by one).

- Regain Weaving by: Resting in a fae realm (1 point per day), fulfilling oaths (roll Oaths [diff. 6], each success restores 1 Weaving point).

DOMINIONS

Casting Cantrips: Roll is Dominion + [Attribute or Ability listed in cantrip entry]. Base difficulty is usually 6; check specific cantrip entry. Storyteller can modify difficulties as she sees fit. The difficulty is reduced by -1 if the fae is using her favored Dominion, if the cantrip is being cast at the appropriate juncture (e.g. the half hour before and after midnight for Night), and/or on the appropriate equinox (e.g. Winter Solstice for Night). All bonuses are cumulative but the difficulty cannot fall below 4. Most cantrips only require one success to take effect, but check specific cantrip entries.

Unleashing Dominions: Roll is Mists + Dominion. Base difficulty is 6, modified as for cantrips. Also, player rolls five Unleashing dice (3 for firstborn); this pool can be reduced with Weaving points. Strange visual effects happen no matter what the dice read. If the Mists + Dominion pool comes up with as many or more successes, the Unleashing happens as intended. If the Unleashing pool comes up with more successes, the Unleashing spins out of control. If both rolls fail, nothing happens except the strange visual effects. If the either roll botches, destructive, harmful effects happen.

Countering Cantrips:

- Absorbing the cantrip: Defender must have at least 1 dot of the Dominion being used and must win initiative. Defender rolls Dominion + Weaving (diff. 7) in an opposed roll against the cantrip. If the defender wins, the cantrip fails. If defender wins by 3 successes or more, defender gains a point of Mists.

- Scattering the cantrip: Defender rolls Mists (diff. 7) in an opposed roll against the cantrip. If the defender wins, the cantrip fails. Defender may spend a Mists point for one automatic success.

Countering Unleashings: Roll Mists (diff. 8) in an opposed roll against opponent's Mists + Dominion roll. If the defender wins, the Unleashing is considered a *botch*, not a failure. Defender may spend a Mists point for one automatic success.

WORLD OF DARKNESS *Dark Ages* FAE

Oaths of Gold and Iron

You promised us, when we gave you the world to go to war, that you would remember your vows. You promised to leave our sacred places intact, to leave sacrifices for us, to remember us in your songs. You promised that when the War of Seasons ended, you would stand aside for us, the true rulers of the world. You lied.

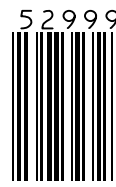
The Trace Falls with the Blackened Sun

Dark Ages: Fae is the book for playing the "Good Folk." Some have bred with humanity and inherited our understanding of the world, some are born of the Earth and the elements, and the rest spring from the very stuff of Creation itself. This book provides complete information on playing fae characters, including details on their society, their magic and their perception of the world. This book requires the use of Dark Ages: Vampire.

WWW.WHITE-WOLF.COM



ISBN 1-58846-292-7
WW20008 \$29.99 US



9 781588 462923

5 2 9 9 9