

# Lords of Summer™



World of Darkness

TARGET  
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CHANGELING  
THE LOST™

**R**un, Fool, run,  
The Knights are on the ride.  
The sun, it lights their lances,  
And golden crowns their pride.  
Flee, Hob, Flee,  
No sanctuary here.  
The noble lords are oathbound  
To wrath and flame and spear.  
Die, Fae, die,  
Beneath the summer sun.  
By oath and Wyrd and honor,  
Your wicked ways are done.

— SONG OF THE BRAZEN'S LAST STAND FREEHOLD

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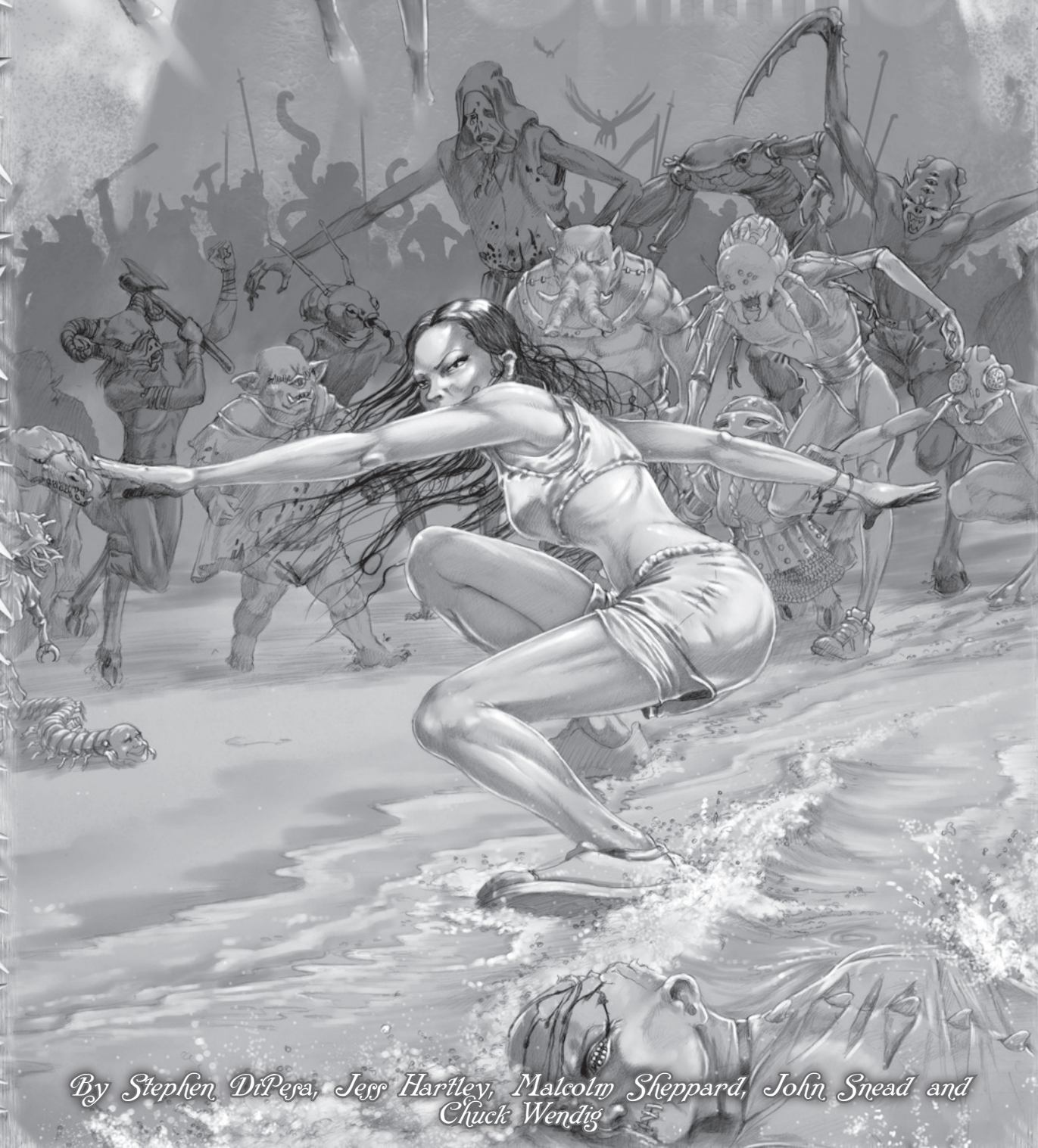


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# Lords of Summer™



*By Stephen DiPesa, Jess Hartley, Malcolm Sheppard, John Snead and  
Chuck Wendig*

## The Longest Day of Summer, Now

War.

Light on my feet, I'm buoyed by the heat coming off the sand, driven by the drum-hiss of crashing surf, and pushed forward by a sad and angry heart.

I pirouette and bend backward. An arrow slices through the air above me. I see its dark shape, its razor-tip, its shaft kept aloft and swift by a draft of a dozen black hornets. Behind me, the arrow finds a home in the chest of Papi Chulo. He bleats in pain. The pistol spins from his grip and into a briny tidal pool. Hornets erupt from the wound. Then he's gone.

Hands backward in the sand, I kick forward: the flat top of my foot connects with the goblin's head. His bone spur jaw slams shut on his tongue, biting it off. It flops to the sand. The wretched thing is confused, even more so when he finds me behind him, sticking one knife in his throat and another in the small of his back.

Over his shoulder, I see Tombs Tuttle go down under a trio of the gibbering things. They stab downward. I can't see Tombs, but I can see his blood running into the sucking tide. The water is pink with it.

I could save him, but I don't. That's not why we're here today. That's not why *I'm* here today. I'm here to finish this.

With the sand castle walls towering above me, the crumbling parapets held together by coils of thorn and whisper-thin sedge, I push on.

A pair of goblins thinks they can flank me. They think wrong. One ends up dead atop the other, and the tide comes and takes them both away.

Sister Sunra is next to me; suddenly bullets are barking from her AK, stitching holes in the onrushing ranks. Her left eye is fused shut with a crust of blood. The hand that cradles the rifle's stock is little more than a busted claw. But she's smiling. Her teeth are smeared with red. I always liked her. I goosestep forward, and she pivots around me.

Back to back, we take down too many to count. My knives flint in the hot sun, leaving arcs of black blood in their flashing wake. Her rifle chuffs, spitting brass cas-

ings and filling the air with acrid cordite (a smell that mixes with the potent brine). Then there's an explosion. One of the parapets falls atop us -- a crashing fist of sand and thorn. I roll forward, just out of the way, sand stinging my eyes. I don't see what happens to Sunra.

When my eyes stop watering, I see that I've killed two more. I also see a goblin feasting on the body of Rooster Petukh, tearing away great hunks of his leg flesh. He's dead. I dance over him, kicking the gross crustacean into another.

Then I see the Keepers marshaling this mad army. Always together, hand-in-hand. Cruel syzygy.

One in a white sundress with red flowers, her mantid face staring out, the other in the black tuxedo with the red carnation boutonniere, his wolf head and spider eyes looking as hungry as ever.

They are separate, but together. I've known that for a long time.

Something thrusts through the back of my calf, but I refuse to recognize the pain. I step forward with my other leg. The knives are in my hands.

I hurl them forward with all my might.

And then I let it all out. I open my heart. No, I *tear it apart*. I rip the ventricles open. I rend my aorta. All the blood and fire and anger and sorrow inside are now free in a single wave, as ineluctable as the tides.

It accompanies my knives. The sun shines bright with them. A streak of fire. A sun flare. My heart's dread gaze.

The dread light illuminates the third finger on my left hand and the red bruise that rings the flesh. The light leaps forward toward its destination.

The wolf's head keens, its fur charring. The mantid face hisses and chitters before it disintegrates.

I swear they call my name as they die.

## The Longest Day of Summer, One Year Ago

"Ramona Ringfinger," Ivan says, putting his hand on my shoulder. His words are clumsy in that muddy Russian tongue of his. His hand is like a brick. "Grandfather will see you now."

I twist out of his grip and offer a shit-eating grin. I can't say what it is he offers in return: Ivan's face is a curious thing, a cement block that could be smiling, could be sneering.

Inside his office, Thunder sits pensive at a glass-top desk. The windows behind him are open. A balmy breeze blows in, growing hotter as it drifts over his shoulder. Something about the room smells like... I dunno, maybe burning plastic.

Standing off to the side is Tombs Tuttle. He has a corpse grin below a nose-less face and a pair of too-big sunglass-like you might see some drug-addled celebrity starlet wear (*hobo chic*, I've heard it called). He gives a little wave. I wave back.

Sitting next to Tombs is a court-less girl I've only seen in passing. Black Betty? Black Bonita? Who can remember? She's a frail slip of a girl with too-long arms and double-long legs. She has a sketchpad in front of her and a lap full of colored pencils.

Ah, the artist.

"So," Thunder says. "You're sure about this?"

He motions for Betty or Bonita. She holds up her sketchpad. On it, the face of a mantis stares out, looming large. My heart leaps. I say nothing. The girl flips to the next page, and there it is: the savage wolf's face open in a permanent snarl. She even got the drool-soaked muzzle right. I clench my fists behind my back and hope nobody can see.

"Sure as anything," I say.

His eyes flicker with lightning.

"Let's go over it again. You say these two—"

"Mother and Father," I interrupt (never a good idea, but it's a habit I can't be rid of). "That's what they call themselves, at least."

"This... Mother and Father, they're the ones responsible for the sudden incursion of the Gentry into my city? They're the ones fucking with the sanctity of this freehold?"

Behind my back, I gently rub the ringfinger bruise.

"Give the man a kewpie."

"Shit's pretty trippy," Tombs felt compelled to open his mouth and say. A cancerous tongue picks something out of his eerily perfect teeth. He looks to me. "Those bastards ain't usually into that kind of unity, you know?"

"That's why it should terrify you."

"I'm still not convinced," Grandfather starts to say, and by the time I decide to bite my tongue it's already flapping.

"Listen. This city's on the verge of going shithouse. You know it, I know it. We've all heard the whispers. We're supposed to be the first and last line of defense, and still everybody's seeing the cracks in that facade. Keeper sightings are through the roof. People are seeing

them through broken mirrors. Down in the dark of sewer grates and watching from distant boats offshore. Everybody's shaken. Nobody feels safe anymore. You're about to lose everything."

His mouth forms into a tight line. A halo of momentary celestial fire shudders above his head before winking out. I have his attention.

"This is a concerted effort on their part. We've intercepted loyalist messages. We've heard the crustaceans whispering in the Hedge. These two—" I give the finger to first the mantis face and then the wolf face. "—are the dirty birds who run the whole show."

Ivan looms over me. Even his shadow has weight. I know how this could go. I know what Thunder does these days to those who displease him. I watch his eyes for the command, the one that tells Ivan to crush my windpipe. I think about how I could move to dance out of the way, to foxtrot right out that window, but I don't have to.

"Done," Thunder says. "This will take time to mount an offensive on these monsters. Get with the others and plan it. I'll make sure everyone's on board. Use this year to train, Ramona. I've seen you spar. You're already good, but you need to be the best."

"Will do," I say. The anger in me is an arrow, one that has found its home. Success.

Tombs gives me a thumbs-up.

Ivan escorts me out.

They believed the lies, I think. I feel bad about this, but comfort myself that maybe, just maybe, they weren't really lies at all, that maybe, just maybe, a kernel of truth lies hidden under that pile of bullshit.

## The Longest Day of Summer, Five Years Ago

The hit splits my lip. I see stars. The ropes of the ring are suddenly at my back, and, being dizzy, I imagine for a moment that they're grabbing me and holding me and won't let me go.

Papi Chulo moves in. The guy's a fat-gutted goat, but he moves like a little moth, flitting this way and that.

"Bitch, look up," he says with a wicked grin. His one hand makes a goofy gesticulation and I watch it, wondering what kind of magic he's up to.

The only magic is misdirection. As my dizzy eyes follow his hand, he sucker punches me. A line of drool escapes around my mouth guard. Gasping, I spit it out. Outside the ring on the other side, Sister Sunra — my only friend in this Court right now — watches me with a little *cigarillo* clenched between her teeth. She winks. Chulo hits me again.

"You gotta get mad," he says. I swing at nothing. "You gotta grab onto something inside you, ride it like a horse that's on fucking fire."



I don't know what he means. I try to do a kickboxing thing, try to whip my foot into his face, but he just laughs behind me. How did he get behind me? Prick!

Two pistons to my kidneys. Then a hoof stomps on my foot.

A surprisingly soft shove and I'm on the mat, face down, suckin' in breath.

"I heard you were fast, lady." He shakes his head. "But you don't look fast. You don't look *pissed off* like you need to look. Me? I'll tell you what pisses me off. Tell you what makes me want to punch the shit out of things. I think of *Him*. The Blind Shepherd. Kept me and all the other animals in a dead meadow. Made us eat like beasts. Made us *ru*like beasts. Always watchin' us even though the fat bastard had no eyes! I think of that. I think back to how that made me feel, sleepin' in my own shit, sharp hay pokin' me in the fuckin' *back*. And I get an'ry. I get super crazy an'ry. Then, and *only* then, I can punch the shit out of things. You gonna get an'ry? Or you gonna go han' out with those pussyfart Snowmen?"

It happens even though I don't want it to.

Her face. Mother, the mantis. Mouthparts clickin' and feelin' the air.

His face. Father, the wolf. Spider eyes starin', pink teeth clenchin'.

Somehow even though I'm on my belly my legs are around Papi's throat. I pivot my hips. His face crashes into the mat. But he's up again, and he's kickin' at me with one of those chestnut hooves, but I wind my own leg around his and slide in behind him. He's about to fall. I don't let him — not yet. First I choke him out. My arms are lithe, limber, like pale snakes, and they're around his forehead and throat and then my leg is around his other leg and I'm pushin' him to the mat.

I hold him there until he's blue.

Something, a little voice, tells me to stop. Then I realize it's not a little voice: it's Sunra, screamin' at me, tryin' to pull me off.

I listen to her.

Papi looks pissed, but he still gives me the nod.

Sunra has a Corona for me, a half-lime drawing bubbles in the bottle. I drink it all the way down.

"So what happened?" she asked.

"Found my an'ger," I say between gulps.



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## *THE Changeling: The Lost LINE*

**Autumn Nightmares**

**Winter Masques**

Rites of Spring

Lords of Summer

*The Equinox Road*



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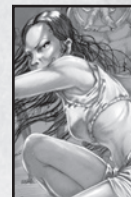
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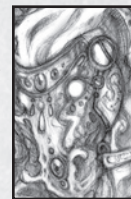


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# INTRODUCTION

*In the depth of winter, I finally learned  
that within me there lay an invincible summer.*

— ALBERT CAMUS, *Summer*

Summer is heat. It's the parching sun overhead, drying out the ground until long cracks run through it. It's the warm wet wind of a thunderstorm, a torrent lit by fiery bolts of lightning. It's the warmth that lingers as the sun creeps past the horizon and the insects drone. It's violence that erupts when the mercury creeps up too high and people can no longer stand to be in proximity with one another.

And arrayed under the summer sun, the monarchs and knights and free-lances and vagabonds of the Lost gather, their banners marking their defiance of their former masters. **Lords of Summer** concerns itself with the organizations that changelings gather in, from the freehold to the entitlement, to support one another. A lone changeling may have to flee and hide, but together, many can stand.

## SUMMER AND WRATH

The imagery of summer implies dynamism. A chronicle set in summer may have its lazy-day set pieces where there's little to do but sit on the porch and listen to the flies buzz, but for a **Changeling** story, summer is more frequently about conflict. As the heat rises, the pot boils over. This motif isn't just the Summer Court's philosophy winning through, either. Summer is a time for being outdoors, doing things — and for the Lost, that often involves hunting or being hunted, fighting or fleeing. Consider the tense energy of a city in summer, or clouds of dust rising from the dirt road as the sun beats down.

The Lost, at least those of the seasonal Courts, also associate summer with wrath. Wrath is a negative emotion, but it's also one that can be positively directed. Few changelings would say it's a bad thing to be angry at the Gentry for their ill-use. While wrath can fester or be directed against the wrong target, the wrath felt by the Lost can also put strength in their limbs and resolve in their hearts. This may manifest as a revenge morality play, where each new act of revenge sparks another until two houses are destroyed — or it can be a righteous wrath, sparking catharsis. There's

room for both in a good **Changeling** chronicle, preferably playing off one another like dueling tongues of flame.

## FRAGMENTED TRADITIONS

**Changeling: The Lost** postulates a social structure that plays out most commonly on the local level, without the over-reaching politics of changeling “nations” or “emperors.” Part of the reasoning behind this is simple logistics. It would be virtually impossible for a changeling emperor, president or high king to govern in such a way that he could bring entire rebellious freeholds to heel unless changelings were the most numerous supernatural being in the entire World of Darkness, and then some. That would require quite a lot of abductions, particularly given that so many abducted humans never leave Faerie.

At the same time, though, **Changeling** also postulates a world where changelings are aware of other freeholds, and might travel from city to city. Entitlements have members scattered across entire countries, convening now and again for official order business or initiations. The Great Courts maintain traditions from city to city; some vary widely, while others are neat reflections of traditions practiced on the other side of the continent. The Lost of Tampa Bay's freehold may hear gossip about Grandfather Thunder's rule in Miami. Thus, it becomes easier to allow for constants from place to place in Lost society.

This is, in our humble opinion, a “best of both worlds” scenario. The constancy of some traditions from region to region allows for easier communication and familiar expectations, and that makes game play easier. Yet at the same time, the lack of a central government and ironclad tradition provides infinite opportunity for customization, to make each freehold as unlike its neighbors as you like. The freeholds, entitlements, even the Great Courts described here can provide all the details you like, but there's ample reason to change what you need without breaking plausibility. Use them as you like; we hope that'll be to the fullest satisfaction.

## HERALDRY

The motif of heraldry is something of a theme for this book. Freeholds and Courts and entitlements are all social constructs, but they're more than that — they're visually rich with symbols and meaning that go beyond simple politics. You can tell something about a Summer courtier by looking at the colors he wears, and certainly by his Mantle (which is a powerful heraldic device in its own right). Each entitlement leaves certain marks on the mien of its nobles, and an observer versed in those symbols can glean more information there.

And perhaps more importantly, heraldry stirs the imagination. It would be enough to know that a lion is the symbol of the king, but it becomes more interesting when you start to question whether the king is really as noble and valiant and “lion-hearted” as his heralds proclaim him to be. A knight who wears the scorpion as his personal emblem hints that he's a poisonous, cold-hearted creature. It's true even in modern times; consider the variety of gut reactions a person might have to a bald eagle, a hammer and sickle or a swastika. Those emotional first impressions are potent narrative tools, incredibly useful for catching a person's imagination.

All of the organizations described here can benefit from the power of symbolism. Even a freehold catches greater attention if its name implies an image and that image implies other things in return. Grandfather Thunder holds court with an ornate trident beside him, a symbol of the Miami freehold's unity. Even a motley might show solidarity with a common badge. **Changeling** is already a visual game: with heraldry as another of the narrative tools at your disposal, it can be even more so.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

**Lords of Summer** is designed for any player with an interest in changeling society. Though the traditions of the Lost vary widely from place to place, here you can find a number of potential rituals, practices, customs and sub-societies to drop into your chronicle or to use as inspiration for building your own.

The **Prologue: The Longest Day of Summer** showcases the heat and wrath and violence that changelings see in summer, but it's also a tale of the power of the group. It's a desperate time when a freehold must go to war, but if it goes to war as a freehold...

**Chapter One: Freeholds** expands upon the structure of changeling regional politics. The shifting politics and concerns of the freehold are looked at here, with many examples provided for Storytellers and players to draw on. Demographics, distribution, organization, character and other subjects are all discussed here.

**Chapter Two: The Seasonal Courts** provides a more elaborate look at each of the four Great Courts tied to the seasons. The credo of each Court is explained in greater detail: what does their emotion signify to them, and how does it reconcile with the purpose that binds the Court together? Many sample offices within the Court are offered to better flesh out the Byzantine politics that mark so many fine **Changeling** chronicles. The stereotypes and relationships of each Court are also examined, from internal ties to other Courts to encounters with other supernatural entities of the World of Darkness. And to strengthen each Court, each Court section also contains a new Contract list to offer more seasonal power, as well as a new entitlement dedicated to the principles of the Court.

And what would a book about these various esteemed changeling be without more paths to distinction? **Chapter Three: Noble and Eldritch Orders** contains 12 more entitlements to flesh out a chronicle. From humble tradesman's guilds (that conceal mystical power and cunning beneath that humility) to the eldritch orders, these are entitlements of legendary power and status. Some of the entitlements here may even provide entirely new storylines for a chronicle — after all, what if the Solstice Court is on the right path?

The fourth season is upon us. The Midsummer Night is at hand, and what wars will be fought in its shadows? Who will win honor and rank when the sun sets?

There's only one way to find out.







he kid gets into my car and they're immediately on top of me. Two of Grandfather Thunder's enforcers — Eye, this big mean Cyclops, and Dog, a Beast who hates everyone. People say she killed half a dozen Spring Court rebels back in '99. I don't know where the hell they came from; you wouldn't think either of them would be all that sneaky. I guess these disappearances from South Beach are encouraging everyone to bring their A game.

Eye saunters over to my window while Dog leans against the passenger side, making sure we can see that gun of hers. Joseph is shaking like anything, grabbing the straps of his duffel bag, like it's the only thing suspending him from a cliff, and is unable to take his eyes off Dog's face. I kind of feel bad about the "full disclosure" deal I offered him right now. I roll down the window to listen to what Eye is growling at me.

"Hey Darkling, got another one there to keep your Keeper happy? That kid ain't goin' anywhere, but you sure are. Get out of the damn car and keep your hands where I can see 'em."

Dammit, must have been Clockwork Sally. She must have gotten someone to bug my car when I was getting that surveillance rig from her. So much for her "you've got a face a girl can trust" line.

"Damn it, Eye! Wouldn't I ensorcell a kid I was going to sell to the fae? Look at his face; he can see just how ugly you are. I'm no traitor. His dad's a psycho homophobe who beats on him and is too rich for the cops to bother. You know how I feel about that crap. I'm just taking him to a couple of friends in LA who take in strays and are good with fake paper. I'll give you their number, they took care of the other two kids I sent their way."

Eye looks a bit less like he's about to kill me right now, and he's stopped growling when he talks. Come on, you thick bastard, keep thinking about it.

"Yeah, that may be. But stealin' rich kids has got the locals way too upset. Goes against the law of subtlety." He shrugged. "Not my job to figure this out, so you're getting in the back seat, and I'll drive us back to see the boss. Dog will be right behind us in my car, so don't try anything or she'll make a call and blow us all up. You know how much she likes to do things like that."

"Yeah. Law of subtlety and all that."

From the look on Eye's face, I shouldn't have pressed my luck.

# CHAPTER I

## *Freeholds*

*We must all hang together,  
or assuredly we shall all hang separately.*

— BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Among the many urban legends of the World of Darkness are stories of strange, otherworldly people and monsters that hunt silently on their own or gather in shadowy cabals. Changelings tend toward the latter. They are social creatures in part due to a longing for companionship that can't always be easily gained from their lost loved ones, and in part from necessity. Most changelings know that alone, one of their kind can be easily captured by the fae or their changeling allies and returned to Arcadia. To hide and protect themselves, the Lost cluster in cities. However, for changelings, not all cities are created equal.

No one knows how many changelings there are, and their numbers vary wildly by city. A very few cities, like Miami, are home to a hundred or more changelings. The Miami freehold contains slightly more than 100 changelings. Between them, the four Los Angeles freeholds may contain a total of more than 400 Lost — the largest number in an US city — and before Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans freehold contained almost 90 changelings.

The reason for these high concentrations of changelings is largely that the paths between Arcadia and these cities and others like them are in some way easier or shorter than those between Arcadia and most locations. Unfortunately, these paths also go both ways, and so the fae are more likely to visit these same cities. The connections between these cities and Arcadia are also not always static. Occasionally there are unusual events that result a dozen or sometimes as many as a hundred changelings successfully escaping Arcadia and all ending up in the same location in the mortal world at the same time, typically a location in or near a city that already has an unusual number of paths leading from Arcadia.

Some supernatural event or supernatural reflection of a mundane event creates a multitude of short-lived paths between Arcadia and a specific location. Oddly, the indi-

viduals who escape via these paths do not all escape from Arcadia together and often come from different decades. Some changelings assume that these escapees may have left Arcadia years or even decades apart, but all made it back to the mortal world together, because some event briefly made the paths from Arcadia to one specific location easier and faster to traverse. The mystics of the Lost work diligently to understand whether some celestial conjunction, calendar numerology, or other cycle is at work in these conditions. Be that as it may, it is definitely true that the freeholds of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century are seeing a population boom because an unusual number of changelings have recently escaped. It strains freehold resources a bit to accommodate the growing numbers, but most find it a small price to pay for the greater number of Lost enjoying new freedom.

Unlike the numbers of some supernatural beings, like vampires, changeling populations have no direct correlation to mortal populations. Changelings aren't predatory and don't need a certain number of humans to "support" them. The Mask also aids larger populations of Lost to remain concealed. In some large cities, there are either no changelings at all or no more than one or two small motleys. Most cities possess only difficult access to Arcadia and so a much smaller number of changelings make it back to these cities. In many cities, there are as few as one changeling for every 500,000 mortal inhabitants. Despite being the largest city in the United States, New York City has a single small freehold with only 37 members. Similarly, in the entire greater Chicago metropolitan area, there are only 21 changelings. It's said that few changelings escape to rural areas or small towns. Also, the Lost wish to remain inconspicuous and hide amidst the mass of humanity, not stand out as the few eccentrics in a small town. As a result, very few small towns or rural areas contain enough changelings to form a freehold. Cities usually need a population of more

than 20,000 before they are likely to become home to even a single motley. That said, there are certainly rural freeholds here and there, in strange communities where strange stories circulate. Peculiar things walk down dirt roads, and sometimes the distracted weather-beaten old men watching you from the hardware store's porch are something else entirely under the Mask.

Many changelings speculate about why some cities are so much easier for changelings to escape to. The most common theory is that large-scale mortal migrations and more specifically the dreams of the many thousands of mortals who have recently arrived in a new location somehow creates or strengthens paths to and from Arcadia, or create beacons for the Lost. Ports filled with immigrants tend to have more changelings, while cities that see little shift in their population also see fewer changelings on average. Between 1900 & the late 1920s, New York City had two large and thriving freeholds containing between them more than 200 changelings. Most notably, these factors seem to affect changelings who weren't previously residents of a city — those who find their way through the Thorns, but not to the exact place they remembered growing up.

Cities that are growing rapidly also seem to be easier for non-native changelings to get to, just as cities that are losing population can be more difficult for changelings escaping from Arcadia to find. However, mortal immigration is not the only reason a place becomes open to changelings, and it certainly doesn't tell the whole story. A growing city erodes away many of its landmarks, which may make it more difficult for once-residents to find their way home through the Thorns. Although New York is less of a center for immigration than it once was, many mortal immigrants still come there and yet far fewer changelings arrive there today than did so 80 years before. Ultimately, no one fully understands why escaping from Arcadia to some cities is so much easier and more common than escaping to others. However, at least some of the reason is a combination of the number of immigrants to a city, how rapidly the city is growing and the number and power of the myths and legends people tell about that city. These factors seem to have the most influence over the arrival of changelings who weren't native to a given city in the first place.

## FREEHOLD CHARACTER

The character of a freehold reflects both the history and nature of its inhabitants and the character of the city it is in. Detroit is a city facing massive urban decay, falling populations and rampant crime. The amount of crime and poverty there has led to the Autumn and Winter Courts taking particular power in the Shield of Rust freehold. Under their guidance, the freehold remains strong and well-hidden from the True Fae, but there's less joy in the court than there should be. Similarly, Los Angeles teems with unfulfilled desires, unparalleled greed, continuous ra-

### *Demographics of Necessity*

These figures are not sacred writ. You may find your freehold requires either far lower or far higher numbers than the average, depending on the structure and demands of your game. There are so many variables that might influence a changeling population that all kinds of things are plausible. Got a 200-member LARP in a comparatively small city? A number of major trods could all lead there, or it may be as notorious as a refuge drawing Lost from miles away. Want a paranoid, isolated chronicle in Los Angeles? Rumor has greatly inflated the actual population. If these demographics inspire you, great; if they limit you, go a different direction.

cial tensions and drive-by shootings. Not unsurprisingly, the dominant Courts in two freeholds there are Spring and Summer.

A city's character touches every resident, mortal or fae. No matter how long they were imprisoned by their Keepers, every changeling is fundamentally a human who responds strongly to the attitudes and actions of the people around her — and given that emotion fuels the fae powers she defends herself with, she may be even more affected by that emotion. Because changelings regularly share the dreams of the inhabitants, the effects of a city on its inhabitants are magnified on changelings. The Lost are no strangers to the idea of cities as living things, organisms made up of their people and buildings like a plant or animal made up of its cells.

Specific events that reshape the emotional tone of a city are also reflected in the make-up of the freehold and the structure of its Courts. Immediately after September 11, 2001, the Autumn Court began to grow in size and influence in major cities throughout the United States. At the moment, it remains the most powerful Court in New York City, having poured its Glamour into acquiring more Contracts, tokens and the like to strengthen its position.

Not all events that affect the character of a freehold are of mortal origin. Though Detroit is in the grip of urban decay, the freehold there is strong. The power and influence of the Winter Court has effectively hidden many of the freehold's weaknesses, and enemies of the Shield of Rust have found themselves unable to mount an effective offense. The most recent example of this strength was when the notorious privateer Jack o' Days was lured into a trap and forced to reveal many of his contacts, leading to a swift and secret campaign that rid Detroit of even more privateers



and loyalists. Within the freehold, there is a strong sense of security, even if it comes at the expense of the Spring and Summer Courts' influence.

## GOOD SIDES AND BAD SIDES

One particular brainstorming device that may help in characterizing freeholds is to assign a freehold a Virtue and a Vice, much like a character. For example, a wealthy freehold that is generous and open-handed with its subjects, quick to offer sanctuary to a new straggler, demonstrates the Virtue of Charity; yet its somewhat decadent subculture is based on indulgence even when there's little need, signifying a Vice of Gluttony.

If you're completely stuck for freehold ideas, you can even pick a Virtue or Vice almost at random and figure out what that implies for a freehold from there. For instance, consider the somewhat incongruous pairing of Justice and Sloth. This could suggest a freehold where the internal structure is strong, the ruler is benevolent and the laws and regulations quite well-reasoned. Where does the Sloth come in? Perhaps it represents a failure to adequately enforce those laws; the monarch's right-hand man might be corrupt and unwilling to do his job when avoidance might be easier. It might also represent a failure to prepare for the future — a crisis is looming on the horizon, yet the freehold is not taking steps because it is too focused on internal issues, perhaps even being willfully reclusive. Either interpretation is a possible start and offers

plenty of incentive for the players' characters to get involved. If they strengthen the Justice aspect while reducing the Sloth aspect, they'll have made local Lost society a better place — not a bad goal at all.

(For more on this particular approach to neighborhood design, and quite a lot of other excellent advice on setting-building, see *Damnation City*).

## THE FREEHOLD COMMONS

All functional freeholds hold regular gatherings where the members socialize, discuss freehold business, resolve problems and share information. At a bare minimum, each traditional freehold holds some sort of gathering on the equinoxes or solstices. Most have some sort of informal gathering at least once a month. Some freeholds have no set location for their gatherings, but most have some sort of location, called a commons, where they can meet.

Since most freeholds contain anywhere from 20 to 120 members, such meetings require a fair amount of space; therefore the location of these meetings both reveals and ultimately shapes the character of the freehold. One of the most obvious differences between freeholds is whether they hold their meetings in the mortal world or the Hedge. In either case, the commons needs to perform several essential functions. It must be a space where all of the members of the freehold can meet, safe from the prying eyes of mortals.



It must also be a location that is sufficiently secure and impressive that the leaders of the freehold can use it to host important visitors and emissaries from other freeholds. In addition, some freeholds use their commons as a safe haven where they can retreat when facing serious problems and as a location where recently arrived changelings and members who are experiencing various forms of mental or physical distress can live for a while.

Responsibility for maintaining the commons is typically held by the current Court in charge. In some cases, the Courts each maintain a private commons that is open year-round for Court gatherings. These are open to the entire freehold during the season of their rule. In other cases, the commons is kept neutral, and adorned with the appropriate symbols of the season and Court as the rule progresses. This is a particularly common approach to Hollow commons, where the psychoactive nature of the Hedge further emphasizes the strength of the ruling Court.

## HOLLOW COMMONS

Although the Hedge offers complete protection from mortal intruders, few freeholds are willing to simply meet out in the open in the Hedge. Not only is it dangerous, but the shifting nature of the Thorns can mean that a clearing isn't always the same clearing or located in the same place. Freeholds that hold their gathering in the Hedge typically meet in Hollows that have three to five dots devoted to size. Some are simply the Hollow of a single motley of changelings who are important members of the freehold. More often, ownership of this Hollow common is shared by multiple motleys or by the freehold as a whole. Some freeholds have large and well-furnished Hollows that are the common property of their members. Most commonly owned Hollows are large and very well protected against unwanted intrusion because a dozen or more changelings work together to create and maintain them.

There are many reasons to use a Hollow as a commons. In addition to providing a location far from the prying eyes of mortals, a well-protected and well-appointed Hollow offers a safe and comfortable refuge for both changelings who are newly escaped from Arcadia and changelings fleeing various mortal problems like social or legal entanglements. Many freeholds using a Hollow as their commons permit individual members to live there for a few days or even weeks, but most also require that members eventually find their own dwellings to avoid overcrowding the Hollow. A well-warded Hollow commons provides the entire freehold with a location in which they can retreat from threats posed by the fae, loyalists, or similar dangers, as well as several escape routes back into the mortal world. Such a Hollow can also provide a touch of luxury in the lives of changelings who may be fairly poor in the mundane world. Also, a commons located in the Hedge provides the members of the freehold with easy access to goblin fruit and Goblin Markets. Freeholds with Hollow commons usually have treaties with the residents of the Hedge who live nearby.

The psychoactive nature of the Hedge also tends to make a Hollow commons a vivid and impressive location. The ruling Court's season affects the entire commons, creating splendid displays of its power and influence. The thorny walls of a Hollow lengthen into glittering, prismatic icicles when a Winter Queen is on the throne, and vibrant blooms fill the air with perfume when the rule shifts to spring.

However, using a Hollow as the freehold's commons can also cause as many problems as it solves. Madness and isolation are two ever-present dangers for the Lost, and having a perfectly safe retreat that is cut off from mortals and all of the concerns of the mortal world often serves to heighten this problem. The most extreme example of this occurred in the St. Louis-based Column House freehold in 1972. The Column House consisted of 47 changelings who all cooperated in building and improving a huge and lavish Hollow. This Hollow had sufficient space to house the entire population of the freehold in comfort and safety. When it was completed in 1966, most members of the Column House began spending

### *Commonly Owned Hollows*

The most common method of sharing ownership of a Hollow between many or even all members of a Freehold is for each member to effectively own a small stake in the Hollow. A common implementation is that each member contributes some amount of Glamour or labor to the Hollow; mechanically, spending one dot on the Hollow. For all but the smallest freeholds, this means that the Hollow is a large, lavish, and exceptionally well-protected affair with five dots each in Size, Amenities, Wards, and Doors. As the common property of the freehold, all Freehold members are free to come and go as they wish. In some freeholds, such a Hollow is already established, and new members are encouraged to improve or maintain it but not expected to spend a Merit point.

Changelings who leave the freehold for any reason lose access to this Hollow and the characters lose the dot they contributed, if any. The Hollow is only affected by the departure of members of the freehold if the number of members decreases below the total number of dots in the Hollow. With an insufficient number of members, the Hollow decays unless new members join or one or more of the existing members contributes more dots to the Hollow Merit.

increasing amounts of time there, and by 1971, 41 of the 47 members lived there, venturing forth into the mortal world only to purchase food and other necessities.

Only changelings who did not live in the Hollow had close ties to their families. In September of 1972, one of these changelings visited the Hollow and found the 41 changelings who normally lived there missing. Repeated searching revealed no sign of a struggle, and most residents took their personal belongings with them when they left. None of the changelings who vanished were ever seen again. The most common theory is that these changelings either returned to Arcadia on their own or were lured away by either the fae or a particularly powerful hobgoblin and taken back to Faerie. Others believe they were killed or imprisoned in some distant portion of the Hedge. A few claim that the Lost who lived there simply faded into the fabric of the Hedge or transformed into hobgoblins. Regardless of their actual fate, changelings who have heard of this incident understand that freeholds who spend too much time in the Hedge risk losing their connection to the mundane world.

## MORTAL COMMONS

While many freeholds have their commons in a Hollow, most take the simpler option of having their commons be in the mundane world. The economic means of the changelings in the freehold has a great deal of impact upon the nature of their commons. A freehold in which most changelings are poor or working class usually has a commons located in various forms of inexpensive structures. Some illegally take possession of an abandoned warehouse or derelict apartment building and use various Contracts to avoid notice by the authorities. These commons are effectively free and usually located where law enforcement is unlikely to look for squatters. However, this same lack of law enforcement means that crime is often rampant in this area and the freehold will usually need to post guards on their commons to prevent desperate mortals from either moving in or stealing the goods and furnishings. As a result, even the poorest freeholds may try to find other alternatives.

A few especially clever changelings construct elaborate and complex freeholds in the hidden portions of large public or private structures, such as the unused and often completely forgotten dead space located in the attics or between the floors of shopping malls, parking structures or factories. Although discovery by mortals can result in instant loss of the space and all its contents, as well as significant legal trouble, these hidden commons offer excellent security and are difficult for mortals, other changelings or even the fae to find. The best of these commons possess borrowed electricity, comfortable furniture, various useful appliances and the sort of amenities normally found in fancy houses or banquet halls. The worst are much like commons made from abandoned warehouses, with light coming from candles and furniture made from scavenged cardboard and old packing crates.

Some freeholds have taken the unusual alternative of renting temporary space at buildings like local community centers. In such cases, the commons is not a permanent location, but a space that is open for use at specified hours a few times a week or month. Freeholds that use this alternative effectively hide in plain sight, with their meetings labeled everything from “private folklore societies” or “book discussion groups” to various sorts of support groups. These freeholds occasionally need to use various Contracts to maintain their secrecy, and must provide lodging for members who are having problems by other means, usually by having them stay with other members of the freehold.

However, hiding in plain sight is an excellent way to avoid unwanted attention. As long as the freehold does not need to have their commons open for more than two or three days a week for no longer than three or four hours at a time, this option works quite well. In some cases, either a changeling or an ensorcelled mortal ally is one of the people who manages the community center and can provide all manner of protections and other benefits for the commons and the other members of the freehold. Mortals who accidentally overhear the changelings’ discussions can usually be placated by being told that the members are rehearsing a play or discussing a novel or movie. Even if the explanation’s a bit flat, the Lost can be very silver-tongued when they need to be.

Wealthier freeholds have the option of purchasing their commons. The most frequent choices are large houses or warehouses that have been converted to galleries or lofts. The Hollywood freehold in Los Angeles owns a large and lavishly appointed mansion on the outskirts of Santa Monica that they use as their commons. Owning a commons’ location provides the most options for security and decoration in the mortal world. However, it is also the most expensive alternative and the option most likely to attract mortal notice. Regardless of its location, a freehold’s (or Court’s) commons tends to attract the attention of its neighbors. Some may consider breaking in to steal or look around, others might simply gossip about it. However, the eccentric behavior of many changelings almost always attracts attention. In some neighborhoods, mortals living nearby wonder if the commons is some sort of den of vice, in others, they might worry that it is a bad influence and may drive their property values down. In either case, having a commons that is too obvious and visible can cause trouble with both mortals and the fae and their allies. Nevertheless, owning the building that the commons is in offers the freehold far more safety, security and privacy than any of the other options for commons located in the mortal world.

## FREEHOLD REPUTATION AND COVER IDENTITIES

In addition to having a reputation with other changelings, to a lesser extent, freeholds may have a reputation among mortals. Unensorcelled mortals may know nothing

about the fae, the Lost or freeholds, but if they see the members of the freehold together often enough, they will assume that these individuals are all members of some organization or share some common interest or goal.

Depending upon the location, habits and attire of the changelings, mortals may assume they all belong to the same country club, street gang, theater troupe, or even historical reenactment society (though most freeholds look rather sternly on Lost who wander the streets in archaic garb without damn good reason). While a changeling can usually pass off the other members of her motley as their close friends, having various members of a large freehold call the changeling or even knock on her door late at night and ask for her help eventually raises suspicions with her neighbors or family. Such suspicions can eventually lead to everything from awkward questions or following the changeling to assuming that this activity must be illegal in some way and reporting these suspicions to the police.

This situation is especially difficult for changelings who have managed (either by killing their fetch or some other means) to regain their old lives or who have otherwise found close mortal friends and family. The neighbors might have seen

the fetch as a loving wife and mother that devoted all her time to home and family. If that “same” woman now occasionally heads out at all hours of the day or night to help out or spend time with a seemingly random array of people that her husband and children have never heard of, her behavior can raise unpleasant suspicions. If the changeling returns injured or obviously upset, these suspicions can stir the neighbors into action.

Apart from consistent discretion in one’s movements, the best way to avoid such problems is for the freehold to have some obvious answer to questions about why the members are spending time with one another. The answer the freehold chooses depends upon its location and the social status, employment and habits of most of its members. The Hollywood Freehold in Los Angeles maintains a front as a private club for the wealthy, with the few middle-class members working as club staff. Similarly, some of the members of the Miami Winter Court are openly known as a criminal gang. In many cases, even a dubious association like a criminal gang is better than no answer at all. However, most freeholds maintain far more prosaic fronts, with amateur sports teams, acting troupes or various sorts of hobbyist organizations being very common choices.

### *Freehold Associations and Social Modifiers*

Freeholds form the center of a changeling’s social world, and influence how hobgoblins and other changelings see them. They can even form a changeling’s affiliations with mortal society. If a Freehold deals drugs or runs illegal gambling operations, the members will know other mortal criminals and understand the customs and habits of the local criminal subculture. These same changelings might pick up mannerisms and mortal associates that attract negative attention from police officers or others. Similarly, a wealthy freehold in a good part of town that actively helps all of its members obtain respectable middle class jobs provides the members with all manner of business contacts, but the members of this freehold may have considerably less experience interacting with poor people or members of various fringe subcultures.

Because the associations and connections of a freehold affect the social interactions of the members, the Storyteller may rule that a particularly factional freehold imposes bonuses or penalties to its members’ social rolls. Each bonus is matched by a corresponding penalty. None of these bonuses or penalties ever exceed +1 or -1. Examples include:

- A freehold with numerous criminal contacts receives +1 to Social rolls with members of the criminal subculture, but -1 with police officers and other official personnel.
- A freehold with a Hollow commons, where members spend a great deal of time in the Hedge, receives a general +1 bonus with hobgoblins, including social rolls at Goblin Markets, but a -1 penalty with members of mainstream mortal society.

No freehold should have more than three pairs of bonuses and penalties, and one or two is far more likely. These bonuses and penalties apply to all members of the freehold, which further influences what sorts of mortals (or other beings) the members regularly interact with. Freeholds should only have bonuses or penalties with groups they either spend a great deal of time with or that they either actively avoid, have significant numbers of negative interactions with or have no contact with. These bonuses and penalties are a measure of both what sorts of mortals the members of the freehold are comfortable dealing with and of the reputation that most members have with various mortal groups they interact with.

Most freeholds do nothing more than come up with a cover identity and a few minor trappings. These freeholds handle potential problems like a changeling's mortal friends or family members wishing to join or visit on a case-by-case basis. However, a few, like the Hollywood freehold actually do their best to make the front seem completely real, by registering their commons as the headquarters for a private club and formally hiring the less wealthy members as full-time staff. The few freeholds that employ many of their members in some legitimate business (see below) already have their official identity taken care of and all they need to worry about are following the various business regulations.

Not all freeholds bother with a cover identity. Some have their commons in a Hollow and spend much of their time in the Hedge, while others are fairly loose organizations, where most members only meet once a season. A number emphasize the importance of secrecy (particularly where the Winter Court is concerned), encouraging changelings to keep a careful eye on how often they're seen with one another. In such cases, individual members are largely left to provide whatever cover stories they might require.

## SOURCES OF INCOME

All freeholds require at least some money. Those that have their commons in the Hedge and where newly arrived members can live in a Hollow that serves as the commons sometimes require very little money, just as freeholds where the members rent or own a large and expensive commons require large amounts of money. Even so, almost all require a continuous source of at least some income if they intend to provide any services for members. Changelings newly arrived from Arcadia may need clothes, medical care, fake IDs and help finding a job. The Lost who get in trouble with the law require bail money, and even the simplest and most austere seasonal festivals require some minimum of food, drink and decorations.

The source of this income is highly variable. In many freeholds, the members hold conventional jobs and pay dues, just like the members of mortal union or clubs. Similarly, all of the expenses of the Hollywood freehold in Los Angeles are paid by the Court who wins the seasonal auction to determine which Court holds power. To insure that all expenses are met in this fashion, the minimum bid is set at \$10,000, so even an uncontested bid provides for the basic needs of the freehold. Even freeholds where most of the members make their income from crime often pay for their upkeep via dues collected from the members. As an alternative to set dues, some freeholds simply request all members to donate whatever they feel they can afford, and use social pressure to encourage both rich and poor members to donate a reasonable share of their income.

One alternative to such formal or informal dues is for the freehold itself to be a moneymaking concern. Many of these freehold businesses are criminal enterprises, involving everything from drug dealing or illegal gambling to the small free-

hold in San Diego that makes its money from the theft and resale of cars. However, there are also legitimate businesses that work in this same fashion. The New York City freehold runs a small taxi company. Since most changelings are able to drive and the freehold has sufficient illegal connections to enable them to obtain driver's licenses for those members who lack legal identities, it is easy to employ new members. As a result, driving a taxi is often the first job a changeling in New York has after returning from Arcadia. Similarly, in one of the Parisian freeholds, 34 out of the freehold's 42 members all work, in some capacity, for one of four local restaurants all owned by the local Courts. Most of the members of the San Fernando Valley freehold in Los Angeles belong to a private security company run by the freehold. In some of these freeholds, the Courts are usually an integral part of this enterprise. In Paris, each Court operates a different restaurant in the chain. In San Diego, each Court handles a different aspect of car theft and resale. The Spring Court steals the cars, the Autumn Court strips and alters the cars and deals with fake titles and registrations, the Winter Court transports and sells them, and the Summer Court provides security, in the form of both armed guards and a young but dedicated lawyer.

Freeholds that function as businesses, legal or not, rarely demand that all members work for this business. However, members who don't are usually expected to help out in small ways, such as working shifts when business is especially heavy or too many workers are ill or injured and they are often expected to pay monetary dues of some sort. These favors can be especially difficult and problematic for changelings attempting to lead law-abiding lives while being members of a freehold financed by criminal activity. However, changelings have a strong predilection for a barter economy. Their facility with pledges, oaths and favor-trading frequently means that a changeling can get some money out of a local business in exchange for a promise or some oddment found at a Goblin Market.

Members who are part of a freehold-run business have some opportunity to advance in status with their fellows by doing well in its business. In addition, these changelings also have an ideal excuse for their mortal friends and families as to why they are spending time with the other members of their freehold. Combining work and freehold duties provides a sense of closeness and unity that can be very therapeutic. Most freeholds that operate on this model have businesses with room for a wide variety of employees of different ages and levels of experience. As a result, changelings who recently escaped from Arcadia and are having trouble readjusting to life in the mortal world can usually obtain jobs from the freehold that both earn them money and help them relearn how to live and work in the mortal world. Unfortunately, this same closeness and unity allows greedy or unscrupulous rulers of a freehold to overwork or otherwise abuse their employees. Given the problems involved with one of the Lost filing a civil suit or a complaint with the labor relations board against the leaders of his freehold, members often have little

recourse unless they are willing to leave the freehold entirely. Such rulers also have to be particularly careful about rebellion. There isn't a single changeling who fought her way back through the Thorns to escape her Keeper who's going to be happy about a new form of servitude.

## SYMBOLS AND IDENTIFICATION

Freeholds are about more than just politics and mutual defense. They are also the local community for the Lost, and many function like a somewhat contentious extended family or a particularly large and diverse support ground. They are centers of ceremony and places to belong. More importantly, they are the only real community most changelings have. Here, the Lost can freely talk about their experiences in both Arcadia and the mortal world, experiences that few mortals would believe, must less understand. As a result, many changelings feel a strong sense of attachment to their freehold and wish to demonstrate their loyalty in a variety of ways. These "colors" are almost always completely optional. In fact, some freeholds where the Winter Court is strong advise against such displays. The fae mien and the Mantle of one's Court are symbols of belonging enough; why advertise their unity to mortals who don't understand the significance anyway? Even so, many changelings feel a measure of grati-

tude and loyalty to their community that prods them to express it with pride — it is a very human feeling, after all.

The members of many freeholds identify themselves by wearing some sort of symbol. These symbols can range from the members of wealthy and conservative freeholds all wearing the same tie to members all sporting the same tattoo, wearing sneakers of the same color or all having an article of clothing with the same odd symbol on it. In small or especially tightly knit freeholds, these identifiers represent membership in the freehold. In the New York freehold, members wear caps bearing the logo of the taxicab company almost all of them work for. However, in many freeholds, these signifiers represent both Court and freehold membership.

In Miami, changelings often display their membership and Court allegiance by the color of shoes and sometimes the color of the hat or other headgear they wear. In keeping with the dominant colors of the city, particularly demonstrative members of the Spring Court wear pink, members of the Summer Court wear bright red, members of the Autumn Court wear sea green, and members of the Winter Court wear stark white. For formal functions, a changeling looking to make a particular impression may wear a tuxedo or gown of the appropriate color, or even dye their hair to match. In Mexico City, many loyal members of the dominant freehold sport large and elaborate tribal tattoos with



similar design elements on their upper arms, but the details vary according to which Court the members belong to.

## COURTS AND POWER

In theory, freeholds are supposed to be governed by a system of rotating Courts. Relinquishing power voluntarily is something that baffles the Others and it has the additional benefit of being good for a community's morale. In the ideal model of a freehold, this transmission of power is clearly laid out for all residents to see. Under the seasonal Court model, each Court rules the freehold during its appropriate season of the year, then yields its rule at the appropriate equinox or solstice. Great ceremony and fanfare as well as various rituals typically mark the transition from one season and one Court to another. These ceremonies often include some sort of purely symbolic combat or contest between the champion of the Court that is about to depart and the one that is about to take power, where the departing Court's champion always loses and the incoming Court's champion always wins.

This pattern is fairly common in freeholds in both the United States and Britain, but it is far from universal. A particularly notable exception is that not all freeholds have members of every Court. This shortfall often has to do with some combination of the physical and emotional climate of the region and the history of the freehold. In regions where one season or another seems particularly short or is difficult to distinguish from the seasons before or after it, the associated Court may be absent. The same thing can happen if the Court's associated emotion is largely overwhelmed by the emotions associated with one or more other Courts, leaving the freehold with three or, on rare occasions, two Courts.

This paucity most often occurs in small freeholds with 30 or fewer members, where one court may be represented by only one or two changelings, who then boost their power by allying themselves with another, larger Court. Popular wisdom states that using a rotating Courts system to protect against the fae requires a freehold to have more than one Court, and with the exception of freeholds where one or more Courts have temporarily collapsed or left, all do.

One of the most striking examples of a freehold with only two seasonal Courts is the small North Star Banner freehold in Winnipeg. With only 19 members, the freehold consists of two Courts, Summer and Winter. The Summer Court rules from June 21 to September 21. During the rule of the Summer Court, the freehold is especially boisterous, vibrant and active. The eight members of this Court frequently hold outdoor celebrations and regularly agree to change the Court's rules and structure. Although the Summer Court uses the same commons as the Winter Court — a small apartment complex that has been converted into galleries, meeting rooms, and similar locations — most of the Court's activities are held in the small forest and the nearby lakeshore on the grounds.

During the remaining three seasons, the somber Winter Court governs the Winnipeg freehold. As temperatures

plummet and activity moves indoors, the Winter Court uses a bar located in the commons building as their central location. Unlike the frenetic pace of the Summer Court, the leaders of the Winter Court keep activity at a slow pace and emphasize both tradition and patience. They dedicate the first month of their rule to "autumn business," a temporary focus on mystical concerns, and initiate "spring business," a series of renewal rites and ceremonies the month before they cede power to the Summer Court. Although seemingly fairly passive, the Winter Court maintains a thriving brewery and is quite wealthy. Because of the practical difficulties of the long and harsh winters and the power of the Winter Court, neither the Spring nor the Autumn Courts have attempted to move into Winnipeg in force.

Many freeholds also alter the way that they transfer power from one seasonal Court to another. Some, like the Trident of Miami, disrupt the cycle when one Court perpetually claims power. This practice is risky, but the ruler strong enough to maintain power usually claims that he or she has what it takes to serve the freehold better than a Court rotation would. In a number of freeholds, the rotation continues, but a Court may hold onto power considerably longer than one season. The traditional transfer of power occurs at the solstices or equinoxes. Doing so lends mystical power to both the incoming and the departing Court. However, often this transfer of power is far from regular.

One way of "doing business" is to make the combat or contest between the outgoing and incoming Court real and not merely symbolic. In some freeholds, the champions of the two Courts actually fight and the winner's Court, regardless of which it is, takes power for the next season. So, if the Winter champion and the Spring champion fought on March 21, and the Winter champion triumphs, then the Winter Court remains in power at least until June 21, when the Winter champion would then need to battle the Summer champion.

Such contests between Court champions are surprisingly common. Some changelings view it as more traditional and appropriate than purely symbolic contests. However, such contests can also be open to all manner of corruption, ranging from attempts to drug, blackmail or bribe the rival champion to spying on the champion's preparations. One or both sides may use such means to try to gain some advantage. In most freeholds, this sort of trickery is prohibited. If a champion is found to have been involved in any such efforts, their Court is immediately removed from power and replaced by the one who lost to them. However, in a few freeholds, such as the one in Detroit, there are no rules beyond avoiding mass murder, killing another Court's champion before the battle, or betraying the other side to the fae. In these anarchic freeholds, the weeks before the seasonal contests are times of intense intrigue and brutal conflict.

A large number of the contests used to determine the rulers of a freehold have nothing to do with physical combat. Many freeholds use contests of skill, ranging from seeing how

many goblin fruit the champions can collect in a set amount of time, to tests of musical or artistic prowess or even having each champion deliver a rousing campaign speech and allowing the members of the freehold vote for the winner. Other options for transferring power are less traditional. In the wealthy Hollywood freehold in Los Angeles, rulership is decided by four seasonal auctions. The leaders of the two courts associated with the incoming and outgoing season each bid for the office, with the highest bidding Court ruling the freehold for the next season and the monies, which often amount to many tens of thousands of dollars going to the freehold and the various charities maintained by the freehold.

A few freeholds use a model similar to the one Miami may be moving to, where each Court governs a specific portion of the city and there is no transfer of actual power. In cities like St. Louis that use this arrangement, the “transfer of power” that occurs at the solstices or equinoxes is purely symbolic, with the only change being the right of the leader of the seasonally appropriate Court being able to speak first and wear a special sash during freehold meetings.

## CITIES WITH MULTIPLE FREEHOLDS

Most cities contain too few changelings to support more than a single freehold. In a city containing only 40 or 50 of the Lost, dividing them up between two or more freeholds makes little sense. However, some cities are home to large changeling populations and a few of these contain more than one freehold. In cities large enough to contain multiple freeholds, there are three primary reasons for their existence. The most common reason is distance – in a city the size of Los Angeles, the inhabitants live sufficiently far apart that a single freehold does not make sense when members could come from locations as far away from one another as Glendale and Orange County. In the few cities where this is true, the different freeholds are typically sufficiently far apart that they rarely come into conflict. In many ways, they are essentially akin to freeholds of different cities, just sharing a similar mailing address.

Another reason for changelings to divide into more than one freehold is history. If conflict within a single freehold became bad enough, it may have split a few years or even a few decades ago, creating two traditional rivals. Before 1965, southern Los Angeles contained a single freehold. However, rising tensions between the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking changelings continued to worsen as mortals battled one another in periodic race riots. Eventually, this led to the Spanish-speaking changelings forming their own freehold, called La Rosa. La Rosa is theoretically open to any changeling who wishes to join and can gain the acceptance of the members, but prospective members of La Rosa should either know Spanish or be willing to learn it. Tensions between La Rosa and Crimson, the other freehold in Southern LA, continue to the present day.

In rare cases, freeholds split along Court lines, with one new freehold only containing members of one or two Courts, while the other freehold contains only members of the remaining Courts. Some changelings in Miami suspect that the Trident could soon split itself into two freeholds, with the Winter Court allying itself with the Spring Court, and the Autumn Court either making peace with the Summer Court or gaining the respect of the Winter Court. The prospect of schism worries many, as such strife may call sympathetically to the True Fae, who might find Miami *much* more familiar. Even rarer is division upon the lines of seemings. In Barcelona, tensions within the freehold are currently quite high and many changelings there expect the Beasts, Darklings and Ogres to eventually split off and create their own freehold.

The final potential reason for different freeholds to exist in the same city is social class. Many changelings are members of the poor or, at best, the lower middle class — attempting to survive without a legal identity or with skills and education now one or more decades out of date. However, a sizeable minority of changelings are well-off members of the middle class. Some either had no fetch and found some way to explain their disappearance or disposed of their fetches and reclaimed their middle-class identity. Others have sufficiently useful skills that with a fake ID and a lucky break or two, they can find work as a stockbroker, doctor, engineer, or any of the many other professions that allow both mortals and changelings to live quite well. A few changelings were criminals before their abduction or take to a life of crime upon their return to the mortal world. Some of these criminals discover that their new abilities allow them great success in criminal careers from breaking and entering to extortion or even murder for hire and a few even become established in organized crime.

Many well-off changelings are often at least somewhat uncomfortable around the majority of changelings who range from the homeless and near destitute to petty criminals or members of the working poor. Some fear that their poorer fellows will ask to borrow money or request gifts as a gesture of solidarity. Others do their best to forget the horrors of Arcadia. These changelings wish to avoid anything that reminds them of want and deprivation and so have no desire to associate with fae who regularly face the difficulties of poverty or homelessness.

Some freeholds attempt to avoid these problems by finding jobs for newly arrived changelings. Other freeholds either lack the resources or organization to do so or find it easier for members to simply associate with others of their own social class. In Miami, Maria Throne’s “Vichy Spring” Court is home to half a dozen changelings who are wealthy club owners and well-off party animals as well as well as a dozen drifters and semi-homeless changelings who had trouble gaining acceptance in any of the other Courts. Tensions between these two groups occasionally run high, making this Court even less stable than otherwise might

be. In some freeholds, these tensions become strong enough to split the freehold in half. The most well known example of this process occurred in Los Angeles in the mid 1970s, when a group of well-off changelings broke off to form the Hollywood (and they do call it “the Hollywood”). Today, any changeling living in Los Angeles may ask to join, but in almost all cases, only changelings from upper middle class or wealthy backgrounds are allowed in.

## CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE

In addition to helping to protect their members from the Other, another important function of organized freeholds is to help reduce violence and conflict between individual changelings and between the members of different Courts or motleys. In most cases, freeholds function sufficiently well that such conflicts never escalate beyond insults, or at worst fistfights or minor vandalism. All but the worst or most careless leaders of freeholds realize that violence within a freehold serves as an opening for the fae and their agents. Internal conflict distracts the members of the freehold, causing them to be less watchful of external threats. Also, if tensions rise sufficiently high, some agents of the Gentry may take the opportunity to approach members of one side of the conflict and offer their aid, in return for allowing them to drag the members of the other side back to Arcadia.

During the late 1960s, several cases of this type of betrayal occurred in the southern United States, including incidents in both Montgomery, Alabama and Miami. In Montgomery, several white changelings with loose connections to the KKK agreed to work with a group of privateers in order to make certain that a trio of outspoken black Lost were carried back to Arcadia. In Miami, a small group of Jewish changelings discovered that a pair of changeling loyalists was going to help the fae carry off the child of a prominent city council member who supported segregation. These changelings agreed to help the loyalists in return for the loyalists also carrying off the city council member and asking the fae not to leave a fetch behind. When the truth about these two abductions was revealed, the incidents acted to galvanize the majority of the freeholds. The perpetrators quickly learned (much to their sudden and excessive discomfort) that their fellows put the integrity of the freehold first.

## LEADERSHIP & OBEDIENCE

Even in the freeholds of the most democratic First World nations, the Lost have a peculiar tendency for organizing in freeholds under less than democratic terms. An observer might guess that it has something to do with their spirits being broken and being taught to love a strong master in Arcadia or being infused by a desire for some kind of savior. This assumption flies in the face of the actual escape from Faerie, however. Changelings fought their way back through the Thorns to be free of their masters, and they did it without a savior.

### *Ethnic Identity*

Changelings aren't magically free from prejudice because of their transformative experiences. A changeling can still be a racist, sexist or bigot, and may even find others like him. However, prejudices of this kind are notably rare within Lost society — not because changelings are morally better than ordinary humans, but because their experiences often give them a more extended perspective. Just as some people gradually learn to shed their old prejudices as their life experience broadens, many Lost find it difficult to maintain a xenophobic opinion of other human beings now that they've encountered *truly* alien threats.

That said, ethnic identity is still very important to many changelings. It's part of their perception of themselves as human beings — a vital component in maintaining psychological well-being — and in some cases, their Keepers even resembled entities out of their cultural folklore. Where a changeling is less likely to snub another on the basis of skin color (assuming the skin color's even a human tone), he may still be goaded into action if he believes it would protect the interests of “his people,” and he may define “his people” as a human culture rather than the Lost as a whole.

Rather, the tendency for strong rulers rather than democratic councils usually arises from the besieged situation the Lost find themselves in. Every changeling has a lot to adapt to, and has to make rebuilding an old life or building a new one a priority. They are frequently quite willing, then, to let a direct chain of command handle the affairs of the freehold until their own personal affairs are set in order (which can take a long time and some never fully succeed). Thus, the prominent members of a freehold are almost always powerful and charismatic individuals who know how to both command their fellows and help them feel safe.

As long as there is only one acknowledged leader in a freehold or all of the leaders of the Courts get along with one another, the freehold is likely to remain orderly and peaceful. Some measure of rivalry and politicking is expected. The games of power are common to all freeholds, but there's a general understanding that things are to remain at a certain level of civility. When two leaders go beyond those bounds of civility, it's the worst form of conflict in a freehold. Many changelings were used as spies, soldiers, and bodyguards in the Gentry's frequent power struggles. Knowing that their own fates could become far worse if their Keeper was vanquished and a new conquering lord took command of them, changelings called upon to fight



for their Keepers did so with great dedication and ferocity. The instincts learned from such struggles often remain. When placed in a situation where a freehold has two or more powerful and respected leaders at odds with one another, changelings are even quicker to take sides than mortals and often respond to threats against their leader or leaders even more violently. This is only exacerbated when one considers the powerful emotional bonds that may develop between Lost. A changeling's trust isn't easily won, but when you have it, it is a powerful thing. The most dangerous leaders of a freehold are those whose followers love and trust them with all their fae-touched hearts.

## CONFLICTS BETWEEN MULTIPLE FREEHOLDS

Most cities contain only one freehold. The members may not always get along, and Court and other political divisions can sometimes be extreme, but all of the changelings in the city consider themselves to be part of the same organization. However, the presence of several freeholds in close proximity to one another creates both political and social tensions. These conflicts usually remain within the realm of insults and occasionally minor vandalism. Open skirmishes between freeholds are rare and usually have one of two causes.

Most commonly, the members of the two freeholds distrust each other. The suspicions range from worries that the rival faction are planning to attempt to push the other freehold out of some territory to fears that some or most of the rivals are loyalists, privateers, or soulless. Even if such fears or accusations are based on only the vaguest of rumors, such tensions can rapidly polarize the members of the two freeholds. If a leader dismisses these allegations against his faction without a sincere and diplomatic attempt to disprove them, suspicion and distrust can continue to grow until the members of the two freeholds begin spying upon one another and potentially even openly fighting. Changelings with political savvy can therefore plant rumors in hopes of inciting such strife, but so too can others unravel such schemes to find the web spinner. It's a complicated, elaborate web of politics, but the Lost have adapted to such.

Sometimes freeholds fall prey to the fact that some members also have strong loyalties to their mortal families and other connections. A recent example of this occurred in Los Angeles during the early 1990s, when relations between the La Rosa and the Crimson degenerated into open violence, including several drive-by shootings and the use of one car bomb. The ultimate cause of this violence was the escalation of mortal gang warfare between the predomi-

nantly black gangs of South Central LA and the predominantly Hispanic gangs of East LA.

A few members of the two freeholds had relatives in these gangs. When the two mortal gangs began fighting, a handful of changelings on each side used their abilities to protect their mortal friends and relatives. Soon after this started, one of the changelings from La Rosa accidentally killed the mortal brother of a changeling from the Crimson freehold and open warfare erupted between the two. This violence only ended when three of the most violent changelings were dead and the leaders of the two freeholds met to work out a peace treaty, which resulted in several changelings from each freehold being banished from Los Angeles.

## CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE WITHIN A SINGLE FREEHOLD

All of the above sorts of conflict can also occur within a freehold, but these conflicts tend to be far more personal, resulting in everything from forming rival cliques to deadly vendettas. If the problems become sufficiently bad, they risk tearing the freehold apart. In a few cases, such tensions have actually resulted in a freehold dividing into two freeholds that often remain bitter rivals. Alternately, as occurred in Miami, one faction can gain near complete victory, leading to lasting resentment by the defeated factions and the likelihood that conflict between Miami's Spring and Summer Courts will continue.

The one advantage of conflicts that take place within a freehold is that the leaders of the freehold can either request or order the individuals involved to either drop the feud or sit down and discuss their problems with a mediator. However, if the leaders are involved or are perceived to have taken sides in a contentious issue, the conflict is likely to become worse. A freehold can be reduced to a series of feuding motleys. In the late 1980s, the Shield of Rust was reduced to near anarchy after the heads of the Autumn and Winter Courts were murdered within a month of one another. The freehold splintered into a dozen aggressive and paranoid motleys that each blamed all or most of the others for the current troubles. This state of affairs continued for the next five years. By the time it ended, the population of the freehold had been reduced by a fifth, through a combination of murder and departure to other freeholds. The troubles only ended when a few changelings with potent charisma and clarity of purpose shed blood, sweat and tears to bring the freehold back together for the greater good. Though other freeholds fell on more tragic fates, the reunification of the Shield of Rust was a strong sign that the Lost can still achieve remarkable things in the name of unity and hope.





It was a thing that had not been seen in many years, when the Four rode together as they had in old.

The Queen of Summer took the vanguard as her rightful place. Her steed was brass and fire and her sword a blazing brand. A wall of heat ran before her, the blast furnace harbinger of a wrath that would shatter mountains.

To her left rode the Emerald King, the Antler Crown upon his head, laughing as he nocked an elfshot-arrow to his bow of living wood. His steed was living wood and leaf and vine, the flowers of its mane pouring forth an incense of life and love and war.

To the Crimson Queen's right rode the King of Autumn, as grim and terrible as the King of Spring was merry and mad. Long chains of lead were his weapon, each link engraved with a promise that a man had died to keep. His horse was smoke and soot and shadow, a thing of Autumn witchcraft that made not the slightest sound, and dried leaves blew in his wake.

And with them, ever-shifting in her place, was the Winter Queen, seeming first to be almost before them and then riding in their shadows. No weapon was visible in her hands, but she was not unarmed. Her steed was a rolling wave of snow like an avalanche, its flurries mingling with the mantle of purest Winter that hung about her like another cloak.

They cracked the asphalt beneath them as they rode through the gateway that pitched wide into the Thorns. They carried death with them.

# CHAPTER 2

## *The Seasonal Courts*

*The combined essences of heaven and earth became the yin and yang, the concentrated essences of the yin and yang became the four seasons, and the scattered essences of the four seasons became the myriad creatures of the world.*  
— HUI-NAN TZU

There are a hundred thousand ways that changelings might have banded together for protection, and each one of those ways might or might not have worked. You see some elements of these potential societies in the freeholds where the Lost experiment with democracy or totalitarianism. But a greater power for defense emerged when changelings found that a series of powerful pacts, constantly shifting in ways that the Others would have difficulty understanding, could bind their society together and give them added supernatural power in the bargain. If any political structure is founded on finding a way to establish a society's security, the Great Courts are that one step more — they are security in the face of the True Fae, alliances that are sworn on the passage of years itself. Thus they have endured and evolved where other alliances have failed. They're imperfect, of course, and sometimes outright abusive, but they've been one of the great success stories in the history of the Lost.

There are many Court systems around the world, but the seasonal Courts are some of the most widespread. They have their roots in Europe and North America, but are also recognized in many other areas. In Japan, the changelings often gather under the seasonal banners as neatly as inserting a *kigo*, a seasonal word, into a haiku. In some areas of China, the directional Courts and the seasonal Courts are recognized as equals, or even tightly allied; the Four Luck freehold

is particularly notable, as its eight reigning nobles are bound together in marriage. The Lord of the North is wed to the Queen of Winter, the Serpent Queen of the East has taken the regent of Spring as her husband, the monarchs of South and Summer are caught in a particularly tempestuous relationship, and the warrior-lord of the West is all the more terrifying for his Autumn bride.

The mark of each Court's passion is vivid. It's a shrewd tactical choice and clever philosophy that established the Autumn Court's interest in sorcery and fae magic as a key element in retaining their freedom — but it's fear that gives them the strength to pursue that task. If a Court's *modus operandi* is the engine that drives their resistance to the Others, its favored emotion is the fuel for that engine. While individual changelings may tend to join a Court for reasons of philosophy or reasons of emotional sympathy, the Courts themselves can't really be seen as favoring one over the other. Their purpose and their energy need one another. Without one, the other fades.

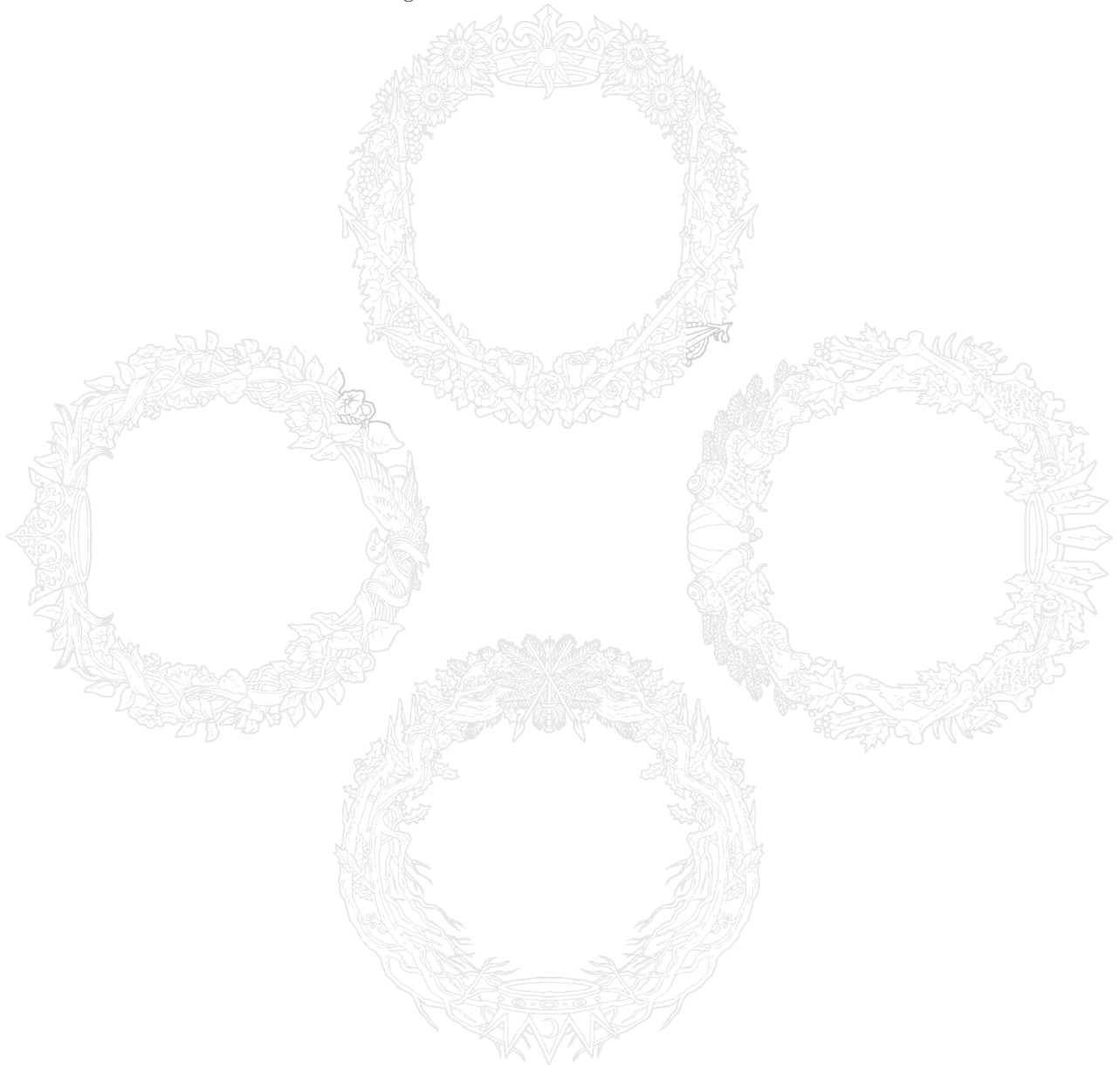
### THE NARRATIVE POWER OF THE COURTS

To be open about it, the Great Courts are meant to be colorful. They appeal to the intellectual challenge of baroque politics and the tactical advantage of a like-minded support network. They also provide po-

tential antagonists and plot hooks aplenty. But they're also things of vibrant color and potent symbols, which are meant to tantalize the imagination. Use this to your advantage. Just as the color red can make one think of passion, fire or blood, the Summer Court's symbolism should stir images of anger and violence, of righteous fury and pounding summer heat. You can take images that speak powerfully to you and tie them into the Courts, adding new symbols and heraldry to them to make them more effective at stirring up emotion at the table. Do the rusted hulks of train cars in a run-down railroad yard inspire you? Consider making rust a potent symbol in the local heraldry of the Autumn Court. Intrigued by the association of the vulture as a solar symbol? Maybe vultures fit into the local Summer Court's banners. Adding these extra

emotional connections to the Great Courts can help the group understand how changelings see them — because changelings can't help but react strongly to these engines of emotion and courtly intrigue.

A great number of unusual customs and practices for the Great Courts are detailed here, now that we finally have the space to do them justice. Bear in mind that even the traditions described as “universal” aren't really that — as diverse and widespread as the Lost are, it would make little sense if the Winter Court had the same ranks and traditions everywhere a Winter Court is recognized. They're definitely not intended to supplant any ideas of your own, merely to provide more sample structures that can be used if it seems interesting. Enjoy them as you please.

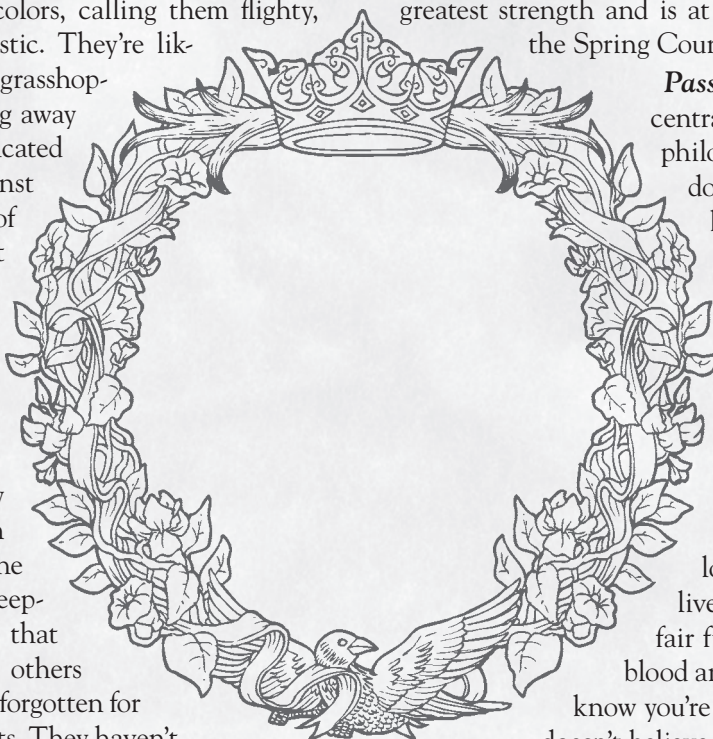


# THE SPRING COURT

The rivals of the Spring Court are prone to paint them in the worst of colors, calling them flighty, irresponsible or hedonistic. They're likened to the proverbial grasshopper, singing and dancing away the year while the dedicated ant puts away stores against the inevitable coming of winter. But the biggest threat facing the Lost isn't famine or cold; it's the unpredictable, almost random threat of being dragged kicking and screaming back through those thorny vines and once again losing everything to the will of an inhuman Keeper. Spring Lost know that threat. Despite what others may claim, they haven't forgotten for one moment that it exists. They haven't forgotten the Others, nor their time in Faerie, or the fate of those who were not so strong or lucky as to make their escape. They don't sing and dance, drink and rut because they don't remember. They do it because they cannot forget. They use the pleasures of this world to remind them why they escaped and why they will never *ever* willingly return. They embrace all that this world has to offer because they remember the alternative. And because they believe it to be the best armor against returning to a fate worse than death.

**Desire** is vital to the Spring Court. It is at the heart of everything they do, from the mundane of everyday life to the most elaborate of Glamour-infused ritual. Every action has significance, if motivated by desire. Without genuine desire, life is a hollow and empty thing. It is not enough to go through the motions of rites, no matter how raucous. The ceremonies designed to keep the Others at bay mean nothing if performed out of dull-hearted, rote obsequience. The noise and motion is not what keeps the True Fae away; it is the pure unadulterated desire to live, to love, to experience and, above all, to remain free. That light,

that hunger, that unquenchable desire is the Court's greatest strength and is at the heart of everything the Spring Court does and is.



**Passion** in all its forms is also central to the Emerald Court philosophy. Anything worth doing is worth doing wholly. Life was not meant to be a bitter bite of sand, but a juicy mouthful that, even when it is bitter, still stains the lips, runs down the chin and pools messily to remind you of how very real it is long after you have swallowed it up. Life is, when lived properly, a messy affair full of sweat and spit and blood and cum — that's how you know you're alive. The Spring Court

doesn't believe in denying itself, or others, anything. For many, their time in Faerie was full of denial, and even those who had a surfeit at their Keeper's table were still deprived of what they truly wanted: their friends and families, their loved ones, their former lives, and their freedom. Although much of this remained lost to them upon their return, they do their best to rebuild, to rejoice, to rediscover things to delight in. Not just because they once did not have it, but because if they allow their memories and past experiences in Faerie to drive all happiness and joy from this life, they might as well have never come out of the Hedge at all.

**Hunger** is respected by the Antler Crown, whether it takes the form of physical craving, emotional longing or spiritual yearning. Wanting is good: it spurs a changeling ever forward into the new and lessens the chance that he will get bound up in the horrors, pleasures or pains of the past. To formally be counted among the ranks of Spring courtiers, a changeling must be willing to give up the resentments that tie her to the past, to throw off the shackles that her Keeper put upon not only her body but also her spirit. She

must be ready to turn her eyes, her heart, her hungers to the future — to things, people and places that her former captor neither knows nor could comprehend. Spring courtiers know that feeding some passions sates them, while for others it only fans the flames. They draw strength from both the unending yearning of unrequited desire and the white-hot passion of achieving that which they have pursued. Spring courtiers dance the tidal waves of their emotions, reveling in the highs and lows, the hunger and the satiety, knowing that each plays its own role in keeping the Others at bay.

Why join the court of Desire? Why dress brightly and revel noisily when the hounds are on your trail? Because it's not what *They* expect. The Others are looking for what they think they've broken, tamed, discarded or stolen every ounce of truly living away from. They're looking for something wounded and frightened. By walking in the light, laughing, loving and truly living, Spring courtiers take away their primary identifying feature. They wrap themselves in the armor of pleasure, knowing that it hides them from their former Keepers far better than any shadow ever could.

While the stereotype of a Spring courtier as a lust-driven, booze-swilling playboy is grossly exaggerated, there is at least a seed of truth in the generalization. Being swayed, if not ruled, by one's passions is an endemic trait to the Antler Crown, and the higher Mantle a Spring courtier possesses, the more likely he is to be seen by those outside the Court as little more than a tool of his emotions. There is, however, more to passion than sex and drugs. The same heat of desire that drives one Spring courtier from one bed to the next can fuel another member of the court to create beautiful works of art or spend long hours and late nights building a business from the ground up. The same quest for new thrills can send one Emerald courtier into dark alleys seeking an ever-greater high or another into gourmet markets and haute cuisine kitchens seeking the next gastronomic masterpiece. Passion can drive one man to hone his body into a killing machine, just for the rush of adrenaline that comes from conquering a stronger or bigger foe, while another spends just as much time and energy honing her vocabulary and wordsmithing skills, constantly seeking to pen the perfect line to express herself. The Antler Court is more than a haven for drug-addled orgies. It is home to the wine expert and the *parkour traceur*, the guidance counselor and the club kid, teachers and students, experimenters and explorers. There is as much room within the Emerald

halls for the coffee connoisseur as there is for the dominatrix, and each may embody the tenets of Spring as wholly as the other so long as they have Passion at their cores and Desire in their souls.

Unfortunately for the Spring Court, Desire can be a harsh mistress. Moderation is a word rarely found in the vocabulary of those called to the Emerald Court. On the other hand, addicts and alcoholics (and indeed, "holics" of all stripes) are abundant. They don't always start out that way, of course. A changeling fresh from the Thorns, still shivering in the cold, may choose the Spring Court from a purely philosophical sympathy, and later develop a strong taste for indulgence through long exposure to the Court's practices. It's not an inevitable fate, but it's common enough that it colors the Emerald Court's traditions — and the prejudices of outsiders, who often see the Antler Crown's intense desires as unhealthy, harmful, even pathological. And perhaps they are. But it is a far better thing, say the Spring courtiers, to die while living fully than to exist forever and yet never truly live.

## THE ARDENT RULE

The Spring Court is entirely comfortable with the idea of formality and ritual: that is to say, they indulge in such things when it seems the proper, enjoyable or impressive thing to do, but dislike awkward or overly stiff regulation. Very few rules have been laid down to govern the entire Court as a whole from place to place. Individual Vernal Sovereigns (by whatever title they may prefer) may create and enforce other commandments. Universally speaking there is only one true rule attributed to Mother Susan and the founding of the Antler Crown: *Your Desires Are Your Own*.

At first glance, this ruling seems quite simple, and it is frequently interpreted by those outside the court as a hand-wave excuse to cover any indiscretion or wrongdoing by a Spring courtier. In truth, however, this mandate (known sometimes as the Ardent Rule) conceals a compact and complex structure of guidelines that help define and reinforce the core principles of Spring's philosophy. Depending on where emphasis is placed in the sentence, its meaning shifts, running the gamut from supportive to cautionary. Much like the Emerald court itself, there is far more to this simple sentence than initially meets the eye.

## YOUR DESIRES ARE YOUR OWN

Tend your own garden, and let others tend theirs. It is not your place to pass judgment on the passions of others or to hamper them from following where their



own hearts lead them. Although you may not like or understand them, others' desires are as valid and real as your own. Respect them as such.

### **YOUR DESIRES ARE YOUR OWN**

Our hearts and souls are capable of many emotions. Some things we do out of duty. Other things we do out of shame, or guilt, or hate. These things can be thrust upon us, burden us, bear us down. Only our Desire is truly our own. The things we do out of pure desire are the most personal expressions of our true selves we can ever take. Only those motivations which come from deep within us, untainted by the influences of the outside world, can really be said to be completely our own.

### **YOUR DESIRES ARE YOUR OWN**

Your desires simply are. They exist at this very moment, whether you will them to or not. Denying them is denying your heart, your soul, the very core of your being. Do not turn your back on your desires and pretend they do not exist. A desire long-enough denied may rage out of control, or worse yet — it may die completely. Nor should you be controlled by your past cravings or your potential passions. The past is dead and gone and the future is mutable and may never come to be; what is important is right here, right now, the desires burning within you at this very moment. They are you. They are.

### **YOUR DESIRES ARE YOUR OWN**

Just as it is not your place to criticize other's passions, it is not their place to condemn yours. Be true to yourself and to the things which stir the fires deep within your soul; do not let *anyone*, be they king or clergy, police or politician, tell you what you can or cannot desire. If you wish to keep them private, that is your right, but never be ashamed of them, never accept censure for them, and know at all times that you are entitled — you are *empowered* — to possess them fully.

### **YOUR DESIRES ARE YOUR OWN**

The things you want, and the things you are willing to do to get them, are your responsibility. Passion rarely comes without a price and when things get messy you should not rely on others to clean up your mistakes. Live hard, play hard, love hard, but know that the burden of your actions falls on your shoulders, not on others.

Elaborate though the Ardent Rule is, it still fails to regulate several potentially critical forms of behav-

ior. Most notably, it does not specifically encourage the Spring Court to refrain from harming others in the pursuit of their desires. Such a rule is the province of local law. Many Spring monarchs are quick to establish a Court law that demands the Antler Crown show respect for the health and freedom of others, but the occasional bad apple does sit under the tree. The worst of the Court obey the Ardent Rule, but are victimizers in the process, corrupting or injuring mortals to sate their hungers. Some stand aside and do nothing to prevent their fellows from such activity. This practice is openly condemned in most freeholds, however. The truest hearts of the Emerald Court know that the pursuit of Desire is meant to stave off the Others, not to emulate them.

### **RECRUITMENT**

It is possible to look at the Spring Court as being on constant recruitment. While they are often labeled self-centered or ill-concerned with others, members of the Antler Court do as much or more than any other court to spread their perspective among not only the Lost but among ordinary mortals. Even if those they proselytize to will never know of the existence of the Lost, the pursuit of Desire strengthens the whole.

Some do so because they believe that fostering and fortifying humanity's passions as well as those of the Lost is the key to ensuring that the Others remain as weak as they are in the human world. Others see nurturing the desires and hungers of everyone around them not only as an immediate source of Glamour ripe for the harvest, but also as a self-perpetuating crop of emotion-rich passion-filled Glamour farmers. If a changeling heightens another person's unrequited love for an unobtainable crush, he not only has the potential to harvest his target's immediate desire for Glamour, but he is fostering the very idea of smoldering desire as an acceptable and valuable emotional state to be in, which in turn strengthens the potential for more angst-filled yearning in the future, not just from that one individual, but from society in general.

In terms of formal recruitment, the Emerald Court is quick to scout out newly returned changelings, hoping to find in them the seed of true passionate Desire. Unfortunately, fear, anger and sorrow are much more frequent emotional states for those who have just escaped Faerie, making it less common for a changeling to feel an immediate connection to the Spring Court's emotion than to one of the others. Still, although others may accuse them of paying little attention to those



around them, Spring courtiers (especially the Searce) size up every newly returned changeling they encounter, hoping that beneath their pain, anger and fear, an ember of desire may still smolder.

Many members instead come to the Spring Court from other affiliations. As Emerald courtiers are fond of reminding others, "Sorrow heals, anger dwindles, fear fades — only Desire grows brighter regardless of whether it is fed or starved." If a member of the Autumn Court begins to weary of the necessity of inflicting terror, or a Summer courtier's wrath has mellowed with time, or the ice surrounding Winter's heart begins to warm and crack, Spring is ready to show them the power of Desire. Should the tendrils of the verdant court find footing in what was once barren soil, a new recruit to the Antler Crown is welcomed into the fold.

The Spring Court seeks members who believe in the philosophy of living joyously in defiance of the Others, who are interested in renewal and able to see the role Desire plays in that renewal. But who among the Lost, those who have suffered so greatly and had so much taken from them, are willing to join? Even after being rent by the Hedge, the human (or formerly human) spirit is resilient. The Lost are survivors and many find the truth in Spring's promise of life-after-Arcadia to be exactly what they need. Some, especially the newly returned, dive into the precepts of Desire to try to help forget what they have gone through, as well as what they have found here on the other side of the Hedge. Many are lured by the promise of worldly pleasures, decadent experiences or joyful revelries that stand in stark contrast to the horrors they have experienced in Arcadia. Others are drawn by the Spring Court's promise of acceptance. The reverence for Desire as a sacred concept and, at least in theory, the acceptance of all desires as valid, acceptable, even vital parts of a changeling's internal make-up can be an irresistible temptation to those who are plagued by desires and passions that they may be chastised, condemned or punished for in other circles. Others are drawn by a desire for action, for doing something, *anything*, that promises to ward off those inhuman captors they fear are hot on their heels. These teeter on the brink between the Spring and Autumn courts, motivated by Fear as much as Desire.

Some make their choice not out of passion, but out of pragmatism or even politics. They join the Antler Crown because that's where the first friends they made upon their arrival are. They swear fealty to an

Emerald Court monarch because they believe that changeling has the wisest perspective or greatest ability to serve the needs of the freehold. Such recruits sometimes occupy a unique position within the Spring Court. They are not as bound by the power of their emotions, which may make them almost wallflowers at the most exuberant Spring revels, but also grants them a perspective that is vitally important to the Antler Crown. Not all passions are for vices to be indulged; there is strength even in the simple desire for security and companionship.

Just as Desire can mean entirely different things to different people, so are the members of the Spring Court called to its numbers through a myriad of means. Whether they seek safety or acceptance, diversion or delight, the Spring court offers something for almost every Lost — assuming they have the desire to seek it out.

## COURT STRUCTURE

Just as few outside the Emerald Court truly understand the Ardent Rule, many also keep little track of the intricate layers of hierarchy within the Court. Certainly, during those time periods when the Spring Court rules any given freehold, they are often led by a king or queen, a visible figurehead who is more than capable of playing the role of regal imperator, frivolous puppet or wanton libertine as suits the Court's needs. Beneath that ruler, there may well be a hierarchy of sycophants and placemen as elaborate as suits the regent's design.

But for the most part the Court lacks the inherent structure and codification with layer upon layer of rank and structure that seems prevalent in many of the other Courts.

Or so it seems.

In truth, however, the hierarchy of the Spring Court is frequently as stratified and tightly defined as any Winter's *drotti* or *camorrae* or Summer chain of command. While another court may base its structure on seniority, slowly earned political power or martial might, the Emerald courtier's rank at any given moment is virtually impossible to predict, and may differ greatly depending upon which individual or group is polled. It is a complicated series of formulae taking into consideration not only her current favors owed and owing, her social connections to others in the immediate setting, significant social victories or faux pas (both recent and notable past triumphs or failures) and the relative acceptance or disfavor of her current ground-

breaking endeavors. Such highly complex calculations would seem more the province of accountants and number-crunchers than for the passion-driven courtier, but they come naturally to the Spring Court.

In mechanical terms, the mercurial and minutely detailed social structure of the Spring Court is difficult to capture with a single, constant Trait. The social bonus of Mantle is only part of the story, though still the most significant. Mantle represents a social tie to the Court that is supernatural in nature and not easily ignored. A changeling with five dots of Mantle (Spring) is a living embodiment of renewal, virtually an avatar of the Court's goals and interests. Yet, such a character can still find himself temporarily out of favor due to a poor performance at the most recent revel, by drawing the ire of a well-loved personality, or by being unfashionably friendly with one of the high-ranking members of another Great Court. This is also true for Lost of other Courts who possess Court Goodwill (Spring); they may find themselves temporarily increased in popularity or reduced in favor as circumstances shift.

To represent the shifting tides of Spring politics, various Social rolls made within the Spring Court should be subject to situational modifiers on a regular basis. Some of these modifiers may be beyond the players' control, of course (for example, "The Viscountess of 15<sup>th</sup> and Knucklebone has spoken out against you, and I don't really know why"), but a skilled Spring Courtier has ways to win favor even when at a disadvantage. Players should be encouraged to win temporary bonuses (or risk temporary penalties) by engaging in duels of wits, spreading gossip or currying favor. Some of these may be extemporaneous (an Expression check to craft a particularly cutting *bon mot*), others more involved or extended (using Politics or Streetwise to uncover potential gossip, Subterfuge to spread it before the event, and finally Socialize or Expression to use the gossip against a rival). However, a subject of the Antler Crown should be careful to avoid using Contracts or other supernatural powers as a means of manipulating her fellows — resorting to such tricks is a terrible *faux pas*, liable to do much more harm than good to one's standing.

## TITLES

Because the social strata of the Spring Court is so mutable, their view of titles tends to be less rigid and compartmentalized than that of other Courts. Where some courts use a title system that is directly tied to the changeling's Mantle rating, Spring Mantle is more

a quantification of the quality with which the individual embodies the Spring Court's core tenet than a definition of the individual's particular status within the Court at any given time. Since a large part of that core tenet is involved with promoting individual desires, views and preferences, rather than court-wide priorities or shared-criteria judgments, there is no strict set of Mantle-related titles for the Antler Crown.

That is not to say, however, that Spring Court titles do not exist. Since the social hierarchy of the court is a constantly shifting maze of current triumphs and recent *faux pas*, the internal structure of the Emerald court tends to be more fluid than most. Spring titles are not a matter of social rank earned and then kept until the next highest level is gained. Instead, they tend to reflect a particular role the courtier fulfills, either within the Court or within Lost society in general, or a particular skill, talent or attribute he has been exceptionally noted for. As such, while a Spring courtier may never gain enough prestige (or notoriety) within any particular niche to be granted a title, it is also possible for one to be awarded more than a single title based upon different roles.

## WHAT IS IN A NAME?

While there are definitely some traditional roles within the Court, the names by which each changeling within that role calls themselves (or is called by others) varies, depending on the oft-mercurial nature of the individual courtier. As well, in no small part because of the constantly evolving and frequently impulsive nature of the Spring Court, new titles are often invented and bestowed (or claimed) on a whim, with the social power of the bestower (or claimant) determining whether the new titles, ranks or honorifics "stick" and spread, eventually becoming traditional, or whether they are seen as (inappropriately) pretentious affectations and earn those who have given, taken or received them the scorn and ridicule of the local court.

Below are some of the more time-honored traditional Spring Court titles based on courtly roles, noteworthy accomplishments or exceptional attributes.

- **Vernal Sovereign:** This is the official title of a Spring courtier who is currently the ruler of a freehold. Not all Vernal Sovereigns will use this title. Some individuals prefer the title of "Vernal King" or "Spring Queen," others adopt monarchical titles that suit their particular personality, heritage or nature. A djinn-like Air Elemental, for example, may style himself as "Nasim ben Altair, Emerald Caliph of the Freehold of a

Thousand Oaks,” while a Darkling Antiquarian might label herself “Imperatrice Page Turner, First Lady of the Furthest Aisles”. It is unusual, but not unheard of, for a Spring Courtier to take the throne without possessing at least three dots in Spring Mantle and an equivalent amount of Status in the Court. However, especially in freehold where seasonal court changes are mandated, if no member of the Spring Court who is willing or able to take the throne possesses such a level of Mantle, exceptions are made. As well, it’s more than likely that several low-Mantle Spring courtiers have held the throne as the puppets for others. When an inexperienced courtier with a passion for public acclaim and recognition crosses paths with a more subtle member whose drives run in more Machiavellian directions, the results can be deadly effective, assuming the two work well together.

- **Searce:** One joke making the rounds states that the price of admission to the Emerald Court is a six-pack and a quick tumble. In truth, while Lost who seek to join the Spring Court are rarely turned away, not everyone is truly suited for his or her role. Just as a gleaner may winnow away the useless chaff from the precious grain, Searces specialize in discretely interviewing new or potential Spring courtiers to determine their potential value to the Court. Those who impress the Searce (pronounced to rhyme with “rehearse”) with their talent, skill, passion, experience or attitudes are more likely to find themselves being introduced to higher Status members of the Court. Those who the Searce finds to be rude, clumsy, or even worse, boring, are often left to mill around the proverbial punchbowl while more promising individuals are put on the fast track to Court social and political workings. Searces most often possess high levels of Empathy, Socialize and Investigation, although Subterfuge, Persuasion and Intimidation are also useful Searce skills. It is uncommon for a Searce to possess less than two dots of Spring Court Status; any less and they simply aren’t considered to have sufficient power to pick and choose among the incoming courtiers, let alone provide appropriate introductions to those of higher Status.

- **Verdant Advocate:** Many members of the Antler Crown are driven by passions which, at least in the extremes, can be disruptive, destructive or even deadly to themselves as well as others. Fortunately for Spring courtiers who are so inclined, there are also those whose passions drive them into the intricate world of legal semantics and procedures. For an Advocate of the Spring Court, navigating the often

thorny labyrinth of human legal proceedings or the even-more-complicated intricacies of Lost traditions and policies is as great a thrill as some Lost find in exploring the Hedge. When one of the court’s members allows her desires to get away with her, landing her in jail, a mental hospital or in the custody of a freehold’s version of the local police, an Advocate (sometimes called a Verdant Mediator or Verdant Representative) is the first one she calls. Some Advocates specialize in specific types of cases. Those who work with the mundane law might focus on drug trafficking, assault, civil matters (such as adultery or libel/slander) or even murder defense (especially handy for those with a pesky fetch problem to deal with.) Others work only Lost-specific situations — collusion with the Others, violations of freehold-specific laws or problems between the Lost and certain sentient members of the Hedge. Atrax Attor, a Venombite Spring Court Beast, is rumored to have negotiated for the release of a fellow courtier when he fell afoul of a group of bloodsucking gang-members whose territory abutted that of the Spring Court. For her successful efforts in researching and then using the vampire’s own laws against them, Attor was given the title “Ebon Advocate” by the local Vernal Sovereign. Advocates frequently have high levels of Politics, Academics (with a specialization in Law) and Persuasion.

- **Claviger:** The title of Claviger is given to those Spring Courtiers who serve as the bodyguards and protectors of high-ranking Emerald Courtiers, especially current or former Vernal Sovereigns who realize that their position may put them at greater risk for retribution from political adversaries or bring them to greater attention of the Fair Folk. Clavigers are most often those whose passions push them to excel at the martial arts, be it hand-to-hand combat, self-defense, fencing, sword-play, archery or marksmanship. High levels of Brawl, Firearms or Weaponry Skills are common, as is any of the offensive or defensive Physical Merits. These emphases are sometimes accompanied by a passion for history or military science, and Clavigers who have a driving interest in one of these areas may claim an alternate title that reflects that focus, such as Cavalier, Praetorian, or simply “Guardian”. It is considered, by some, a mark of power and prestige to have a large force of Clavigers protecting one from danger, and some high-ranking Spring courtiers go so far as to outfit their Claviger(s) in livery that onlookers cannot help but associate with the courtier’s persona. Grand Dame Lily Jaroslav, a noted Flowering Fairest of the early 1900s, was noted for appearing in public only with an entourage of a dozen



Clavigers, all dressed identically in dark green uniforms designed to provide a constantly flattering backdrop for her own lily-white clothing and complexion. The all-Ogre entourage is rumored to have rebelled, however, when Dame Lily attempted to force them all to wear her signature scent while on duty. Clavigers gain little prestige from their title alone, although some develop an exceptionally strong Mantle, especially when their skill is honed through true dedication to the art of their martial skill.

- **Sylvan Emissary:** In freeholds where the Spring Court's presence is strong and well organized, the Antler Crown may send out ambassadors to other courts, freeholds or even to other supernatural groups. In theory, these Emissaries are for the purpose of maintaining positive political and social relations with other groups. In practice, many Emissaries take the position because of a desire to glean new and exciting items, ideas, or experiences from the groups they maintain contact with. Empathy, Socialize, and Expression are frequently Skills that Emissaries find vital in their role, and many are accorded high levels of Status within the Court after proving their value. An Emissary may

remain as part of a local freehold, as in the case of Jacque Avec L'eau, Ambassador to the Royal Court, a Wizened Brewer who for nearly a decade has served as a liaison between the Emerald Court and whichever group was currently ruling his local freehold. Or, alternately, an Emissary may be assigned to a foreign location or to non-Lost individuals or groups. One such is Faxon Farwalker, an Ogre ambassador who makes his home in the wilds of the Canadian Rockies. Faxon (who rarely uses his official title of "Envoy to the Moonbound") routinely sends reports on the doings and whereabouts of the local lycanthrope populations back to his Emerald Court companions. While the were-creatures know (and have come to accept) Faxon's otherworldly nature, they have no idea that he is reporting in to a greater population of Fae creatures like himself. In this way he, as many Emissaries, serves not only as ambassador but also as spy and protector of the Lost.

- **Archivist:** It is possible that the title of Archivist, with its connotation of dusty tomes and lonely libraries, was chosen for the Spring Court as a sort of tongue-in-cheek *bon mot*. Certainly it seems an inap-



appropriately dull nomenclature for those tasked with planning parties and organizing celebrations. However, for those who know in their hearts that such festivities are more than an excuse to run amok — that they are the first and best line of defense against the encroachment of the Others — the title holds a great deal of serious meaning. Archivists are responsible for remembering all of the traditional celebrations and all of their vital details, including timing, location, necessary participants and important related activities. Furthermore, they also must continually come up with new and interesting ways to bring those sometimes-ancient celebrations into being in such a way that they are constantly evolving without ever losing their potency or import. Many, although not all, Spring Archivists are Magistrates of the Wax Mask. The title's role overlaps with, but is not the same as, that of the Noble Order. Where the Magistrates are most concerned with the maintenance of a freehold's pledges and responsibilities, the Archivists hold as much (or more) import on the social traditions of the group. Planning a Latina Lost's *quinceaños* celebration may not be vital to the turning of the seasons or be tied to any particular freehold pledge, but to the Archivist, the celebration plays a vital role, both for the young girl and for the community, and it deserves all of the attention and expertise the Archivist has to offer it. Archivists frequently hold numerous levels of Socialize, Expression and Politics, as well as Contacts, Allies or Resources.

- **Sage Escort:** Even among the passionate Emerald Court, there are those who see intimate interactions as base, sinful or dirty. There is no official mandate enforcing a sex-positive viewpoint from all members of the Court, nor is there an emphasis on stressing "free love" over exclusive partnerships. Even so, there are certainly those who feel passionately about aiding those both within and outside of the Court to have what they believe to be a "healthier" view about sexual issues and interaction. Some seek the title of Sage Escort out of a visceral thrill, knowing that the name alone is enough to bring a fever blush to some changeling's visage. Others pursue it out of a belief that the heart of the Spring Court is deeply tied to physical desire and that learning how to wield such potential is a potent tool. Others are indoctrinated into the role by existing holders of the title, who see in them a spark of potential to nurture, fulfill and shape the desires of others (as well as their own). Sage Escorts are sometimes looked down upon, especially by those outside the Emerald Court, as trollops or gigolos

(although for the most part those who are granted the title have gone far beyond the need or desire to exchange their talents for monetary gain). Those who hold the rank, however, believe themselves to be akin to the Venetian courtesans of old: diplomats, artists and more. Some Escorts are free-workers, drawn to the potential of sexual activity and expressions as a pure art form. Others are in the employ or association of a Sovereign or freehold court, using their skills to glean information, to bolster weaknesses in the community or as a powerful tool for healing wounded souls (like those of many of the Lost).

- **Avant Guard:** Desire is at the core of the Spring Court, not only giving one's own desires free reign, but also inspiring and promoting the desires of others. Trendsetters within the Emerald Court covet the somewhat tongue-in-cheek title of Avant Guard because it recognizes their ground-breaking ability to create that which others covet, as well as giving nod to their role as guardian of the responsibility of shaping the next wave of art, fashion or technology. To claim to be an Avant is a huge faux pas. Even after one has been publicly or formally referred to as such by others of the title, it is considered *très gauche* to use the title to refer to one's self. Many Fairest Muses find themselves in the role of Avant Guard, although it takes true dedication to serving Desire to excel in this position. Expression, Wits and (depending on whether one is creating or inspiring) either Crafts or Persuasion, are often key tools used by the Avant Guard.

- **Joyeux:** Many see Spring Courtiers as self-centered, but what happens when one's true desire is to inspire happiness in others? Where Muses inspire others to feats of creative excellence, Joyeux facilitate happiness in those around them. For some, this entails a life of random acts of kindness bestowed upon others, while others plot and plan elaborate schemes designed to defeat sorrow, fear and anger and replace it with joy, contentment and happiness. (Most Joyeux do not go so far as to actively thwart the activities of members of other courts, but vigilante Joyeux are not unheard of in Spring Court legend and folklore.) Joyeux is most often a self-claimed title, although when one is bestowed the title (especially from a Vernal Sovereign) it is a very high complement. Joyeux are frequently called upon to utilize Investigation and Empathy along with the Fleeting Court contracts to glean what will truly make their targets happy. Contacts, Resources and Allies (a bank of individuals frequently formed from past targets) make their job easier as well.



## FREEHOLD ROLES

Within a freehold, many Spring Courtiers play the same roles they do within the court itself: a Claviger may serve as a guardian for a king or queen of another court, an Archivist need not limit their focus solely to the Emerald court's population, and a Verdant Advocate's skills can spring a changeling whose Summer-spawned temper has put them in the jail as easily as one whose Desire led them there. Spring courtiers are also often called upon to serve their freehold in other fashions.

- **Horticulturalist:** Whether they're tending mundane plants or those native to the Hedge, few Lost have as green a thumb as the gardeners of the Spring Court. In some areas this propensity for nurturing plant life might provide sustenance and resources for the freehold, from ensuring a steady source of wholesome organic food year-round to creating an exclusive business in exotic fruits, flowers and herbs (legal and otherwise). More adventurous horticulturalists may turn their attention to Hedge bounty, cultivating entire orchards and groves of goblin fruit for the benefit of their freehold's population.

- **Counselor:** It is extremely advantageous for a group governed by an ever-rotating group of monarchs to be able to move through the fluid process of seasonal procession with a minimum of insults, injured feelings and slights. Counselors of the Emerald Court have access to the tools of Desire, which can (when wielded properly) allow them to serve as facilitators, truth-catchers, advisors and confidants to those upon whose shoulders rests the burden of power. They also can draw on diplomatic skills that have been well-honed in the shifting politics of the Antler Crown.

- **Ritualist:** The Autumn Court pursues mastery of mystical rites and rituals as their *raison d'être*, but the Spring Court aren't too far behind. From solemn solstice ceremonies to bacchanalian orgies, the Emerald Court understands the power of sacred acts, filling them with special effects, role play, libation, sacred mysteries and more. Many freeholds place a member of the Spring Court in charge of arranging at least a few of the mystical rituals, with the expectation that the Emerald Courtier will bring a certain level of enthusiasm and passion to the task.

- **Social Coordinator:** Not all celebrations thrown by a freehold are Glamour-imbued rituals of deep spiritual meaning. Sometimes the Lost gather over beer and pizza to watch the Super Bowl or host an evening of opera, performance art or spoken-word that is attended by changelings and humans alike. Whether

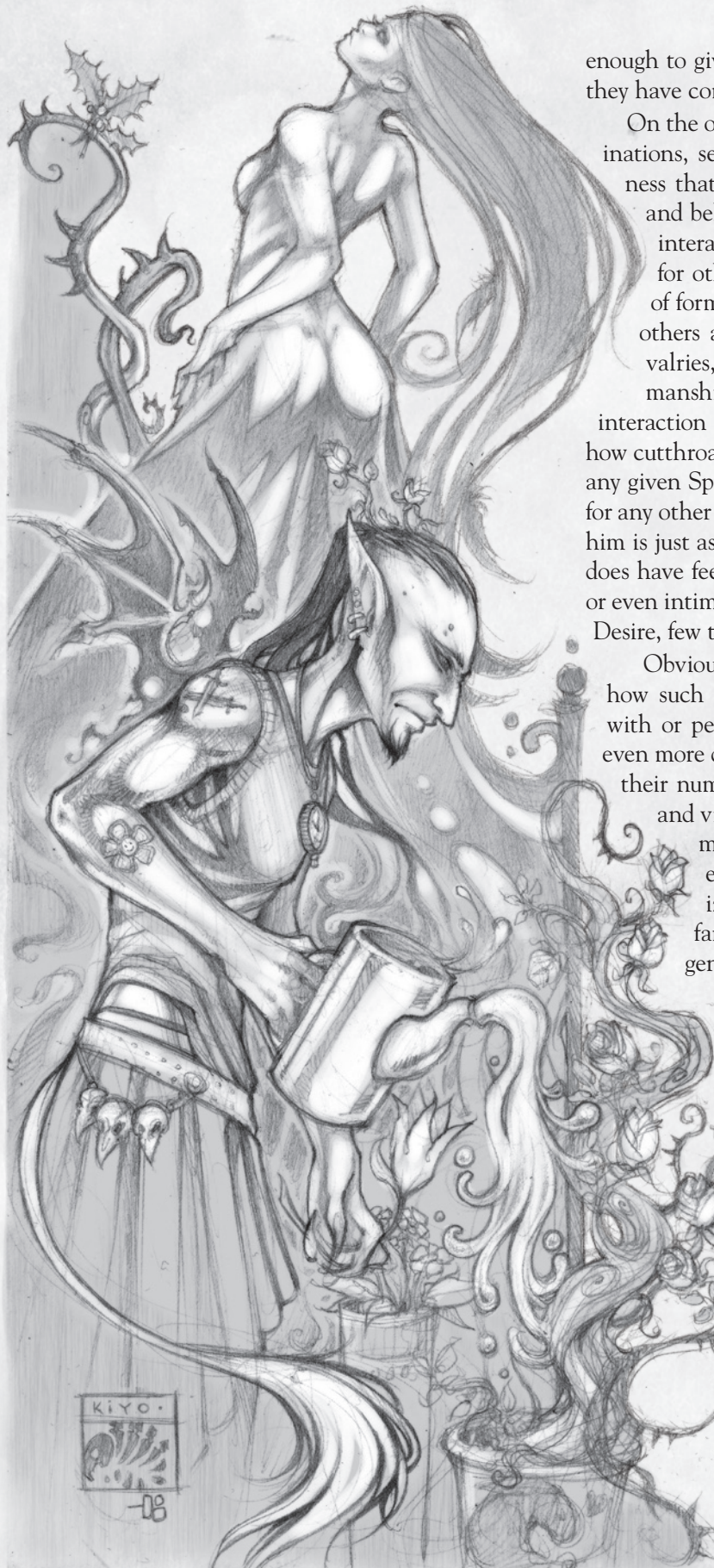
it's planning tours and dinners for visiting dignitaries or plastering telephone poles with notices about the freehold-sponsored rock concert, the Spring Court is often called upon to manage the details that will ensure that the event achieves its intended goals.

- **Defender:** While Summer's wrath and Autumn's fear are often vital to a freehold's defense, Spring is also capable of lending support. Whether it is rousing a garden-army to protect the freehold's fall-back point, acting as a combat medic to heal the wounded, or sending an attacker off to pursue other Desires, those who wield Spring's Contracts can do a lot to protect and defend a freehold population against those who would do them ill. Many, however, lack the focus and concentration to maintain a watchful post long-term. Such Lost are best used when called in to handle a particular emergency to which they can apply their verve and fire, rather than those which require rote drills, monotonous repetition or ongoing attention.

## RELATIONS

In general, the Emerald Court claims to be the passionate drive that keeps Lost society from stagnating. Their claim isn't without merit. Its members provide a counterbalance to the bitter, dark or blazing extremes of the other Courts, while at the same time being themselves counterbalanced by the others' discipline, insight and restraint. Even those who do not believe that the Spring Court's *joie-de-vivre* is influential in thwarting the Other's predations are often willing to (begrudgingly) admit that without their passion, laughter and drama, changeling society would be a poorer, paler, less vital version of itself.

Some Lost make the mistake of believing one of two overly simple extremes about how the Spring Court views the outside world (including them). Some mistake the Emerald Court's often jovial spirit for affection towards, camaraderie with, or even trust of, those around them. Rarely is this true. A Spring Courtier's projected attitude towards another frequently has nothing to do with the other person, but is instead dictated by the bubbling font of emotions inside the courtier herself. Should she be riding a manic high with the promise of her heart's desire just around the bend, she may well greet even her enemies with a knowing wink and a smile. On the other hand, when she is filled with melancholic longing for something (or someone) she perceives to be beyond her reach, it is unlikely that anything (including sometimes having the object of her desire dropped into her lap) will pull her from the depths of bittersweet yearning long



enough to give friends or lovers the warm interaction they have come to expect.

On the other hand, some witness the social machinations, self-centered attitudes and single-mindedness that so often characterize the Spring Court and believe them to be incapable of empathetic interactions or true emotional consideration for others. Spring courtiers are just as capable of forming deep loving and trusting bonds with others as any other individual might. Their rivalries, verbal and social sparring and one-upmanship can just as easily be an affectionate interaction as one spawned by hatred, regardless of how cutthroat it might seem to an outsider. Assuming any given Spring Courtier does not love, trust or care for any other individual because of her actions towards him is just as likely to be untrue as assuming that she does have feelings for him because she is affectionate or even intimate with him. Within the mutable rule of Desire, few things are ever certain.

Obviously, to make a blanket statement about how such a mercurial Court as a whole interacts with or perceives those outside of their number is even more difficult than defining the views of one of their numbers. Certainly there are general trends and viewpoints, but it is important to note that many Spring Courtiers revel in being the exception to the rule, and so such generalizations are, at best, overly simplified and far from all inclusive. That being said, some generalizations do exist.

## VERNAL VIEWS OF OTHER COURTIER'S

- **Summer Court:** Many comparisons have been made between the fire of Wrath and that of Desire. Spring courtiers sometimes revel in spurring those of the Summer Court to berserk frenzy, just to delight in the sheer power of Summer unfurled. Other Lost of the Antler Crown take lovers from the Iron Spear's numbers, claiming to find a passion within them that near-rivals their own (and, although it is often not stated, is often far less fickle than that they would find among their own numbers).

As larger social groups, the Emerald and Crimson courts can be tight allies — or bitter enemies. There is rarely middle ground between two groups who are so strongly ruled by the powerful force of their respective emotions. When stirred toward a compatible goal, these two factions can accomplish awesome feats. Neither is quick to fold in the face of challenge, and often a good natured rivalry between the two courts will spur each to greater heights than either would have achieved alone. That rivalry, however, can quickly spiral into something much more devastating and even deadly as each group's "Never say die" attitude pushes slights or misunderstandings that could be easily assuaged in less forceful courts into blood feuds that can engulf entire freeholds in their frenzy.

- **Autumn Court:** The court of Fear, at first glance, seems incompatible with that of Desire. Most courtiers of the Leaden Mirror claim little understanding of the Antler Crown and the reverse is often true as well. With few exceptions, fright and fascination are very different reactions to stimuli, and that which truly frightens an individual is not something that he is likely to desire as well. Spring and Autumn are also opposed in the greater symbolism of Fae magic, and although it's not as stark a difference as the opposition of Summer and Winter, it's still notable and colors the relations between the two. When Autumn is at its strongest, Spring has not ruled for some time and will not rule for some time yet to come. Therefore the first to oppose an extended Spring rule is the Autumn Court and vice versa.

That being said, there can be a perverse attraction in certain aspects of fear: the temptation of the forbidden (with its inherent threat of consequences), the rush of adrenaline in shock, surprise or fright that can mimic the symptoms of sexual desire, the complicated interplay of nominally safe, and yet just-threatening-enough thrills such as horror movies, roller coasters and BDSM scenes. The overlap of Desire with Fear may not be as blatant or as broad-spread as that the overlap with Wrath, but both as individuals and as groups, there are places where Autumn and Spring complement each other well.

Historically, some Spring Courts have discovered that pandering to the desires of those they would rule, lead or work alongside is a technique only heightened by the spoken or unspoken hint of fear should the others not cooperate, capitulate or offer forth their support. Autumn and Spring can be an effective team, especially when dealing with humans (who so often fear their own desires as deeply as they do any outside threat) and when they can find enough common ground to warrant working together.

- **Winter Court:** Spring's passion may seem alien to the Autumn Court, but no group is more foreign to Spring than those who deal in restraint and coat their emotions, hearts and spirits in a thick coating of ice. Some Emerald courtiers see the Silent Arrow as a challenge. They delight in searching for cracks in their crystalline armor, and once the tiniest chink of vulnerability is found, seek to wedge it open to discover what desires and passions might lie hidden inside, unknown to even the Winter courtier himself.

Others have nothing but disdain and frustration for the Winter Court. How, they ask, can they have any respect for someone who is too cowardly to admit to having emotions, let alone actually acting upon them? The Silent Arrow's stoicism is alien, almost anathema, and many members of the Spring Court aren't above hating and fearing what they don't understand. Like with those who target Summer just to stir a rise from them, there are those who dedicate weeks, months, even years, to the attempt to coax, shock or anger a passionate reaction from a member of the Winter Court. Their efforts rarely succeed, but when they do, they claim the results are like an avalanche: beautiful, devastating and unstoppable.

- **The Courtless:** Conforming is the easy way out. Even those who are called to the Spring Court realize that it is not the right path for everyone, and (for the most part) respect those who continue to strive to find the right place for them even when it means forgoing the safety and support of belonging to a group. There are those who look down on the Courtless for being unwilling to recognize and fulfill their own desires, claiming that if they did so they would surely belong to the Antler Crown. But most honor the right of those who choose to remain outside the court system to follow the beat of their own drummer, while still looking for opportunities to tempt them into fulfilling the call of Desire, even if they do not formally join the Spring family.

## OTHER TRAVELERS IN THE VERDANT GARDEN

Desire makes for strange bedfellows and interesting journeys, and the verdant path of the Spring Court has taken its members into places that few others dare to tread — places where their paths cross with those few look forward to meeting. However, just as their views of the other Lost Courts are varied and diverse, so are the Spring Court's reactions to the unique and often alien creatures who share their world.



• **Vampires:** As embodiments of hunger incarnate, some Spring Courtiers (especially those with carnal tastes themselves) empathize with the walking undead. Here, they say, are those who truly are ruled by their Desire: to hunt, to feed and to manipulate those around them. Others, however, are less certain. They note the lack of true passion in anything these ghoulish predators undertake and wonder if they truly feel desire at all, or whether they are little more than blood-sucking automatons, caught in survival-driven patterns of habit and reaction with no true feelings or emotions of their own at all.

Unfortunately for the Spring Court, many vampires possess the ability to play with others' desires like a child's toys, even if they do not possess true Desire themselves. More than one Emerald Court member has lost her free will, and her life, to the pseudo-passion the walking undead can conjure forth from their victims and manipulate at will.

• **Werewolves:** Few could hear one of the lycanthropes howl and not recognize the passion that runs deep in their spirits. Much in the same ways that Spring respects Summer for its ardent emotion, those who have encountered the werebeasts (and lived to tell about it) are often awestruck by their freedom, power and passion. Woe betide to the Lost who attempts to play social parry and thrust with the wolf-changers in the same way they might with one of the Summer Court, however. Unfettered by social traditions that allow such ripostes to be answered in a non-lethal manner among the Lost, the wrong verbal barb against one of the werewolves might well earn a Spring Courtier a one-way trip to oblivion.

• **Mages:** At first glance, mages are often a source of fascination to the Spring Court. They appear to be limitless power without being restricted with clauses and pledges. No lost time, no fetch taking your place, and no Keeper waiting to steal you back. Sounds like a pretty sweet deal, right up to the point where someone mentions Arcadia. It doesn't take long for even the flightiest Spring Court to put two and two together and figure out that they've been somewhere that these power-charged spell-slingers would give their right arm to get to. And no matter how they explain, they can feel their words feeding the magic-wielder's desire to do the one thing that no Lost could ever understand doing voluntarily. How can you trust someone who has the power to warp reality, and would trade it all for the chance to do the one thing you would give anything to have never done? It's enough to make one start to think that maybe, just maybe there's one line that even Desire shouldn't cross.

• **Ghosts:** Some passions are so strong that even death can't stop them. Some Spring courtiers believe that ghosts are the souls of those who denied their desire in life and are condemned to walk the world until they find a way to satisfy them in the afterlife. Others believe that spirits are little more than long-lasting resonances of those who lived so passionately and fully that they left an indelible mark on the world that lasted long after their bodies no longer functioned and their souls had gone on to whatever lies beyond. Either way, ghosts are generally seen to be a reminder that life is short and desire is strong, and not living fully is a waste of both.

## CONTRACTS OF VERDANT SPRING

Passion is a keen-edged weapon: it is capable of spurring a changeling to unimaginable heights but, like dancing along a cliff edge, the exhilaration is equal to the potential risk. While the Fleeting Spring Contract allows those of the Emerald Court to sense, manipulate and fulfill desire, the Verdant Court Contract allows them to channel their passion to accomplish a variety of goals.

Within the Spring Court, the Verdant Spring is a popular Contract among those who would ride their passionate desire to something greater than a cold beer or a hot lay. The clauses of the Verdant Spring offer the Spring Court the possibility of spurring themselves and others to great heights, but like passion itself, they are neither safe nor sure. Each carries with it a higher than normal penalty for failure (akin to those normally associated with dramatic failures). Among the Emerald Court, great risk always exists when striving for great accomplishment.

Unlike the Fleeting and Enduring Spring Contracts, Verdant Spring Contracts are, in many ways, fickle. Their catches are often more generous than is usual for a Contract. On the other hand, some of the Verdant Spring clauses contain a drawback that comes into play only during certain circumstances, even when the clause is used successfully. Thus are the whims of Spring, which gives (and takes away) according to its own whims.

While some clauses of the Verdant Spring contract are taught to those who are not of the Court but held in their Goodwill, the Contract works best for those who have the inner drive and passion of the Spring Court. Many of the clauses take into consideration the Spring Mantle level of the changeling who is activating it when figuring its effectiveness or potency. As usual, Court Goodwill (Spring) cannot be used in place of



Spring Mantle; Court Goodwill represents enough social standing to be taught a basic clause, but does not have the mystical power of the season strengthening it.

## FONT OF INSPIRATION (◉)

There is more to a successful creation than the creating itself. In order to craft an effective speech, you have to not only have a way with words, but an knack for reading your audience and what they want (or are willing) to hear. Creating the perfect toy requires more than the ability to build, paint or design mechanics. You have to have a sense of what will be fun for the toy's intended owner. By accessing their own inherent knack for sensing others' desires, Lost with this clause are able to create more successfully. The enhanced results are not a result of the clause increasing their workmanship, but because it allows them to better interpret and anticipate the needs and desires of their target demographic. Thus, the ability can be applied to other's creations as well, allowing a changeling with this clause to inspire, advise and consult with other people and enhance their ability to create as well.

Unfortunately, the line between incredible success and dismal failure is sometimes a very thin one, and the fires of creativity can burn unwary fingers. For those who set their sights on amazing creations, one misstep may mean disaster. Success or failure, only one attempt to use this Clause may be made on any given creative endeavor.

**Prerequisites:** None

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Empathy + Mantle (Spring) (minus the target's Resolve if actively opposed)

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The changeling invests his own (literal) blood, sweat or tears into the creation of the object or plans for the project.

### Roll Result

**Dramatic Failure:** The endeavor fails horribly. The creator (and inspiration, should the changeling be exerting influence on another individual) is under a -4 penalty for all creative works (Crafts or Expression challenges) for the next month as the weight of his disastrous efforts hinder future creations. As well, even if the failure happens in secret, the creator (and inspiration, if applicable) is set at -2 for all social challenges against members of the Spring Court for one month, as those of the Antler Crown will inherently sense the failure.

**Failure:** The creator (and inspiration, should the changeling be exerting influence on another individual)

is under a -4 penalty for all creative works (Crafts or Expression challenges) for the next month as the weight of his disastrous efforts hinder future creations.

**Success:** For each success, the changeling (or person he is inspiring) receives a +1 bonus to his next Crafts or Expression challenge. These bonuses stack with any other supernatural or equipment bonuses applicable to the challenge.

**Exceptional Success:** Not only does the bonus above apply to the character's next creative challenge, but to all social challenges made against members of the Spring Court (minimum 1 point of Spring Mantle) for the next week. Only one such bonus can be active at any given time. For better or worse, if another exceptional success using this clause is made before the previous one wears off, its bonuses apply rather than the earlier ones.

## THE INEFFABLE GIFT (◉◉)

Some people have a certain aura of confidence and focus about them that comes from being dedicated to following their own dreams, goals and desires – regardless of what the rest of the world thinks. This can come across to others as intensely annoying and self-centered, or strangely attractive and intriguing. Changelings with this clause of Verdant Spring can use their own inner passions to appear more appealing to others. Unfortunately, if used too often, the clause backfires, driving others away.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Spring) ◉ or Court Goodwill (Spring) ◉◉◉

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Manipulation + Mantle (Spring) versus target's Resolve + Composure

**Action:** Contested; resistance is reflexive.

**Catch:** The character speaks out loud about something she is passionate about.

**Drawback:** Every time after the first that this Clause is attempted on the same target gives a -1 cumulative penalty to the roll. Thus the second time the Clause is attempted on any given target (whether the first attempt was successful or not) the roll is made at a -1 penalty; the third attempt is -2, and so on. Attempts on other targets do not affect each other. These penalties do not decrease over time.

### Roll Result

**Dramatic Failure:** The character's passion comes across as self-centered narcissism. Any attempts at Social challenges (those using Presence, Manipulation, Composure as a stat) towards the target fail for a number of weeks equal to the changeling's Mantle (Spring) plus the target's Mantle (Spring) or Court Goodwill

(Spring) if they have any. As well, all Social challenges made by the changeling against any target are at -4 for the next 24 hours as his self-centered nature taints interactions with others.

**Failure:** The clause doesn't take hold. This still counts as an attempt for purposes of the cumulative penalties applied against a single target.

**Success:** The changeling's passions come across as somehow appealing or persuasive to the target. For the next 24-hour period, all Social challenges towards the target by the changeling gain a +3 bonus, which is stackable with any other supernatural or natural bonuses the changeling may possess, but not stackable with itself (i.e.: only one use of this clause by any changeling can be actively affecting a target at any given time).

**Exceptional Success:** The target cannot help but be struck by the changeling's passionate nature. The changeling is at a +4 bonus for any Social challenges made against the target for a number of days equal to the changeling's Mantle (Spring) plus the target's Mantle (Spring) or Court Goodwill (Spring).

### IMPASSIONED BLOW (●●●)

Some combats are calm, cool and calculated. Then there are those that involve the Spring Court. A courtier driven to combat by her passions may well find that they allow her to strike a devastating blow. Unfortunately, this same drive can leave her vulnerable to less hot-headed opponents.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Spring) ●● or Court Goodwill (Spring) ●●●●

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Brawl/Firearms/Weaponry (as applicable) + Mantle (Spring)

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The target has insulted or assaulted (by word or deed) the changeling in the last hour.

**Drawback:** Intended target gets +2 to next physical attack of any sort against the changeling. This penalty is in effect whether the Clause is successful or has failed. It is not, however, stackable. If the changeling's target does not attack her between multiple uses of Impassioned Blow, the target only gains a single +2 bonus against the changeling.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The changeling's emotions get the best of her, effectively leaving her vulnerable for the rest of the turn. This may manifest as a misstep that throws her to the ground, a jammed firearm or

a dropped weapon. She loses all Defense (not including Armor) for the remainder of the scene, and can take no further actions (including reflexive ones) for the remainder of the turn. If she wishes to continue combat, she must spend the *next* turn preparing again (picking herself up, recovering her weapon, clearing her firearm's chamber, etc.) and can make no attack until the *following* turn.

**Failure:** The clause fails; the attack is resolved as normal.

**Success:** Passion steers the changeling's attack, compounding its effectiveness. She receives +4 to her attack pool against the chosen target.

**Exceptional Success:** In addition to the +4 dice bonus offered by the success, the changeling receives an additional dice bonus equal to her level of Mantle (Spring).

### SPUR THE CROWD (●●●●)

Sometimes a changeling's goal is not to exert his influence on a single person, but to sway an entire crowd. Whether it's rallying folks at a political protest march from passive resistance to aggressive action, or turning a cocktail party against a newcomer's cutting edge fashion statement, a mob can be a potent tool for the Emerald Court.

Unlike the Vainglory Contract "Words of Memories Never Lived", this clause does not rely upon the changeling's own inherent impressiveness, but rather his ability to trigger the (sometimes hidden) desires of certain members of the crowd, bringing them to the surface where they can spark similar passions in others. Because of this, the changeling does not need to be actively speaking or performing in front of the crowd, or even be visible to them. His kenning of their desires (and ability to shift them to suit his needs) is enough.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Spring) ●●● or Court Goodwill (Spring) ●●●●●

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Wyrd + Mantle (Spring)

**Action:** Extended and Contested (five successes; each roll represents five minutes). One contested roll may be made reflexively for a crowd based on the highest Composure present. Supernatural targets make their own resistance rolls.

**Catch:** No one in the target crowd knows that the individual using the clause is a changeling.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The crowd is not only not swayed, but turns on the changeling. The effects of this

may vary: in a public political gathering, the changeling may become the target of the police's attention, leading to arrest or physical assault even if he's done nothing to deserve it. In a social setting, the changeling becomes the brunt of the crowd's derision, even if they do not realize he was attempting to sway them. Any Social challenge the character makes automatically fails for the rest of the scene. As well, any Social challenge the changeling makes against any member of the targeted group is at a -4 penalty for a full lunar month.

**Failure:** The crowd is not swayed.

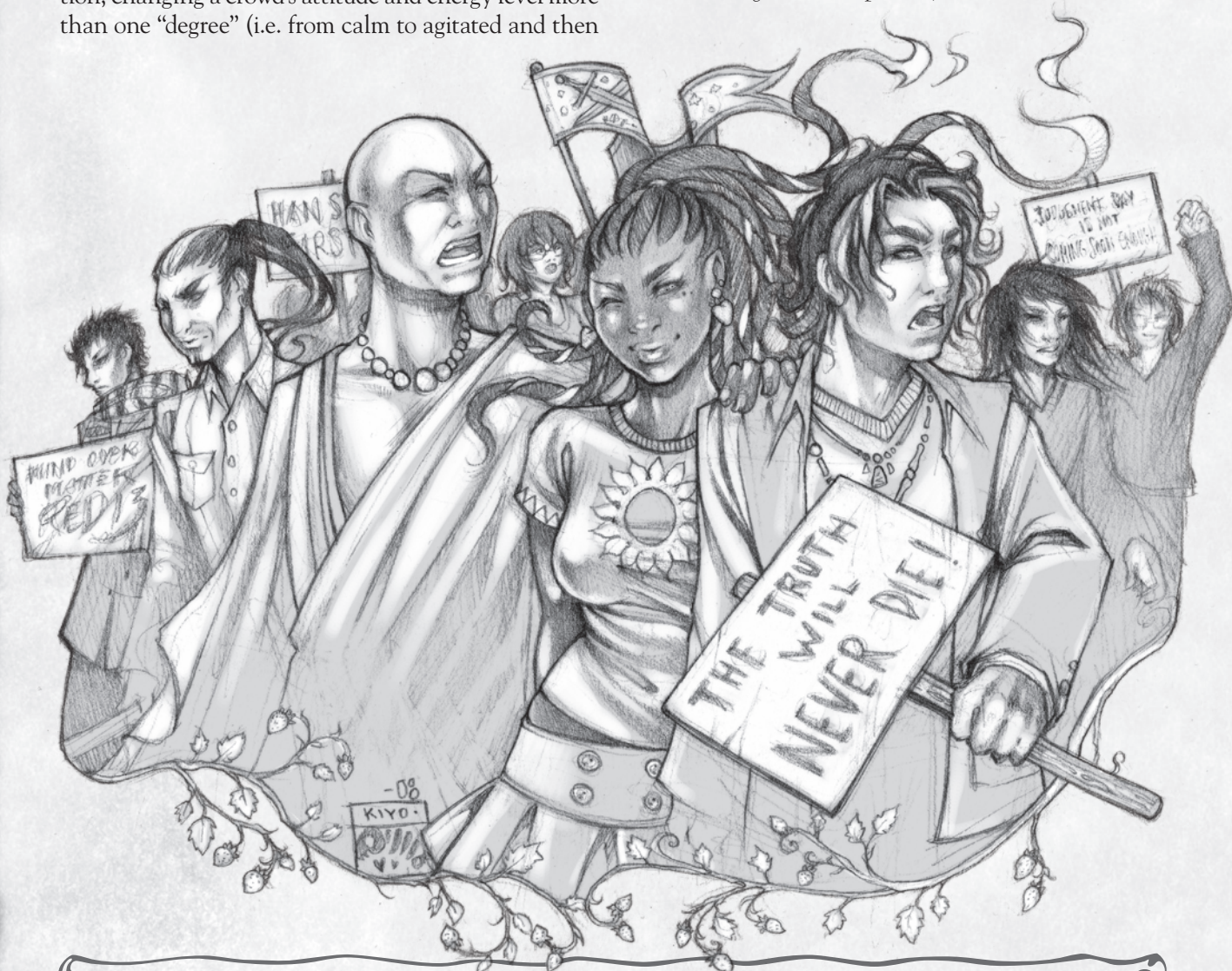
**Success:** The crowd begins to sway in the direction that the changeling desires. A complacent and peaceful group may be made anxious and irritated. A burgeoning mob might be soothed and calmed. The changeling can encourage a group to disperse by increasing their paranoia, incite an already-irritated group to violent action, or lull a relaxed and comfortable one into a near-sleep. At the Storyteller's discretion, changing a crowd's attitude and energy level more than one "degree" (i.e. from calm to agitated and then

from agitated to violent) may require exceptional success or continued effort on the part of the changeling.

**Exceptional Success:** The crowd is so completely affected that their attitude and demeanor as a group is moved entirely in the direction that the changeling desired.

### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	The character has successfully performed Cupid's Eye (Fleeting Spring ●) upon a member of the crowd and uncovered desires of the kind that he is attempting to spark. (Cumulative bonus)
-3	The crowd is actively gathered for a reason which directly opposes the desired reaction (i.e. inspiring violence in a peace rally, or turning a loyal gathering of changelings against the leader they have gathered to protect).



## VERDANT, ROILING HEART (•••••)

Virtues and Vices represent, on a fundamental level, the things a character is passionate about and how those passions manifest. In using Verdant, Roiling Heart, the changeling taps into her inherent passions (as represented by her Virtue or Vice) and uses her core sense of self to renew her internal fortitude. This clause may only be attempted one time per week, whether it is successful or not. Additional attempts automatically fail, but may incur the Glamour cost and drawback, regardless.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Spring) ••••

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Composure + Empathy + Mantle (Spring)

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The character takes an action that is directly related to his Virtue or Vice.

**Drawback:** For the rest of the scene, all social interactions the changeling undertakes are tainted by his

Virtue or Vice. Social interactions are strained for the remainder of the scene and all Social challenges the character initiates are subject to a -2 penalty for the scene.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** Unable to tap into his inner strength, the character loses a Willpower point and is unable to regain Willpower through any means until he has slept for at least 8 hours.

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

**Success:** Bolstered by his passions, the changeling's Willpower pool is entirely refreshed. All previously spent Willpower is renewed and the changeling's inner strength is bolstered by tapping into his sense of self.

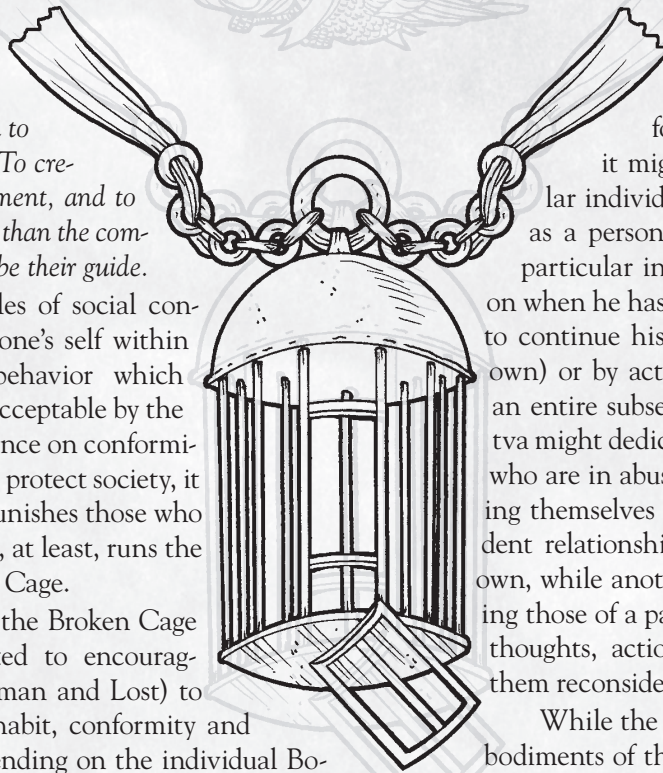
**Exceptional Success:** The character's Willpower pool is entirely refreshed at the end of the turn. As well, he receives a +2 bonus to any challenges involving his Resolve or Composure for the duration of the scene.

# BODHISATTVAS OF THE BROKEN CAGE

*I swear to do all I can to encourage others to lead, rather than follow. To forge new paths rather than to blindly walk the old ways. To create, to combine, to experiment, and to let their own desires, rather than the complacent pap of the masses, be their guide.*

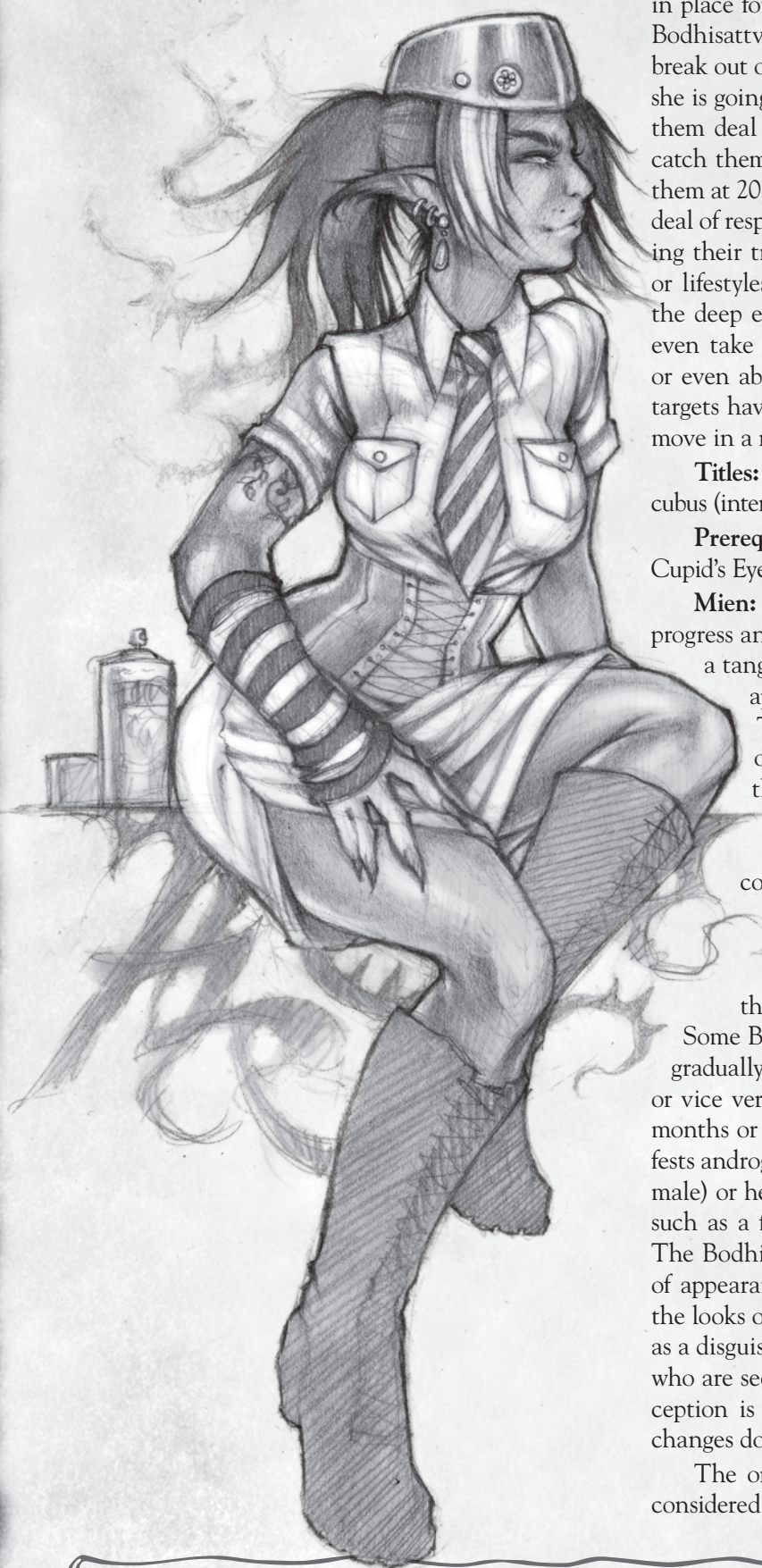
Many of society's rules of social conduct involve restraining one's self within certain perimeters of behavior which have been deemed to be acceptable by the masses. While this insistence on conformity seems on the surface to protect society, it induces stagnation and punishes those who think outside the box. So, at least, runs the philosophy of the Broken Cage.

The Bodhisattvas of the Broken Cage are entitlements dedicated to encouraging individuals (both human and Lost) to break out of the rut of habit, conformity and social acceptability. Depending on the individual Bodhisattva, this might be focused on a specific "cause," like encouraging illegal recreational drug use, pushing



for "bleeding edge" fashion trends or inspiring new and innovative uses for technology. Alternately, it might also focus on a particular individual or group, either serving as a personal muse, nag or bully to a particular individual (and then moving on when he has gained enough momentum to continue his forward movement on his own) or by acting in a similar fashion for an entire subset of society. One Bodhisattva might dedicate herself to pushing those who are in abusive marriages to stop defining themselves in terms of their co-dependent relationships and break out on their own, while another might delight in tempting those of a particular religious order into thoughts, actions or desires which make them reconsider their sacred vows.

While the Bodhisattvas are living embodiments of the Spring Court tenet, "Desire Inspires Growth," their methods are not always beneficial or even safe for those they choose



to “help” with growth. Societal mores are sometimes in place for very practical reasons, and just because a Bodhisattva applies pressure to encourage someone to break out of their accepted patterns doesn’t mean that she is going to be around to bail them out of jail, help them deal with the ramifications of broken oaths or catch them when their hastily packed parachute fails them at 20,000 feet up. Some Bodhisattvas feel a great deal of responsibility for their chosen charges, smoothing their transitions into new thoughts, relationships or lifestyles. Others adhere to the “throw them into the deep end” method of inspiring change, and may even take what most Lost would consider unethical or even abusive actions in order to ensure that their targets have little choice but to buck convention and move in a new direction.

**Titles:** Bodhisattva, Agent of Change, Succubus/Incubus (intended as offensive, but rarely taken that way)

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 2, Wits 3, Fleeting Spring – Cupid’s Eye (•), Spring Court only

**Mien:** The Bodhisattvas are all about change, progress and evolution, and their mien reflects that in a tangible, if disturbing manner. A Bodhisattva’s appearance constantly, but subtly, shifts. These changes are uncontrollable and can, over time, result in significant changes to the Bodhisattva’s appearance, although the changeling’s current visage always seems natural and somehow “right” to them. Eye color, hair color and texture, skin tones, facial features, body shape, stature and vocal timber can all shift, although the changes are rarely enough to fool those who see the changeling on any sort of regular basis.

Some Bodhisattva have been known, over time, to gradually shift physical forms from male to female or vice versa, although this change takes a matter of months or years during which the Bodhisattva manifests androgynous features (neither strongly male or female) or hermaphroditic ones (both male and female, such as a feminine shape but masculine facial hair). The Bodhisattva have no control over these changes of appearance, and they cannot be guided to mimic the looks of another, nor are they fast enough to serve as a disguise to aid the Succubus in hiding from those who are seeking her out. (No bonus to disguise or deception is given by virtue of these changes.) These changes do not affect the Mask.

The one feature which does not change, and is considered by some to be the true mien of the Bo-



dhisattva (with the shifting of features being merely an affectation) is a golden glowing aura which emanates from them. This light does not affect Darklings as the sun's light does, but it is enough to serve as a subtle source of illumination in darkness (or to make it difficult for them to hide in shadowy environs.)

**Background:** Not all entitlements have histories which trace back into the annals of time. Although some assume by virtue of the name that the entitlement began somewhere in Asia centuries ago, in truth the advent was much more recent. In the late 1950s, a Beat Generation author used the term Bodhisattva in a book which detailed the main character breaking out of a mundane existence with the aid of a mentor who showed him a world of possibilities beyond those he had previously considered. Although the story never received great critical acclaim, it became a cult classic among the Spring Court during the early 1960s; courtiers read a great deal of significance into what they believed was the novel's intended meaning. Stylizing themselves after the story's mentors, the first Bodhisattvas dedicated themselves to a common purpose and set out to drive a culturally repressed generation of youth into action and thought previously unheard of at the time.

Social change, however, has a way of becoming the norm, and within a decade the formerly-unheard-of was nearly mainstream, with an entire sub-culture flocking to the "beatnik" way of thinking and living not because it was true for them, but because it had become the social expectation among their peers. Some among the original Bodhisattvas chose to continue to drive the subculture, pushing trend-setters and free-thinkers among the population to continue to push the boundaries, traditions and social mores the generation had begun to establish for itself. Others branched out in other directions, choosing new segments of Lost or human populations to challenge in what they believe to be positive ways.

Bodhisattvas can manifest as elitist-yet-cut-throat social bullies who apply everything from peer pressure to outright threats or physical mayhem to guide others in the directions they believe will improve them and push them out of stagnation. They can just as take the role of inspiration and muse, however, encouraging growth and transformation through subtle manipulation or emotional bribery. Some Bodhisattvas remain aloof from attempts to actively manipulate others, serving as a force of change only by the nigh-unattainable ideal they set in their daily lives and the example they act as, trusting that others will follow.

## *Pledges and the Agents of Change*

It is abhorrent to most Bodhisattva to enter into a pledge which hampers their freedom in any way for any length of time. While pledges are sometimes used when a goal cannot be accomplished any other way, Bodhisattvas will go out of their way to craft vows with the shortest possible obligation on their part, preferring great immediate sacrifice over even minor lengthy constriction on their actions. This makes some actions (like Motley or Freehold Pledges) very difficult to maintain. Any Bodhisattva who is placed in a situation where her Desire runs contrary to an established pledge must make a successful Resolve + Composure roll to avoid choosing to break the pledge.

Other Lost are unlikely to cut a Bodhisattva any slack for breaking pledges based on their unique philosophical views as a group, and the Wyrd certainly will afford the oath-breaker no extra leeway for following her whim over her word.

Because of the entitlement's reputation as flighty, gaining Court Goodwill with other Courts is difficult for the Bodhisattvas. Court Goodwill gained after joining the Bodhisattvas of the Broken Cage costs 3 experience points per new dot level rather than two.

**Organization:** The social structure of the Bodhisattvas doesn't just mirror that of the Spring Court; it is the super-charged, ultra-refined, razor-edge version thereof. There is no stagnation within the entitlement, nothing so slow-paced or rigid as rank or hierarchy. While most of the Bodhisattvas believe themselves to be a vital source of change and growth, they are still of the Emerald Court, and social politics runs through their veins.

In truth, gatherings of the Bodhisattvas are rare. Many are more comfortable in the company of those they are trying to influence and encourage than among their fellow Agents of Change. Some claim this is simply a natural reaction to their constant struggle for social change, while others say that Agents simply can't be comfortable around anyone whom their inherent privilege doesn't give them at least the hope of a social leg-up on.

## PRIVILEGES

The following token is given to new members of the Bodhisattva by an established member upon being recognized as a member of the entitlement. It is not given lightly, as by welcoming a new member into the group the Diva has just lost an individual over which he (or other members of the entitlement) may wield his own supernatural edge. As such, the Bodhisattvas comprise one of the smallest and most elite entitlements in existence. They prefer it that way and rarely pass up an opportunity to remind those of other entitlements of their exclusivity.

### Sprung Door (••)

This token takes the form of some variation of a broken door. The stereotypical manifestation (if any such thing can be said to exist) is a tiny golden birdcage with a sprung door. Other symbols used might include a miniature cottage with a door hanging loosely from its hinges or a small castle with the gates battered open. Regardless of the specific symbol, the token is normally crafted in the form of a piece of jewelry (pendant, earring, brooch or bracelet charm), although it can also take the form of a piece of clothing like a batik scarf, embroidered sash or elaborately painted biker's jacket.

While the gifting of the token from one Bodhisattva to a new member is an important symbolic invitation into the entitlement, the exact cage gifted does not have to be the one empowered to become the token, allowing a new recruit to create (or commission) a piece which suits her own individual style. Likewise, as the token is a symbol of the Bodhisattva's membership, should it be stolen or destroyed (or simply become passé) the owner can spend a point of Glamour to disinvest her connection with the old symbol and a point of Willpower to connect herself with a new piece that takes on the qualities of the Sprung Door. Only one token of this kind can be associated with any given character at a time, although some pride themselves in rotating through various manifestations of their token at a rather amazing rate.

The Sprung Door's power is useable on any human or Lost who is not a member of the Bodhisattvas. It gives a +3 dice to any Social challenge involving an attempt to get the subject to thwart social mores, break out of established habits or comfortable patterns, or try new things. This might be as minor as trying a new restaurant, talking to an interesting stranger or changing their clothing or hair color, or as major as quitting

their job, cheating on their spouse or breaking a religious vow or pledge.

If the Bodhisattva has successfully used Cupid's Eye to determine that the course of action she is attempting to influence the subject into is something that he truly desires to do, she receives an additional +2 dice to the above Social challenge.

**Drawback:** On fellow members of the entitlement, any Agent of Change suffers from a -2 penalty to any active Presence or Manipulation challenges (this penalty affects only the character attempting the action, not the defending Bodhisattva.) This disadvantage occurs regardless of whether the Bodhisattva was attempting to use the Token or not, and happens even if the Token is not present (or if the Bodhisattva has temporarily divested herself of the Token altogether).

### *Rumors of the Bodhisattva of the Broken Cage*

- Each year the Bodhisattvas have a contest. The winner is the individual who has influenced the most outlandish, least logical or practical trend to be followed by humanity for that year. Past winners include the Bodhisattva who spawned forth pet rocks, shoes with living goldfish in the heels and a series of collectable card games that lured some players into seeing as solid financial investments.

- There's no rhyme or reason to the ways of the Cagers. They claim they're trying to guide society in ways that will keep it from stagnating, but sometimes they just want to see how far they can go before someone stops following them.

- Fifty or sixty years back, there was another Entitlement just like the Bodhisattvas. They tried to take over the entirety of the Spring Court, claiming that the rest of the Antler Crown was just a bunch of mindless sheep that didn't deserve the freedom of choice if they weren't going to use it. It almost worked, too. But then one night, something hunted down each and every one of them, and the entitlement was decimated overnight. Even now, the old entitlement's name is never spoken.



# The Summer Court

*I'm the tusk and bristle of a pissed-off boar. I'm the solar flares leaping off an unforgiving sun. I'm hot blood in tight veins, a heart like a fist pounding on the breastbone that traps it, and teeth gritting so hard that they crack and snap. I'm a champion of the Summer Court, and the Summer Court is champion of all.*

In Philadelphia, a red-clad gang of Summer brutes blows a hole through a door with a shotgun, raiding a nest of dream-eating loyalists. In Anchorage, the Wrathful King enjoys the long days and mild sun, rocking on a chair and sharpening his axe, knowing that the time will soon come when he must use it against his cold-hearted enemies. In the Hedge, an army of the furious marches down Minister Viburnum's cobbleglass trod, the soldiers hungry to kill whatever steps in their way with the iron-tipped spears held firmly in hand.

The Summer Court wears many faces, all of them angry. Some focus their anger and wrath, funneling it into actions of justice and defense. They protect the freehold, taking up arms against Keeper incursions, loyalist pigs, slaving hobgoblins, and whatever other threats wait in nightmare and shadow. They protect humans, too; the aimless and ignorant masses sometimes need a hand to walk them through tough times or a fist to knock the teeth out of bullies and abusers. They don't punish needlessly. Justice is fair, given some semblance of balance. Everybody gets a shot, even the vilest loyalist or lunatic (though they are, of course, shackled to the strictest pledges if they want to keep their heads). In such places, wrath has been leashed. It has been made to serve, like a loyal hound.

It's not like that everywhere. Wrath, like the heat of the worst summer, sometimes burns out of control.

It consumes the hearts of those who espouse it, and in these freeholds the Court of Wrath earns its name as a brute squad of blood-streaked berserkers, a frothing army driven by callous revenge. In other cities, the wrath turns cold, as frigid as the tears frozen to the cheeks of any Winter courtier. When revenge grows icy, the Summer courtiers become soulless automatons, marching to the beat of an autocratic hunt. Oppression, surveillance, and dictatorship rule the day. Justice is found at the merciless stroke of a sword, the emotionless face staring down the sights of an M1 Garand rifle.

No matter how it wears its mask of anger, the Summer Court has a place in every freehold. The Lords and Ladies of the True Fae do not comprehend the flow of time, the rising of the summer sun, the lengthening of the days, the cool nights of waning August. This anger, sworn to under pennons of war and justice, keeps trouble at the freehold's borders. Remember, every doorway is a potential breach into the Hedge. All changelings have a spark of their Keepers lurking in the chambers of their vibrant hearts. Every misstep might call the Others, might lead to a line of Lost with chains around their necks marching back to the lands of nightmare and honey. Who will protect the city? Who will put a boot on the necks of the enemy? If the Summer Court is without power, the freehold's adversaries gain courage. When they gain courage, all may fall.

## RECRUITMENT

The poster hanging on the wall might as well read: *The Iron Spear Wants You!* The Summer Court desires recruits. An army is nothing without soldiers,



a kingdom little more than a lunatic on a throne if he has no knights to serve his needs. In most freeholds, the Summer Court cleaves to the notion that *any and all* changelings belong in its ranks. Anybody can be made into a proper soldier. Sometimes it takes some hammering, sure. Some Lost need words of encouragement, a foot in the ass, or castigation in front of one's superiors, but most Summer courtiers accept that everybody's got that "switch" inside. You just need to know how to flip it. When you do, it opens the door to anger. After that, all a potential recruit needs is discipline. Certainly some freeholds are home to overly picky Crimson courtiers who view membership within their ranks as so laudable that only a few "deserve" such esteem. But this is usually in freeholds where Summer doesn't have a strong presence, and the Court becomes little more than a gentleman's club talking adventure over beers and blunderbusses.

It's easy to assume that the Summer Court wants changelings who can fight. That's true, to a point: it helps to be able to swing a wrench or pull a trigger. But the reality is that the Court has many needs. Even shitty pig iron can be turned from scrap into a weapon or tool. Even the dullest rock can smash a head or break a window. Anybody can fight; not everybody can *think*. The Court needs strategists, game players who can plan a proper defense or who can draw up designs to rig traps or bullet-belching siege engines. The Court needs politicians, too, savvy serpent-tongued generals who can interface with the rulers (be they noble idiots or idiot nobles) of the other Courts. The Court needs mystics, those doe-eyed strangers who can go into the Hedge and come out with oddment seeds to fill in the tips of hollow-point bullets (blasting the unmerciful hell out of any True Fae who mistakenly comes near) or gather life-saving pomegranates and apples.

And if a changeling isn't any of those things, well... the Court needs people to stand by and guard doors, too. They need Lost willing to march on the front lines and maybe accept the first arrow in the eye. The King needs his shot of bourbon. Again, everybody can serve a role.

Summer Court generally does quite a bit of canvassing when it sees the possibility to bring aboard new recruits. If they catch a whiff of one who's fresh out of the Thorns, then that's perfect, isn't it? Desperate to claw her way back home, skin still crisp with scratched scars, that changeling is likely to have lots of fury and confusion inside her head. Summer can draw it out, either whipping those elements up into

a mad frenzy or shaping it into a focused point (like the tip of a rapier). The Iron Spear has a lot of value to the wet-behind-the-ears changeling. Want to strike back at your captors? Want to burn those mad Thorns to the ground? Want to jab a stick in the eye of those gibbering hobgoblins that harried you to the Hedge gate? The Summer Court awaits, scarred arms open, callused hands waiting.

Sometimes, this open recruiting works well when done with a deft hand. The Queen might learn about a potential recruit and send an appropriate representative. Does a courtier among her ranks perhaps share a Keeper with the neophyte? Did they endure similar experiences? Maybe it's a simpler commonality: both have antlers, both were college students, both grew up on the same street. It helps a new recruit feel comfortable. Helps to make her feel like she has a place within the Crimson Court.

The hand isn't always that deft, though. Some recruiters are bullies or lunatics, trying to cajole or threaten a changeling into joining the brutish ranks. Others are downright cruel, tormenting them just like the Keepers might have, threatening family and friends if the changeling doesn't join. Sometimes this works, but it ensures that the Court is filled with either resentful changelings or changelings pushed so far to the brink that they become just like the bullies who recruited them.

## IDEALS OF SUN AND SONG

What face does the Summer Court put forth? What ideals does it hold to — or, at least, claim to hold to — when canvassing potential recruits?

**Brotherhood:** It's a bit like a fraternity or sorority. The Iron Spear claims to be all for one, one for all. They provide backup. They provide support. Its members celebrate the successes of all courtiers and form a unified defense against the politicking of the other "noble" Lost. It's true, most of the time. The brotherhood breaks down in some freeholds, though, with individual interests taking paramount importance. At least most Summer Courtiers stab you in the front, though, and not the back. Thus goes the kindness of a brother.

**Combat:** Want to learn how to fight? The Summer Court will show a changeling how. Lots of Lost have anger in their hearts, and that anger can be directed toward some degree of martial prowess. Everybody has two fists. Everybody can swing a baseball bat. It doesn't take much to be able to bring a hurting down on somebody, and the Iron Spear can help.

**Defense:** Not every changeling in Faerie was the victim of abuse: some were drugged with beauty or formed into callous knights with only the barest memory of once being a good person. But the Summer Court will have you believe that every changeling was used, abused, tormented and violated during their captivities, and that the Crimson courtiers are the ones who stand in the way of that happening again. That's a broad brush they paint with, as they put themselves as the defenders of innocents both mortal and changeling (and hell, some even claim to defend animals as PETA-style extremists). A big kid pushes another kid on the playground and breaks his arm. An adult molests a child. A cop kicks in the teeth of the falsely accused. A changeling suffers social slings and arrows from a cruel Spring Court heartbreaker or takes a fist from a monstrous Autumn Ogre. In all these situations, the Summer Court claims to be the one standing between the monsters and the innocents. Sometimes this is true. Other times the Iron Spear courtiers *are* the monsters, and they just don't see it.

**Competition:** Sharks have to swim forward or they drown. Males must compete for the breeding rights of the best-bred females. Men compete to win accolades in the form of gold medals around their necks and having legends spoken about them. Competition is healthy, so says the Summer courtiers; it's not a thing to be feared. Most of their rituals and holidays offer some semblance of competition: bizarre Hedge Olympics, brawling matches, chess games, paintball, target shooting, jousting, whatever. The Summer Court knows that survival is on the line and Charles Darwin pegged it: only the fit survive. Competition reveals who is fit and who won't survive. In some freeholds this separates the wheat from the chaff and tells the King who needs to get booted out on their ass. In other "kinder" Court institutions, it shows who deserves training and teaching.

**Greater Good:** The Iron Spear knows that its actions are not always easy or, well, *moral*. It's a hard row to hoe. Sometimes they have to kill. They get their hands dirty. They go into the nooks and crannies of the darkest parts of the Hedge to rout the freehold's enemies. Hard choices abound, but these courtiers make them daily. Why? The Summer Court is profoundly utilitarian. The freehold's safety is paramount. Humanity must be kept secure. Sometimes, one changeling or human must die to protect the rest. Sometimes one's privacy or rights must be cast to the wind so that the strength of the whole remains unbroken. The Summer Court isn't about helping individuals. It's about help-

ing *everybody*, at least in theory (some freeholds retain Summer courtiers who are fat-bellied braggadocios who wouldn't know a hard choice if it bit them).

**Revenge:** This one's simple: the Summer Court offers a change at revenge. Hate your Keeper? Loathe the Autumn witch who tricked you into swearing a pledge to serve her for a year and a day? Find your fetch a gross aberration? The Summer Court will help a changeling gain her vindication. They'll put a sword or a gun in her hand. They'll show her how to use it. And they'll be there to back her up.

## WHISPERS KEPT QUIET

It isn't all honor and nobility and good soldier boys in the Summer Court. Not everything smells of roses, and they like to keep the stink down when it comes to bringing neophyte recruits on board.

**Brutality:** Violence is a living thing. Some liken it to a worm that burrows in your heart or a wolf that lives in your ribcage. It takes control. It muddles one's clarity. Inevitably, some changelings of the Summer Court grow scabs over their noble ideals and give in to brutality. They don't just save the princess from the Ogre: they break his knees, cut off his ears, rub his face in the muck. Maybe they let him die, finally. Maybe they curse him to a life deformed.

**Sacrifice:** This is related to the "hard choices for the greater good" idea, but it's easier to think of the greater good than the personal sacrifice. Many Summer courtiers sacrifice mightily: they lose loved ones, can't pay bills, shut out family and friends. The worst sacrifice of them all is perhaps their innocence and clarity. The pursuit of vengeance and justice takes a wretched toll.

**Struggle:** They don't like to make this clear up front, but the struggle for prominence and status within the Court is a toothy bitch. They don't make the climb up the ladder easy in most freeholds. Every rung, someone's kicking you in the face or coating the ladder with slick blood so you fall back to the ground. Those above the untested worked their tails off to get where they are, and have little interest in letting the younger set surmount them. The competition for status is thick. The hazing is, at times, unbearable.

## COURT ORGANIZATION

In most freeholds, the Summer Court claims to be largely apolitical: it's an order based on need, an army formed of the worthy, a true *meritocracy*. It's bullshit, of course. Some believe it. And many instances of the

## Tests of Wrath and Righteousness

Some freeholds still put potential recruits through trials of skill and hardship to determine their value within the Court. What follows are three particular trials taken from various freeholds across the world:

- The courtiers take a “new recruit” and drop him off in the middle of nowhere (usually the wilderness, but can be a dangerous point in the Hedge) and hands him nothing but an auroch’s horn. How long before the recruit sounds the horn and calls for help from the hidden courtiers? How long can he survive on his own before he cannot survive any longer without help? The Court has lost more than one novitiate in this way, usually to some mad hobgoblin or reclaiming Keeper. (Of course, it’s also good *bait* for such adversaries, provided the recruit sounds the horn in time.)

- The Summer Court openly rejects the recruit, sometimes publicly. When the recruit least expects it, they send attackers to rough him up. They measure not only his martial ability, but also his zeal to survive when he might not have anything to fight with outside of his hands, feet, and maybe an umbrella or briefcase. This can go awry, of course. More than once, the recruit’s skills were better than expected and a masked courtier was sent home with broken bones or sent to the morgue with a sucking chest wound.

- In most freeholds, the Iron Spear asks that its courtiers eliminate their fetches. Fetches are a distraction, a link to the Gentry, and generally work against their counterpart Lost. In this trial, the changeling is locked in a room with his fetch (who the courtiers capture beforehand, of course). Sometimes, he’s given a weapon, whether a revolver with one bullet or a shiv made out of a sharpened toothbrush. Sometimes he’s left with his own bare hands. The goal is sometimes spoken, sometimes not: *kill the fetch*. If he’s unwilling, unable, or gets killed himself... does he really belong in the ranks of the raging?

Iron Spear are *less* political than the other seasonal counterparts. But politicking lives in the Crimson Court, vibrant and angry, often backed up with a hand on a sword hilt or a Glock barrel pressed against the small of one’s back.

## THE CROWN APPEARS

In the shadowy tangle of streets and alleys in modern Rome, the Summer Imperatrix leads a crisply-trained motley of soldiers after some Hedge-born thing with its bones on the outside of its skin. On a deserted playground in DC, a grim-jawed once-schoolteacher grits his teeth as a searing king’s crown of spear-tips appears on his head, calling him to duty. Lying in the jungle mud some miles from Bangkok, His Great Majesty Loto looks down at the flies alighting upon the wide gash in his guts, and he knows that his stolen crown will soon fade with the beating of his heart.

How is a king chosen in the Summer Court? How is the king made? (It’s worth mentioning here that while “king” is a distinctly male term, the courtiers of Wrath have just as many queens as they do kings in their domains; strength is strength regardless of gender.) For the most part, leaders simply emerge. Think of it like voting with belief, voting with one’s spirit: when the freehold’s Summer courtiers collectively think of one among them as the ruler, that changeling manifests the crown.

It doesn’t *always* work like that, of course; while belief is certainly important, sometimes a crown appears on the head of a king who doesn’t have the support of the people or who may not even be on the *radar*. (Some rumors persist that from time to time, a Summer crown appears on the head of Lost from other Courts; a certain impossibility, but in any freehold the impossible often denies its own unlikely nature and becomes quite possible, thank you very much.) The courtiers respond differently to this depending on the tenor of the local Crimson Court. Some see this as destiny, and make a king out of that changeling chosen by the crown. Others see it as a test and murder the offending imposter. After all, one cannot be king (false or not) when one is dead.

Another oft-unspoken manner of attaining the crown is a military coup. Almost universally, he who deals the killing blow on an existing king gains the crown, at least for a one season. In this way, a Summer Court can be ruled by a callous despot — but that despot only has the remainder of the true Summer season to maintain his authority. Come the following Summer, if he has not convinced the hearts of the courtiers

(or intimidated them, at least) of his ability to rule, then the crown is no longer his to claim. Unless, of course, he opts to assassinate the new king...

### *The Diadem*

The Diadem, or crown, of the Summer Court is not one thing, despite what some might say. It appears as part of the Mantle and cannot be removed; it is supernaturally part of the mien, bound to the Lost's very nature. Some are simple: a red headband or bandana, a single silk strip with a dangling jewel, a tattoo. Others are complex: an iron band with spear-tips encircling it, a shimmering wisp of heat vapor smoldering steam or smoke, an elaborate tower of summer blooms such as those of the crepe myrtle or bleeding heart.

### ESTEEM OF MOB AND ARMY

Status isn't freely given in the Summer Court. In most cases, it cannot be bought; it cannot be claimed without merit. No, status is *earned* — often inch by bloody inch, with snapped fingernails and chipped teeth, with battered bruises and broken blood vessels.

It's true, in a way, that the Summer Court represents a meritocracy, but that doesn't mean those higher up in the chain care to give it freely. It's a cruel circle, actually. Those atop the chain of authority had to struggle mightily to get where they are, put through paces by their once-betters. Uneasy at the idea of relinquishing their hard-gained power, they tend to make the climb up the ladder just as hard — if not harder — than they themselves had it.

It's why some courtiers are content to remain low soldiers or support members of the Court: they just don't care to run that gauntlet. Those that do, however, are said to suffer the Tribulum: an old threshing device consisting of a wooden framework with flinted teeth, then dragged by oxen over grain. Some suggest that this is pretty much what the courtiers of Wrath go through, though whether they're the tooth-threshed grain or the rickety tool dragged by animals remains to be seen.

Status is thus gained through various trials and tests. Nobody offers the opportunity to take such tests to a changeling (unless the queen takes a shine toward an up-and-coming courtier). The changeling must ask to undergo such a test. Usually, he has to entreat the king himself to earn the opportunity.

Tests are never easy. They might seem so at the outset, for instance, "play a game of chess" doesn't sound too awful. But it's often so much more than how it's initially described. The changeling might have to play chess and win over and over again over the course of three days, not being allowed sleep or to eat during that time. Or perhaps the match takes place while other Crimson Courtiers pelt him with stones or paintballs (and if a stone knocks off one of his key pieces, such is the bitter whimsy of fate).

Some tests are physical rather than mental: a precarious duel atop a water tower, a task to bring back seven heads of dreaded Hedge beasts or a command to quaff a draught of poison and survive. Some such tests exploit the weaknesses and fears of the changeling going through the Tribulum: as the changeling fights for his life against an automaton made of praying mantises, those knights above him in station attempt to exploit known frailties (throwing taboos in his path, or flinging his bane headlong into the fray; perhaps the poor changeling cannot cross a line of gunpowder or is a Swimmerskin whose skin is seared by salt or sand).

Rarely are tests social. While the Summer Court has its social aspects, they are not important to success in most instances. Sometimes a tightly-run ship might demand some tests of manners or decorum, but otherwise it matters little how well once dances or navigates the forked-tongue improprieties favored by the other Courts.

Of course, status and Mantle are not intimately connected. They *can* be; as one grows in social status within the Court, it's possible that one's Mantle increases in equal measure. Mantle, though, is ultimately a supernatural connection with the ideals of the Court. Growth of one's Summer-fed mien (heat vapor like off a hot road, skin like sun-baked clay, eyes flashing with summer storms, hair turned to dead grass) is bound more to those actions that fulfill the Court's emotions and principles.

Some changelings strive to increase their Mantle. For others, though, it happens naturally as a result of their actions. A crusade of violence against those who wronged a changeling might earn her an increase in Mantle. Standing constant vigil at a treacherous Hedge gate — and earning the traumas and scars from those things that emerge — may cause one's Mantle to "flare." Crossing a hot desert to kill a traitor? Forging a new weapon whose sole purpose is to behead one's Keeper? Binding one's fists in biting fire-thorns to help stoke the anger deep inside? All of these are good ways to see a Summer Mantle emerge and deepen.

### *Goblin Fruit: Flower-Of-One-Hour*

Flower-Of-One-Hour, also called Tiger Mallow, is a weedy hibiscus that grows rampant in hotter, more humid parts of the Hedge. The blooms look first like thistles before unfolding swiftly and unfurling velveteen petals of impossible black. The bloom's pistil and stamen are fierce orange: the color of the sun or a tiger's fur.

The flower only blooms for a single hour a day, but not the *same* hour each day. To harness the properties of Tiger Mallow, a changeling must brew it into a tea during its blooming time; if the changeling drinks the tea after this hour has passed, the tea tastes of bitter licorice and chills the bones. If consumed during the proper time, however, the tea fills the drinker with warmth both literal and figurative: tender, sunburned skin paired with a fiery passion (or sometimes an uncontrollable rage). For the next hour, the changeling may trade points of Resolve to either Strength or Stamina. If she moves more than two dots in this manner, however, she burns out after the hour is completed. Burning out means the character feels empty, exhausted, even occasionally confused. She must immediately sleep for eight hours or suffer a -3 penalty to all dice rolls until she does.

One final permutation: these effects only apply to those who possess dots in Summer Mantle. Tea brewed from Flower-Of-One-Hour has no effect on those possessing Mantle from other seasons beyond its taste.

## THE AMITY OF ANGER

How can a changeling earn dots of Court Goodwill? What impresses the Crimson Court? They might dismiss some opium-addled Spring Mirrorskin until that Darkling steps onto the muddy field of battle and shakes off his haze long enough to cut the hands off of a press-gang of treacherous militia-men. If that act saved the hide of some Wrathful courtier, Goodwill might be earned.

It's almost universally earned through some action on the battlefield or in favor of war. Those willing to leave the safety of their own Court long enough to help the courtiers of Summer put down some encroaching

menace (a mob of allied fetches, a Keeper riding some many-faced chimera, a rolling fog whose beating heart is a soul-sucking wisp) are sure to earn a dot or two. A changeling has other ways of earning those dots, though. Voting in favor of the Crimson Court's political ideals is a good way, given that the Summer Court often demands things that necessitate hard and unpleasant choices. Aiding the Court's endeavors in a support mode (providing a safe house, offering medical support in the form of first aid or goblin fruits, parlaying clandestine information) will do the trick. Of course, even these modes of support are ultimately meant to help the Summer Court win the war, or at least one battle.

What does Court Goodwill grant a stranger to Summer? It gives them an opinion. It gives them a voice among the Crimson courtiers. They don't exactly get a political say, but it does earn them the right to agree or disagree with the Summer Court's burgeoning battle plans. Those in Summer are careful not to give outsiders too much power, however; one ill-trusted seed can grow into a choking vine. Summer courtiers are often paranoid about outsider influence, about treachery from within. It's for this reason that in many freeholds you won't find changelings with more than three dots in Court Goodwill with Summer; though, it can go both ways. Sometimes, the Summer courtiers are ultimately *too* trusting, green to the callous maneuvering and expected backstabbing of the other Courts. Consider the Freehold of Fog and Bay in San Francisco: naïve King Justice Johns of the Presidio failed to recognize the snake in his midst, an Autumn Court witch he counted upon as both his right-hand advisor and his only lover. On behalf of her own Court she stole back the coveted Horn of Plenty and left Justice with such a broken heart that he leapt off the Golden Gate Bridge (though many say he did not die, but was snatched away by hands of fog). Current King Tom-of-the-Grotto is, as a result, paranoid of outsiders, certain that they wish to worry away at Summer's own flagging power base.

## TITLES IN CRIMSON

What follows are some of the titles that carry from Summer Court to Summer Court; these titles are *generally* universal, and often (but not always) tied to one's dots in the Mantle (Summer) Merit. Sometimes the title is different in various parts of the globe, but the role itself remains the same.

Where appropriate, dots in Mantle are listed with each title. These dots are the minimum necessary; it's possible, for instance, for a changeling with one dot in Mantle (Summer) to still be a Sentry of Summer's Vigil,

but it's not possible for a changeling with one dot in Mantle (Summer) to become a Constable of Calefaction.

Also listed are alternate titles for each role.

### Sentry of Summer's Vigil

Also known as a "Yard Bull," the Summer Court often includes several Sentries within its ranks. Sentries are little more than guards, bouncers, and bodyguards. Prized for physical ability over anything mental, the only requirements for the role is to either be able to hit something or to *appear* as if one can hit something. Seen largely as disposable and lacking anything resembling wits (regardless of the reality), Sentries rarely find themselves treated well. That said, it is a viable stepping stone to other, greater roles within the Iron Spear. Performing some heroic measure while on duty is a way to stand out. Making casual "suggestions" to the royal a Sentry is supposed to be guarding is most certainly not.

### Mule Squire

It comes down to this: carry this pack, push this broom, park this car, bury this body. The Mule Squire (or simply "the Mule") gets all the shit work. Mules are essentially non-people, treated like valets at best, three-legged dogs at worst. Unlike with the role of Sentry, nobody expects a Mule Squire to ascend the ranks. It's a role that falls to what the higher-ups believe to be those who have already reached their peak: some dumb-fuck Gristlegrinder or crazy Swimmerskin. It might very well be a false assumption, and a Mule who proves himself is notable, indeed, but the assumption exists regardless.

### Dust Grunt / Mud Grunt

The role of Dust Grunt or Mud Grunt ("dust" chosen in areas of Summer drought, "mud" chosen in areas where monsoons or hurricanes make it very wet) is that of a foot soldier for the Summer Court. Some martial ability is necessary, as is a willingness to step to the front of the line and suffer the slings and arrows of whatever hobgoblin, Loyalist or Keeper waits behind that ring of Thorns. The one thing that clearly separates a Grunt from the Men-At-Arms (the "Knights") is that a Grunt must supply his own weaponry and armor. The Court does not provide. This means that some Grunts enter the streets and trods of battle armed with nice pistols and extra clips, while others barrel forward holding little more than shovels and baseball bats.

### Constable of Calefaction (Mantle ••)

Also known as simply "The Calefactor" or "The Watch," the Constable acts as the name suggests: a

sheriff, an investigator, a keeper of the peace. In most freeholds, the Constable acts as such only among the changelings within the Summer Court. Recognizing that Crimson Courtiers often suffer from volatile moods and can give in to vengeful or rowdy urges, the Constable is there largely to police his own. That said, in cities where the season lasts longer than expected (Miami, for instance), the Calefactor may well police the changelings of all Courts. A good Constable must be prepared not only to enforce the peace, but to investigate crimes whenever necessary. Even the best policing skills don't make it easy to dust a scene of blood and Hedge thorns for fingerprints, though...

### Man-At-Arms (Mantle ••)

The title "Man-At-Arms" isn't particularly inventive, but the Summer Court doesn't always go in for flashy names when something simple tells the story. Still, these soldiers and knights of the Court sometimes refer to themselves as the "Crimson Knights" or "Crimson Brotherhood." The Men-At-Arms of the Summer Court are better trained and better equipped than their Grunt brothers and sisters. They do not have to supply their own equipment (mundane stuff, at least), and are not first on the line in a fight. They're the ones that hold back. It's not a Knight's job to pick off the lesser soldiers; they're the ones who go in against enemies with skill, foes with better weapons and bad tricks. The Grunts go in and soften up the adversary. Then the Knights wade into the fray, gritting their teeth and stepping over the (hopefully not lifeless) bodies of their fallen comrades.

### The Sun's Tongue (Mantle •••)

The Sun's Tongue (or, in the archaic, "The Song Sung by the Sun's Told Tongue") is a diplomat and plenipotentiary within the Crimson Court. It's a far-from-glorious position, often dismissed by those more physical members of the Court as being nothing more than an excuse to attend "social hour" with the other Courts. As the only truly social role within the Iron Spear, though, acting as diplomat can be quite valuable *and* pretty damn dangerous. Negotiating terms with the other Courts is dangerous; at least those marching onto the battlefield can see their opponents. The Sun's Tongue is left walking over a well-hidden minefield of social foibles and *faux pas*, where one who seems a friend is actually trying to sell your beating heart to a cat-faced goblin at the Mackerel Market just beyond the Hedge door. It's a thankless position in most freeholds, though a wise ruler knows to reward his diplomat well.



### **Arrayer of Distant Thunder (Mantle ●●●)**

An arrayer is said to have a “commission of array,” meaning that he can canvass the freehold’s inhabitants — anybody from the loftiest Spring Court socialite to the lowliest ensorcelled — to drum them up for war. As the storm approaches (be it metaphorical or literal), the Arrayer’s job is to draft those outside the Summer Court to fight. It’s not always necessary, of course; sometimes the Crimson Court can handle a threat easily, though even then the Arrayer must reach out to those in Summer if they’re otherwise hard to reach. But when the threats threaten to overwhelm the Crimson Court (they can’t handle everything, much as they’d like to), the Arrayer is the one who must convince, threaten or cajole others to leap headlong into the fray. Note that in freeholds where the Summer Court is bloated with pride and thinks itself the only one who can truly handle incoming threats, the Arrayer position is quite often empty. They’d not admit the need for such an individual.

### **Hunter of the Longest Day (Mantle ●●●●)**

The Hunter of the Longest Day (sometimes referred to in other countries as simply the *Jager* or *Chasseur*) is something of an esteemed bounty hunter, a proud knight who isn’t valued so much for his prowess in a large fight but is used more as an “elite” tracker and hunter. Many of the freehold’s enemies are not keen on straight fights: Keepers hidden under the cover of night, Loyalists striking from the shadows, fetches and hobgoblins hiding behind keenly-crafted facades. The Hunter is the one who handles such individual threats. He might be required to track down and capture a rogue courtier. He might need to make that Winter Court dissenter “disappear” (exiling her to another city or breaking her tender neck and leaving her body beneath a freshly-poured concrete foundation). Maybe he goes into the Hedge and tracks down that spider-faced hobgoblin that’s been stealing ensorcelled and laying dream-eggs in their sternums. Two things of note about Longest Day Hunters: first, they’re given a token as appreciation, something in the range of one or two dots. Second, they take trophies whether they want to or not. While some suffer a frailty that demands it, it’s actually more something of a social convention; those who fail to showcase trophies can’t be trusted to have truly fulfilled the mandate at hand. A freehold often has a few Hunters on hand.

### **Iron Adjutant (Mantle ●●●●)**

Sometimes known as Auditor, Bailiwick or Seneschal (all with “Iron” preceding the title), this role is actually a rather estimable one within the ranks of the Crimson. The Iron Adjutant’s job is to function as

the right-hand-man to the Court’s royal ruler. While this sounds like a subservient position (and in some freeholds it is), it also means that a lot of the day-to-day administration of Court business is handled by the Adjutant. The Adjutant is the Queen’s proxy; his word is firm. Or, as some say it, “his word is iron.” This ultimately grants the Adjutant a pretty hefty measure of power, especially in freeholds where the king is either uninterested in all the petty details or is addled with age or frailties. The ruler needs to be careful with the Adjutant, though. More than one has grown tired of the abuse and advantage taken, and usurps the throne (perhaps leading a junta against the Queen).

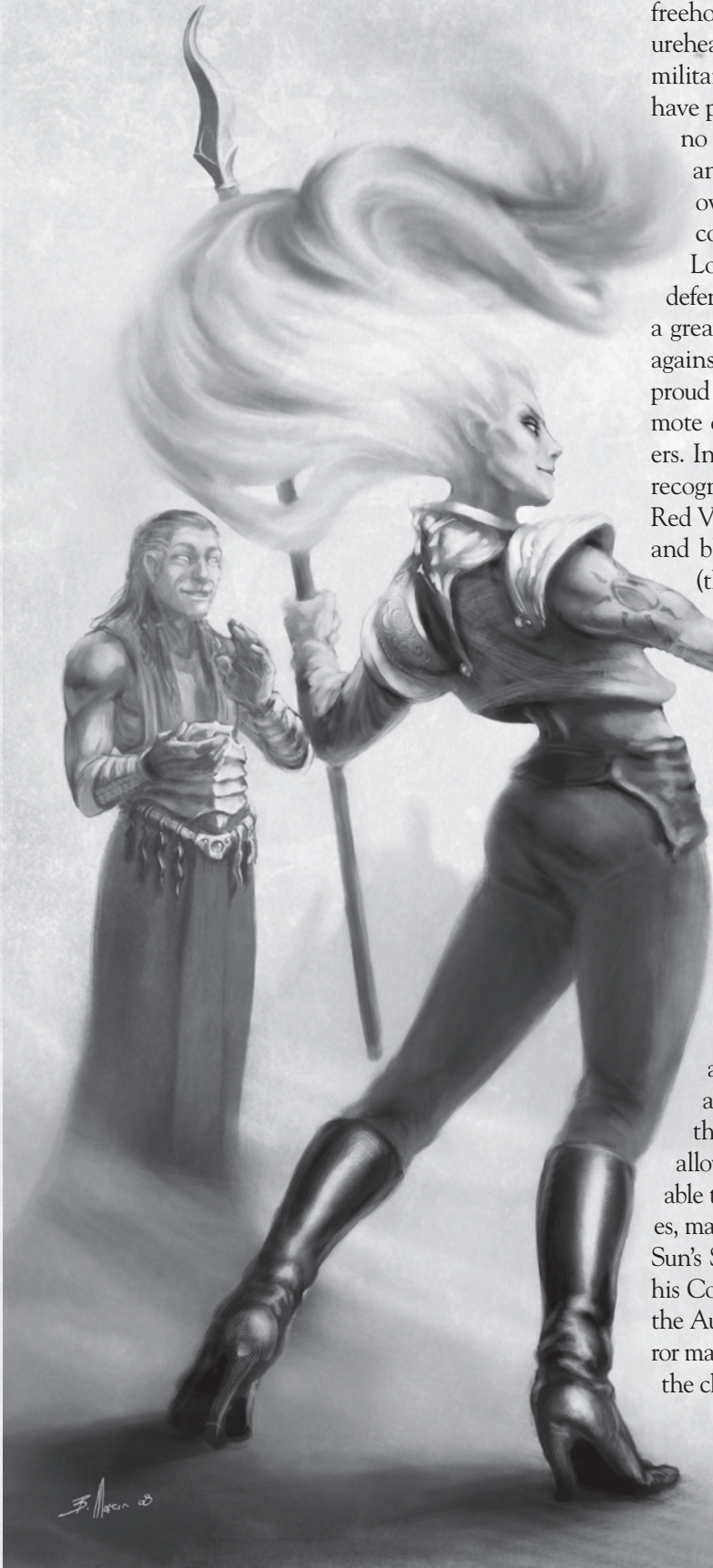
### **Red Victor (Mantle ●●●●●)**

Sometimes, a champion emerges. She’s wreathed in a potent Mantle: her eyes like lens flares, her skin sloughing off wave after wave of heat, steam rising from whatever blade or revolver she holds in her hand. Her accolades are on a list whose end cannot be easily found: a collection of Keeper hands in Mason jars, a chest of mighty Hedge tokens, a herd of changelings rescued from Arcadia (each comprising an adoring fan base), and so on. The Red Victor (or Vanquisher, or Vindicator) had better be ready for the role. The Vikings believed that glory and heroism put one into the written and spoken myths and invoked a kind of immortality, and that’s exactly what the Red Victor gets. She’s loved in this life and remembered long after. She cannot remain quiet or hidden as the champion of the Crimson Court. The King drags her out for every show of strength, to every salon and tournament, to every ceremony and goblin market. She becomes the emblem for the local Summer Court, like it or not. The role does suffer a peculiar downside, although it’s not a downside the Victor herself will ever deal with. If the Red Victor dies, all within the local Court possessing one or more dots in Summer Mantle suffer a loss to morale. This loss is real and supernatural, manifesting as a –1 to *all* rolls for a number of weeks equal to the years the Red Victor held the title of champion. If Ursula Candlefly, Red Victor of the Summer Court perishes, and she held that title for seven years, then the penalty to the Crimson Courtiers lasts for seven weeks (the “mourning” period). This period for some is marked with sadness and tributes. For others, it is a frenzy of sorrow: pulling out hair, scarring the flesh, setting public property aflame.

### **The Wroth General Calescence (Mantle ●●●●●)**

Often known as simply “The General” or “The Calescent,” the changeling who fills this role is some-





times equal to the ruler himself (and in a rare few freeholds, actually has a greater authority than the figurehead king). He is, for all intents and purposes, the military leader of the Crimson Court. The General may have potent prowess with hands, a blade, a rifle, but he's no longer expected to be out there cracking heads and hacking limbs. He's a strategist, prized for mind over body. And some are just that thing: a one-man council of military wisdom, plotting attacks on local Loyalist hollows or arranging the freehold's proper defenses. Others, though, find themselves hungry for a greater slice of power. They see opportunity to move against the other Courts. Such Generals are no longer a proud bull, but the worm inside that bull's heart: a tiny mote of the monstrous amorality gifted by their Keepers. In one freehold, it's said that the only one to have recognized the Calescent's secret machinations was the Red Victor (above), and that the two expired in a brutal and blood-soaked fracas in a high school gymnasium (the gymnasium served as the Crimson Court's "control center" seeing how school was out for... well, the summer).

Regardless of corruption, the Wrath General Calescent is always a figure both feared and respected.

### Sun's Shadow (Court Goodwill ●●●●)

This role is reserved for those outside the Court who have truly earned the respect of the local Crimson Courtiers. Someone with great Court Goodwill is truly worthy of it, whether having helped the king overcome some clandestine problem or having marched into the stormy Hedge with a battalion of Iron Spear soldiers to take the head of a terrible True Fae. The Sun's Shadow is a brother to the courtiers, invited to all the Summer Court events, allowed to use the Mule Squires for his own purposes, able to call upon Iron Spear resources (tokens, safe houses, marked trods) for his own need. In some freeholds, the Sun's Shadow role actually marks a partnership between his Court and the Summer Court. If he's high-up in, say, the Autumn Court, then the Iron Spear and Leaden Mirror may see him as a changeling straddling the two worlds: the chain that connects their alliance.

## WITHIN THE FREEHOLD

What role does the Summer Court play within the



freehold? The Summer Court represents the faction of defense *and* offense within the freehold. If the Lost come under threat from the True Fae, the Crimson Courtiers are there to earn their keep by slaying the dread gentleman or at least by pushing him back to his infernal home. On a broad level, the courtiers go to war en masse, often in the Hedge, against staggering enemies. Thankfully, such large battles are rare and their defense then takes on a more personal level. If a newbie Lost is finding herself plagued by a serial killer fetch, the Summer Court may take down that fetch (thus earning their keep), or may go with the “teach a man to fish” approach and give the changeling the martial skills and courage necessary to face her tormentor (thus earning themselves a potential recruit).

Politically, the Summer Court acts more as a hammer than a rapier, relying more on strength of conviction and actions than on lilting poetry and deft political maneuvering. That’s not to say the Iron Spear fails to have its poets or politicians, but the flavor is a bit different here than in other Courts. The poet is more Homeric, detailing accounts of war and strife, of heroism and defeat. The politico is more the blusterer general, the conservative square-jaw, the shadowy strategist who sees every solution as one necessitating attack, attack, attack.

Ultimately, the Court acts as a “safe harbor.” Feel tormented by forces outside of or within the freehold? Find safety, sanity and sanctity within the open arms of the Crimson Court. Summer has a number of ways it helps to reinforce that feeling.

## CELEBRATIONS AND CEREMONIES

The following represent some of the holidays and rituals put forth by the Summer Court every year. Note that these holidays are all bound to the freehold by contract: the Summer Court is *expected* to perform these events. A failure to perform them can be somewhat disastrous, at least temporarily: for one week after the event was supposed to occur, all within the Summer Court lose the effects of their Mantle. The Mantle’s shift to mien also fades. Of course, this can lead to some other vindictive Courts to try to stop these ceremonies from occurring, forcing the Crimson Courtiers to suffer.

### The Shikar (June 21<sup>st</sup>)

The first day of summer begins and the hunt is on. The Shikar, born from the traditions of royal India, is a hunt shepherded by the ruler of the Summer Court, known in this case as the *Mir-Shikar*. (Though in some freeholds it’s simply referred to as the “Royal

Hunt” and the king or queen is aptly titled “The Master (or Mistress) Hunter.”) The Summer ruler declares one or several targets for the hunt, and the target is almost universally something that has been plaguing the freehold over the past year. Might be a gaggle of itinerant fetches who’ve banded together to make terrorist incursions against the Lost, or maybe it’s a wolf-faced Keeper who’s been making secret trips to the freehold to murder husbands and steal the resultant widows. At dawn that day, the hunt begins, and it does not end until dawn the following day (technically the 22<sup>nd</sup>). The results are simple: capturing and destroying the target allows all who participated to fill their Will-power pools. Failure to destroy the target, however, results in a -2 penalty to all Resolve- or Composure-based dice pools for the subsequent week as a kind of low-grade depression sets in. Worth mentioning is that some freeholds make this less about a target plaguing the freehold and more about individual Summer courtiers hunting down those who have plagued them or shamed them personally (again, a fetch, an abusive ex-lover, a nattering hobgoblin, and so forth). If the Crimson Courtiers manage to destroy the hunt’s target well before the sun-up deadline, they often throw a small party to celebrate the victory.

### Midsummer’s Yield (July 20<sup>th</sup>)

This half-party, half-funeral is open only to Summer Court changelings. At Midsummer, the Crimson Courtiers gather to remember the fallen with real dirges and funerals, and flirt with death through performing their own mock funerals. This all-day affair isn’t just about sorrow: they celebrate their successes, they mock their enemies, they tell jokes (often rich with gallows humor). Some members go into the Hedge and collect all the goblin fruits that they can muster, all of which will be for use in the coming struggles. And at the end of the night is the sacrifice. Two sacrifices, actually: one, a straw man whose face is painted to roughly match that of one of the Court’s persistent enemies; and two, a large mammal (pig, boar, ox, horse, though some regrettably still rely on human sacrifice instead of the sacrifice of a beast). All of this is said to fulfill a contract that earns the Summer Court continued success in their efforts to defend the freehold and rout their enemies. For one week after participating in this event, those of the Iron Spear are able to ignore one die of penalties suffered from loss of Health.

### Feast of Strength (August 31<sup>st</sup>)

It begins with a meal. A big meal. A meal to *end all other meals*. A vast cornucopia of meats, potatoes,

fish, noodles. Things from a grill, from the oven, from the freezer, whatever. This happens as a late lunch. What follows this meal is a championship tournament, a series of physical games to test the participants. Games might be combats — two Lost in a boxing ring, two Lost battling it out on a rotting log over raging rapids. Games sometimes manifest as sporting events: brutal games of football and lacrosse or events performed Olympic style. Competitions go from the simple (throw this stone, whoever throws it the farthest wins) to the complex (hurl these logs up through that window, then climb up the side of the house into the window, and chop those logs into splinters with a camping hatchet, whoever finishes the pile first is the winner). All changelings are invited to participate, though some perhaps accurately declare that it's really just an event where the Iron Spear likes to make an example of the physical prowess held by its courtiers. The effects of competing are fairly straightforward: win a game, gain a Glamour point. Lose a game, lose a Glamour point.

### July at Christmas (December 24<sup>th</sup>)

This Summer Court event, unusual because it does not take place in summer, is thought by some to be a jab at the Winter Court, though most in the Iron Spear simply consider it a way to push past the com-

mon chill of the season. On Christmas Eve, the Crimson Court holds a raucous, violent party. Changelings leap headlong over bonfires. They brand themselves. They drink themselves into fiery rages or slumbering oblivion. The Lost pass around torches or crank the heat if inside. Sometimes, a punk or metal band plays (something fast, angry, and most certainly *loud*). Those who participate (who *really* participate, meaning they've earned at least one bashing damage from the events of the party) gain, upon waking the next day, a number of Glamour points equal to the Summer King's Mantle score. Changelings of the Autumn and Spring Courts are invited. The Winter courtiers are generally not invited unless Summer and Winter have an unusual alliance in that given freehold.

## RELATIONS

How does the Summer Court see or deal with the other Courts or the other denizens of the World of Darkness? While no one answer is truly universal, these are the general relations held by the Iron Spear and, well, everybody else.

## WINTER COURT

Winter courtiers are cowards to the core. Perhaps appropriately, the Summer and Winter Courts are in



dire opposition ideologically as well as meteorological-ly. Hot summer equates with rage, zeal, justice. Cold winter infers grief, silence, the burying of one's head in the sand (or in this case, the snow). Those of the Onyx Court think they can just cling to the shadows or hide under the house in the crawlspace when the Keepers come sniffing, but it doesn't work like that. Sure, the Summer Court finds some nobility in there. They want to be more human. That's fair. Humanity is something to cherish. The Gentry are the inhuman ones, and it's a worthy crusade to be as far from those nightmares as possible. They also serve those who stand and wait. It seems possible. Things get done on the quiet and the Winter Court takes credit. It seems a little suspicious that they don't share much detail, but the results are there. They embrace sorrow? Absolutely. Sorrow's a good thing. A pure thing. It shows a changeling what she's lost and more importantly, what she still has left to lose. But, as Elke the Glasswing (one of Summer's most notable strategists) said about this, "Just get over it, will you? *Stop crying and pick up that rifle.*"

## SPRING COURT

Passion is a good thing. Spring has it in spades, but they aim it in the wrong direction. The Summer Court knows to take that passion and shape it into an arrow, an arrow that they hope to fire right in the eye of those who'd dare to hurt them. Spring... well, what the hell do they use their passion for? Drugs? Sex? Heart-taking and heart-breaking? One changeling put it thusly: Spring Court is the rambunctious teenager with lots of potential but nary a lick of common sense and not one iota of proper direction. Summer Court, well, that's your adult, right there. All grown-up. It has seen the hardness of the world, had the rose-colored glasses ripped away, and now understands that it's time to stop taking and give a little back, instead. So they like to celebrate. Nothing wrong with that. But they celebrate just to celebrate. Those in the Iron Spear recognize that you don't celebrate until you earn a god-damn reason.

## AUTUMN COURT

Scary, that's what the changelings of the Leaden Mirror are. And they know it. Hell, it's right there in the name: *the Court of Fear*. It's not that they're sneaky or secretive. While that's generally not the Summer way of doing things, hey, a knife in the back of an enemy is just as valuable as a knife in the front, as long as the mad fucker is down and dead. But... the things they do behind closed doors, the bloody rituals and the

whisper of dry leaves on bleached bone... worthy of a mighty shudder, it is. Wise Crimson Courtiers look upon those in the Leaden Mirror with a mixture of awe and revulsion, with a hefty dollop of suspicion to boot. These changelings have effectively stolen some of the grim magic from their fae Keepers to use against the Gentry. That'd be commendable if the occult magic wasn't so damn spooky. It's like picking up a poisonous snake and trying to use it as a flail or something. Too dangerous to be healthy. Too dangerous to be *sane*. Can't they just pick up a baseball bat and break some heads? What they do, they do well, but it pushes them too close to the edge for comfort.

## OTHER LOST

Madmen just need to be put down: bring some mercy to their madness and give them the gift of forever sleep.

Loyalists? What else can be said about them besides "hunt them down like the diabolical lapdogs that they are"? Nothing else, that's what. Same for the privateers. No mercy.

Militant Lost, well, they share a great deal in common with the Summer Court, and sometimes changelings of one also belong to the other. But the militiamen tend to take it too far. They go over the line. They get themselves hurt. Innocents, too. Listen, some casualties are expected in the ranks of the Iron Spear, but wanton sacrifice serves little purpose.

Bridge-burners aren't that much different. They're lunatics willing to give up too much to gain too little. It's a noble effort and not exactly an unreasonable idea, this severing of bonds between Earth and Faerie, and if they can be convinced to go about it in a sane and measured way, great. Otherwise, the Summer Court has pretty simple advice regarding them: ignore them until they get in your way. When that happens, clip their wings and send them tumbling to the ground.

## MORTALS

The Summer Court considers the protection of mortals as part of its duties. It's not a universal task: some instances of the Iron Spear could give a rat's right foot about human beings, who are sometimes as crass and callous as the Gentry. But for the most part, the Summer Court thinks of itself as a secondary defender of the innocent, the downtrodden, the plainly and dangerously human. Maybe they stand watch over a women's shelter. Maybe they keep an eye out for bullies and gangs. Could be they kick down the doors of white collar criminals and put a boot on their neck

until they agree to stop leeching off the fortunes of the unwary. They especially protect those who cannot or don't know to protect themselves.

## MONSTERS

The Summer Court knows all too well that other things haunt the night. Men who drink blood. Succubi who turn into wolves to prey on humanity. Weird witches and mad magicians. The stories never stop: moth men, lights in the skies, things that lurk in the sewers, gargoyles that come alive and steal human hearts. None of that flies on the Iron Spear's watch. It seems that for the most part these monstrosities exist to prey on the ignorance of mankind, and the Crimson Court aims to stand in the way. The Summer Court knows that the cities are sometimes home to rag-tag cabals of human hunters who seek to put down the many fiends of the World of Darkness, and they lend a hand when appropriate. Of course, they don't tell these so-called "hunters" just what they are: why not just paint a big bloody bull's eye on your chest?

## CONTRACTS OF PUNISHING SUMMER

Long ago, the earliest rulers of the Court of Wrath forged contracts with the blistering heat of the hottest summers. Many of the clauses to these pacts are lost to the weave and weft of history, but some still remain. Those of the Summer Court use these searing clauses to punish their enemies for their transgressions, whether on the sunlit battlefield or in a dark sub-basement. These are the tools of war. These are the instruments of Wrath.

Any of the clauses within this contract are subject to the same set of potential modifiers.

### Suggested Modifiers

Performed during summer	+2
Sun is at its apex in the sky (between 11AM — 1PM)	+1
Performed at night	-1
Performed during winter	-2

## SMOLDERCRIP (•)

Items left long in the sun collect deep and terrible heat: a steering wheel in a hot car, a plastic toy left on a desiccated lawn, the rubber grips to sun-scorched pruning shears. With this clause, the Summer courtier may force any object of Size 3 or smaller to burn turn after turn, as if left in the hottest noon-time sun. The object must be in sight for this clause to be successful.

A courtier might use this on a foe in battle, hoping to force the adversary to drop that deadly revolver, or might instead use it to help stall pursuers reaching for that now-scorching doorknob.

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Wits – the object's Size

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The character sports a real sunburn (not artificial).

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character's own hand suddenly suffers a terrible sunburn; the skin grows blistering red. She takes one point of bashing damage.

**Failure:** The changeling fails to manifest the heat needed, and the object remains at its extant temperature.

**Success:** The object gains the heat of an object lying in direct summer sun. Any attempts to touch the object fail unless the target succeeds on a Resolve + Stamina roll. This roll is penalized by a number of dice equal to the Mantle (Summer) score of the changeling who invoked Smoldergrip. If the target is able to touch or use it, prolonged use is still difficult: he must succeed on that same roll every turn he touches the item. The terrible heat lasts for a number of turns equal to the changeling's Wyrdscore.

**Exceptional Success:** As with success, except any time someone touches the object while it's hot, he suffers one point of bashing damage.

## BATTLE BRIGHT (••)

Fighting with the sun in one's eyes is no easy task. Depth perception is weakened as a fighter squints to see his foe. Is that his target or his target's shadow? The bright light blinds. While using this ability, a changeling makes himself radiate with the white, searing light of the summer sun, a hot bright mote that burns in the eyes of all who see it. The exception to this is those who possess any dots in Mantle (Summer). Summer courtiers who wear the Mantle of the Court remain unaffected by the bright light since the fierce light is their ally, not their enemy. This ability can only be used once per day.

**Cost:** 2 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Wyrdscore versus the highest Wits + Composure of those within sight of the changeling.

**Action:** Instant and contested

**Catch:** The changeling holds a real, burning torch aloft.



## Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The changeling must've missed a detail in fulfilling this clause of the contract, and the summer sun rebukes him for it: his vision becomes filled with bright "floaters," causing him a -3 to all sight-based Perception rolls for the rest of the day.

**Failure:** The character fails to draw on the summer sun's intensity.

**Success:** The changeling becomes a supernatural beacon of intense light. Any who can see the changeling suffer the following: Defense halved (round down), any rolls to attack are made at -2 dice, and all sight-based Perception rolls are complicated by a -3 penalty. This ability lasts for up to one scene, with one exception. Use of this clause necessitates that the changeling remain still. If the changeling moves more than one inch, the clause ends prematurely. Note that any characters who possess one or more dots in the Mantle (Summer) Merit are unaffected by this power.

**Exceptional Success:** Targets affected by this clause continue to suffer from the Perception penalty (-3) even after the clause ends. The penalty remains for one hour after completion of the clause.

### *Vampires Don't Like Sunlight*

All of these clauses evoke sunlight (the hot, summer sun to be specific), but what does that mean for vampires? None of these abilities conjure *real* sunlight, and as such it doesn't do additional damage to the Kindred. That said, it's similar enough to sunlight where it likely triggers a vampire's panicked aversion to it. Sometimes called the "Red Fear," a vampire who witnesses a clause like Battle Bright in action must make an extended Resolve + Composure roll and achieve five total successes (with each roll equivalent to one turn). If at any point one of those rolls fails, the vampire automatically flees — and, frankly, even if the rolls *don't* fail, some vampires are going to get the hell out of Dodge anyway, having little interest in suffering aggravated burns.

## CROWN OF CLASHING FIRE (●●●)

Woe to those chosen to do battle with a courtier of Summer in the Crown of Clashing Fire. With this



clause, a changeling chooses a foe on the battlefield with a simple point of the finger. When the two are within 10 yards of one another, a ring of thorns rises up around the two of them and in the next turn those thorns *catch fire*. The duel is on.

**Cost:** 2 Glamour, 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Wyrd minus opponent's Stamina

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The changeling has one or more scars from his last battle with this foe.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The fiery thorns rise up and encircle only the changeling. Trying to leave the crown of fire is as per a success, below.

**Failure:** The thorns and fire fails to manifest.

**Success:** A ring of thorns about two feet high rise up and, in the subsequent turn, catch fire. The fire burns high with hot, red flames.

At the time of the circle's inception, any other characters within the fiery circle who are *not* part of the duel hear a deafening, crackling roar in their ears: the sounds of surrounding conflagration. Remaining within that circle is difficult, demanding one Willpower point per turn. In addition, those not part of the duel but lingering in the circle also suffer -3 to all Physical rolls while within the fiery borders. In leaving the circle, the flames do not burn any of these non-dueling characters.

The same cannot be said for the two individuals locked in skirmish. If either try to leave the circle before the flames burn out, that character suffers two aggravated levels of damage automatically upon exit. (And he can be dragged back into the circle by the other opponent.)

The fire burns for a number of turns equal to twice the changeling's Wyrd score and only ends prematurely when one of the opponents is either knocked unconscious or killed (thus resulting in an "end" to the duel). Otherwise, the changeling cannot end it until those turns expire.

**Exceptional Success:** As with success, but the changeling who initiated this clause gains the spent Willpower back.

## BALEFUL STROKE OF SUMMER SUN (••••)

With a close strike of a deadly weapon, a Summer courtier with this ability infects the target with

a debilitating poison that simulates the effects of sunstroke and heat exhaustion. As the seconds pass after the strike, the victim begins to feel the effects take hold. He is no longer able to sweat. His tongue turns to cotton. The target's heart race accelerates, he suffers splitting cramps, and he gets dizzy with fatigue.

**Cost:** 3 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Stamina + Wyrd versus opponent's Stamina + Composure. Note, however, that the changeling must first make a successful close combat attack (with Brawl or Weaponry) and do at least a single point of lethal damage. The moment of the attack's success occurs when the reflexive roll takes place.

**Action:** Reflexive and contested

**Catch:** The changeling strikes with a weapon featuring metal that the changeling himself forged. It must be a substantial part of the weapon: the pommel and quillons of a sword, the blade of a knife, the bludgeoning end of a mace.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The effect does not occur and the changeling loses his Defense in the subsequent turn due to the invested (and failed) attempt.

**Failure:** While the attack may have been successful, the effects of the clause fail to manifest.

**Success:** One turn after the successful lethal attack, the target begins to suffer the effects of sunstroke and heat exhaustion. This cursed effect lasts for a number of turns equal to the Resolve score of the changeling who used this clause.

However, the victim *does* have a choice as to how this curse manifests: she can choose to accept cumulative dice penalties equal to one die of penalty per turn (thus she chooses to let the heatstroke potentially affect her actions) or she can choose to instead internalize the effects and eschew taking penalties, but in doing so she takes one aggravated level of damage every turn she makes this choice. The choice *can* be made on a turn by turn basis. If the changeling's Resolve was 3, the effect would go for three turns. On the first turn, the target might choose a -1 die penalty, on the second turn she might take a point of aggravated damage, and on the third and final turn might take another penalty, which becomes a -2 penalty (as those dice are cumulative until the effect ends). Alternately, she could just choose to take three full aggravated (with no penalties) or -3 dice (with no damage). Penalties occur at the beginning of a combat round, and thus are in play when the target opts to make a roll.

Penalties from the curse fade once the effect's turns are completed (in the above example, starting on the fourth turn) at a rate of one die of penalty per turn. (So, 3 penalty dice after three turns becomes -2 on the fourth turn, -1 on the fifth, and no related penalty on the sixth.)

**Exceptional Success:** As with success, but the affected target cannot spend Willpower while the curse is active.

## SCORCHED EARTH (•••••)

This clause represents the ultimate punishment of summer: with it, a changeling curses an area to bake in blistering heat, blighting the plants, incurring drought, possibly even invoking the death of pets, older adults, or children. Many Summer courtiers have been known to invoke this clause in the midst of battle. While it runs the risk of harming those who fight for the freehold, one hopes that they are prepared to fight through such scorching weather.

**Cost:** 5 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Wyrd

**Action:** Extended (10+ successes; each roll represents a turn of uninterrupted meditation)

**Catch:** The changeling meditates beneath a Summer Court pennon or battle-flag that she helped to create.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The changeling grows warm, then hot, then the air is sucked out of her lungs in a vacuous rush of heat. She falls unconscious for a number of turns equal to 10 minus her Resolve score.

**Failure:** No progress is made.

**Success:** The character makes progress toward the end result. Ten successes are required for every half-mile radius of effect. The character must decide the radius of effect before beginning to evoke this clause.

Once the Scorched Earth curse is active, the following effects occur:

- All of those within the radius of effect find the following stats halved (round down): Stamina, Strength, Composure, Resolve. (The loss of these dots while in the radius of effect also affects related traits such as Speed, Health, Willpower, etc.)

- Bashing damage does not heal while one is in the area of effect and Willpower cannot be regained. The heat truly saps one's internal energy and spirit.

- All plant life within the radius of effect begins to die. Death can be forestalled by some measure of preventative care (usually necessitating Wits + Science rolls).

- Water turns to steam. Faucets and hoses only trickle water. Puddles turn to vapor. Rivers run thin and muddy while streams dry up entirely. Water is not impossible to get, but it's always warm and in far scarcer supply than it had been.

Effects plaguing a character end as soon as that character leaves the area of effect.

The Scorched Earth curse continues for a number of days equal to the changeling's Wyrd score. It can be ended prematurely, but requires that the changeling spills a pint of his own blood (necessitating him taking one point of lethal damage) on the ground of the affected area.

Note that this effect can occur even in winter. While it likely baffles meteorologists and is surely an extraordinary experience, it doesn't necessarily appear supernatural.

**Exceptional Success:** If the character achieves an exceptional success on the extended roll (gaining five successes in total beyond what was necessary to activate the clause), she may add a stipulation to the clause that allows for those with dots in Mantle (Summer) to remain unaffected by the Scorched Earth effects.

### Suggested Modifiers

Meditative Mind Merit	+1
Spring or Autumn	-1

### Cloudburst

There is a variant version of the Scorched Earth clause that features not the dry, blistering weather of summer, but the punishing monsoons common in certain parts of the world. The effects on individual characters remain the same. Water, however, is not scarce; quite the opposite, as flooding becomes a certainty. Plants don't necessarily die from drought, either, though many will either die from over-watering (yes, plants can drown, too) or are broken and diminished by ravaging hurricane-like winds.



# THE HOUND TRIBUNAL

Write a name on this slip of paper, my liege. Then worry no more. This, I swear to you.

The Romans called the latter days of Summer the “dog days”, a reference to the star Sirius, the brightest light in the season’s nighttime sky. Sirius — also known as the “Dog Star” — was thought to be an angry god, embodied by the star’s occasional red hue. During its time in the sky, during these so-called *dog days*, Summer’s heat grows punishing. The air becomes feverish. Food spoils. Grass dies. The strongest of beasts and the weakest of men became mad or indolent, giving in to their worst inclinations.

And it is during these days that the Hound Tribunal haunts the freehold in the name of the Court of Wrath and the Summer King. Those that stand in the way of the Court’s interests become targets. Those that dare to oppose the King or Queen — or worse, dare to bring harm to the monarch — are found to be enemies of the freehold, as judged by the members of this secret “noble” council. What happens to those branded as traitors, obstructionists, enemies? It depends on the thirst for blood possessed by the local Hounds. The line between “justice” and “wrath” is often blurred, like the lines on a hot road warped by vapors of heat. Some are more inclined to mete out a measure of compassion with their justice; those that fall in their crosshairs are often banished from the freehold, made to swear the Turncoat’s Assurance (see below), a pledge ensuring exile. More vicious Hounds may not bother with the troubles and indiscretions of exile, preferring instead to wear the mask of wrath and murder the chosen enemies. The Hounds who give in to such lynch mob “justice” rarely recognize the depths to which they’ve sank, believing that they are a necessary evil — or nary an evil at all.

The curious thing — and to many, the most *frightening* thing — about the Hound Tribunal is that they only act against the Court’s enemies during those days ascribed to be the literal “dog days” of the season. Most Tribunals use the Old Farmer Almanac definition of July 3<sup>rd</sup> to August 11<sup>th</sup>, though some find excuses to widen that range of dates.

During these blistering days of summer (either bone-drought dry or chokingly humid depending on the region), the Tribunal acts against all those who have offended the Court of Wrath in some way during the other seasons. Some Hounds cut a bloody swath through

the freehold, leaving in their wake a trail of marred bodies. Other times, there appears only a grand mystery as some changelings simply disappear, never to return.

**Title:** Hound (though many prefer to put “The Honorable” before their names as a title of courtesy, such as “The Honorable Black Myrtle” or “The Honorable Hound, Valmont Torchiere”).

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Summer) 2, Wyrd 2, Subterfuge 2, Stealth 2, and one martial Skill (Brawl, Firearms, Weaponry) at 3

**Joining:** The Tribunal demands decisive members, Hounds who possess an unswerving (and in fact rather slavish) devotion to the Summer Court’s ideals. Anger is of no concern to the Honorable Hounds; even if a changeling’s rage scorches out of control and threatens to consume him, Hounds believe themselves capable of leashing that anger and directing it at those who deserve its burn. What is wrath, after all, but anger focused to a keenly-honed point?

So, how does one go about actually claiming a seat among the Tribunal? The Tribunal is ostensibly a court of assessors that operates wholly in secret. A changeling cannot petition to join this noble order if she doesn’t know about it. For the most part, that means a changeling does not choose the Tribunal, but the Tribunal chooses *her*. Upon seeing one of the Lost perform some notable task in service to the Court, the Hounds begin to keep track of her. Maybe she takes a bullet for the King. Perhaps she exposes one of the knights of the Court as a clandestine privateer. Could be that she becomes a right-hand advisor to the King, sacrificing all her free time — and more than a bit of her sanity — in attending to his needs. Over time, those who stand out might be selected to learn what it *truly* means to serve the Court as one of the Honorable Hounds.



**Background:** The Tribunal has needs across the board when it comes to its loyal Hounds. Some assessors are prized for their ability to judge others in a way that is clear-thinking or incisive. Others might be favored for more pragmatic reasons: one's ability with a blade, a talent above others to hide in the shadows, or an almost preternatural facility for deception.

Obviously, a devotion to the Summer Court and its ideals is paramount. Many Tribunal members have strong Summer Mantles — heat vapor rising from burnished skin, breath of steam and smoke, or a fierce heartbeat revealed in pulsing neck tendons. In support of the Court's ideals, many Hounds also possess Justice as a Vice and/or Wrath as a Virtue. The pairing of these principles, after all, is what drives this noble order of assessors.

**Organization:** What do the Hounds do when not "active" during the dog days of summer? If that period stretches only from July to August, how do they fill the rest of their time?

For one, they act as ideal Summer Court members, some with a verve bordering on zealotry. But they also work toward the needs of the noble order. During these "off days," the Tribunal watches changelings from the other three Courts with an eye toward distrust. The Hounds covertly gather once a month to compile secrets and suspicions and to mark potential targets. They only make judgments against possible enemies a week or two before Sirius rises in the summer sky and the dog days begin again. Once their decisions are made, the rule is that none shall back out of the judgments. To deny the judgment of the Tribunal is to deny the Tribunal itself, which makes one an enemy to Court and King. When the dog days crawl to a close once more — and the Tribunal has "disappeared" or outright executed those who dared threaten the strength of the Summer Court — the Tribunal once more draws back to its phase of suspicion and contemplation.

Just how much does the Summer King or Queen know of the Tribunal and its activities? In most freeholds, upon claiming (or being claimed by) the Court's Mantle and crown, the king often finds himself approached at night, under shadow, by one or several Tribunal members. They tell him what they are. They explain what they do. And then they fill him in on all the tawdry secrets: "Cracktooth didn't disappear into the Hedge, he was exiled", or "That Winter motley, the Rimeblight Boys, had to go — don't worry, we dissolved the bodies in a hot chemical bath about two years back."

How does a King or Queen react to such a persisting conspiracy? Some embrace it. The Tribunal makes a strong ally. Knowing that a secret cabal protects her actions, a Queen might feel more relaxed in her rule. Others find the Tribunal vile, but does a ruler move against this hidden jury? The Summer Court needs whatever power it can muster. By removing what are ostensibly some of the Court's more potent members, the ruler surely finds herself and her rule weakened. The Queen must decide if being on the side of "right" is worth that sacrifice, or if allying with the Tribunal is excusable. Rulers in all lands must make hard decisions. War is not a moral thing.

The result is variable: some kings have managed to oust the Tribunal from the freehold, while others who go against the Hounds are themselves made absent so a less repudiating royal can be elevated to the crown. Sometimes, the Hounds are wise enough to see a potential threat when it arises and choose not to approach the King at all. In such cases, the jury operates in secret from even the king, supporting him under the cover of clandestine operations.



**Concepts:** axe-man, clandestine hangman, clergyman, Darkling assassin, ex-cop, fairest liaison to the monarch, king's right-hand-man, secret judge, talented abductor.

## PRIVILEGES

Members of the Tribunal are notoriously apt when it comes to lying about themselves. In explaining where she was or why her collar is marked with three dots of dark blood, a Hound must lie with all her heart. In situations where a character lies about herself, her player gains +2 to the Subterfuge roll. Members of the Hound Tribunal are also taught the parameters of the secret Turncoat's Assurance, below.

### PLEDGE: TURNCOAT'S ASSURANCE

— *I vow on my treacherous heart that I shall go beyond the borders of this domain and shall never again let my iniquitous flesh cross the threshold now denied. Should I betray this pledge, my watcher shall become my hunter and all my fortunes are forfeit.*

— *Jesus! Fuck! Get that gun out of my ear! I swear, I swear I'll leave! I'll fuckin' leave, and I won't come back. God-damnit don't cock that gun! Please! I'll go.*

**Type:** Corporal, Nemesis Pledge

**Tasks:** Forbiddance, Greater (-3, the "turncoat" promises to never again return to the city from whence he is banished); Alliance, Lesser (+0, the two parties agree to a "peace pact")

**Boons:** Blessing, Medial (+2, the "turncoat" is allowed to increase the Resources Merit by one dot to pay for "moving expenses"), Blessing, Lesser (+1, the turncoat gains one dot in the "Fleet of Foot" Merit so he can run his ass out of town as fast as possible)

**Sanction:** Curse, Greater (-3)

**Duration:** Lifelong (+3)

**Invocation:** 1 Willpower point, 1 Willpower dot

The Hound Tribunal wants to be clear about this point: an offer to commit to the Turncoat's Assurance is a mercy. They've got a knife to the traitor's throat and they're only a few feet from the line marking the city limits. They want the traitor to know that a quick slip of the knife is the easiest thing to do, but they're bringing an unexpected *kindness* to the table. Not buying into the pledge, well, that makes their job easy. That's why most, when given the chance, gladly take the pledge. It's better than bleeding out on the highway shoulder.

The Turncoat's Assurance actually manifests as a written document: it can be penned on any kind of paper, and the exact text written is variable (though obviously must clearly state the pledge and the ramifications of enacting

and breaking said pledge). The Hound must write up the document in the juice of a fruit or vegetable: ink of blackberry, pomegranate syrup, tomato juice, whatever. The "turncoat" must sign his name to the pledge in the blood of some animal or insect that normally consumes that fruit or vegetable (the squeezed guts of a tomato hornworm caterpillar, the blood of a berry-nipping sparrow). Therein suggests an implicit relationship that the Summer Courtier is clearly the fruit on the vine, whereas the turncoat is the vile parasite who might consume the health of the harvest.

### Rumors of the Hound Tribunal

The following are some stories one might hear about the Hound Tribunal. The Hound Tribunal is secret, true, but that doesn't mean rumors don't get out.

- Joining the Hound Tribunal requires a certain *proof* of commitment. A changeling's gotta be willing to make the hard choices, so the stories go. Maybe the changeling has a close friend in the Spring Court, maybe even someone in his motley. Some say the Tribunal demands that the friendship be ended, cut short cruelly and suddenly. Others say that the Tribunal demands something worse: the life of that friend.

- They've removed *kings* from the throne. Not Summer kings, but the rulers of the other Courts. Rude Becky told me that's what happened to The Lepidopterist, Emperor of the Spring Court just last year. Whispers say he was getting uppity. Starting to grow a pair and make little moves against the Crimson Court. And then, one day, *poof*. Gone. His penthouse apartment was empty. Repainted all white. The only evidence anybody ever found was three ring-fingers, one from each of the Emperor's ensorcelled attachés.

- Every Court has a Tribunal order protecting its interests. The Spring Court has its Sylvan Tribunal, Autumn has its Harvest Tribunal, and Winter has its Glacier Tribunal. Even weirder, I hear they all know about one another and meet to hash out the future of the freehold.

# the Autumn Court

Fear.

It is, arguably, the most primal and defining passion of all life. Every creature, from the meanest and simplest to the most complex and intelligent, is ruled by fear. When the earthworm is snatched up from the moist soil in which it burrows, it writhes and coils inward, seeking to escape its capture or, failing that, to curl into a protective ball. When a fish is landed on the hook, it thrashes about, terrified at the prospect of what comes next. On a lonely road, a man spies a stranger approaching from out of the shadows, and a momentary chill grips him. Fear slithers into every spirit and sinks in its talons, weathering away even the strongest conviction, the stoutest courage. It does not compromise. It cannot be sated, like Desire. It cannot be spent, like Wrath. It cannot be healed, like Sorrow. Fear lurks in every corner of the unknown and permeates the mortal world. For the Autumn Court, it is a sumptuous banquet that grows wild, its fruits ripening wherever life flourishes.

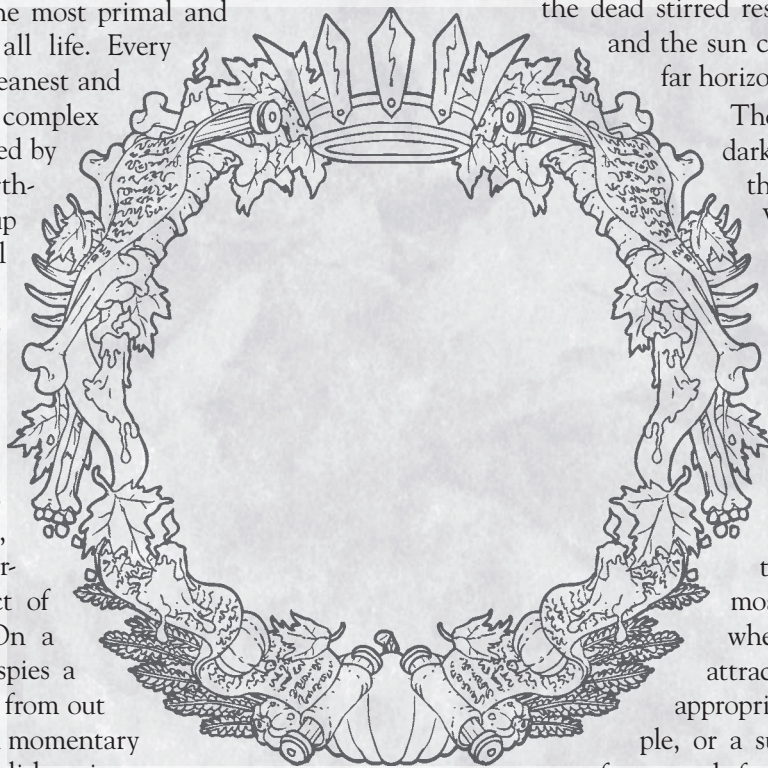
Better still, however, is the feast created by the deliberate cultivation of fear, horror, terror, and mystery. While just anyone can forage and manage to scrape by, so much more successful are those who plant gardens of their own and tend the crops with care. So it is that the Ashen Court, like *all* of the seasonal courts, works to encourage the spread of its passion, the emotion that empowers the harvesting-time, the hour when shadows grow long, frost first gathers, and the year begins to die. The pairing between season and passion is natural, an instinctual connection that humans have

recognized for centuries and perhaps millennia, when the dead stirred restlessly in their graves and the sun creeps daily toward the far horizon.

Those that walk the dark path of fear accept the burden of intimacy. While such Lost maintain that it is relatively easy to learn what people desire, what incites their rage, and even what makes them sad, it takes an especially close bond to understand the every nuance of the passion of fear. Almost everyone feels desire when presented with an attractive specimen of the appropriate gender, for example, or a sumptuous and diverse feast, and feels wrath to discover

that a treasured possession has been stolen or defaced. Truly getting inside another's nightmares, however, requires learning not only that he fears, say, clowns, but also *why*, or knowing the reasons behind her unreasoning dread of that tiny door in the attic of her grandmother's home. Perhaps someone dressed as a clown kidnapped, sexually assaulted, and murdered children in the town where the man in question grew up, or the woman made up a childish fantasy wherein the bones of her deceased grandfather hid behind that door. But, to know and truly understand — to be able to *use* — that fear, an Ashen courtier must get inside of it, and inside the one whose heart is gripped by it.

At their worst, changelings of the Leaden Mirror can degenerate into serial murdering lunatics, seeking ever more rarified varieties of fear through elaborate hunts perpetrated upon the living. More so than any other passion embraced by the seasonal courts, the Autumn Court's driving emotion is perhaps the easi-



est to lose oneself within in a decidedly unhealthy way. Anger and sadness are often cathartic, while longing can readily be applied to all sorts of spiritually uplifting pursuits. Fear, on the other hand, denies catharsis and can certainly inspire, though usually only in the darkest and most unpleasant ways. Thus, many Ashen Courtiers walk a thin line in the pursuit of their court's chosen passion.

On the other hand, when the Leaden Mirror is at its best, when its concern for the mortals that it shepherds is genuine, it can be a true boon to those over whom it has purview. It is often said that "fear is a healthy response," and this is true — fear sharpens the senses, keeps people alert to danger, and teaches an appreciation for life. Were there nothing to fear in this world, everyone would take everything for granted. Without fear, the urgency that generates Desire, Wrath, and Sorrow simply would not exist. Because fear is omnipresent, there are always opportunities to learn and to grow by it.

In a freehold, Autumn courtiers are necessary because, more than any other seasonal court, the Ashen embodies a "carrot and stick" approach to changeling life. Fear is a beneficial tool when used for the good of the local freehold: its enemies can be cowed and forced into exile, or else compelled to make mistakes that turn such foes into easy prey. Conversely, those that get out of line within Lost society can be scared back onto the straight and narrow. And, of course, Ashen courtiers can help other changelings to confront and overcome their own fears, many of which are universal to the Lost. Terror at the thought of the Others — at the promise of being dragged, kicking and screaming (or, worse still, following one's Keeper willingly) back into Arcadia — is chiseled into the very soul of every Fae, as are fears of alienation, the inability to interfere in the fates of friends and loved ones from before the Thorns, and the dread of what comes next. It is the Leaden Mirror that has most thoroughly explored these unhappy feelings and is best equipped to help other changelings to deal with them.

## RECRUITMENT

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAGIC

Each one of the Great Courts has a powerful tie to an emotion, but also a specific plan for resisting the attentions of the True Fae. In the case of the Autumn Court, their guiding philosophy is to claim the power of Fae magic for their own. By mastering the powers of pledge and Contract, of token and dream, they can resist the Gentry in ways that iron cannot match.

Finding changelings who are interested in this philosophy isn't difficult. Many of the Lost resent the changes that have been wrought on their lives, but would no sooner give up the power of faerie magic than a survivalist would surrender his knife. For some, it's practically addictive. And that's the danger that is all too obvious to the Leaden Mirror — the changeling who treats magic too carelessly is a potential threat to everyone around him, friend or foe. The only way to truly master the power they've dragged back from Arcadia is to respect its potency. Only an idiot who doesn't consider the possibilities of an occult secret shared too readily or used too cavalierly isn't afraid of what he does to some degree.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF FEAR

To be accepted into the Autumn Court is to be embraced by fear, which begs the question of what sort of changeling attracts the notice of those driven by this grim passion, perhaps the most basic and even primordial of the emotions that drive the Lost. The gruesome stereotype of the Ashen-Fae-to-be, stalking the shadows and seeking victims with wild abandon certainly has its place but, like most generalizations, it is rather too simple to capture the whole truth of the matter.

Some changelings, fresh out of the Hedge, fall instinctively into patterns of haunting and terrifying others. Darklings, especially, take easily to the way of fear, though every seeming has its "Autumn Court naturals." Some do so out of a desire to turn their feelings of victimization by the Gentry outward, subconsciously becoming victimizers so they do not have to feel like victims. These sorts comprise the majority of early joiners for the Ashen Court, and some of them manage to go quite far after, at long last, overcoming the majority of the baggage from the violation inflicted upon them by the Others.

Not all aspirants to the Leaden Mirror come to it by instinct, however. Far from it. Some meander about for a time, skirting the edge of two or more courts, trying to find their proper place in changeling society. Sometimes, this is because of simple indecision while, at other times, it is merely the product of an active dedication to finding out where one can best serve and be best served. The Autumn Court typically devotes time and resources to courting these changelings, hoping to win them over and increase the size and power of the Leaden Mirror thereby. Sometimes, incentives are offered for joining, though a Freehold's Autumn courtiers must be careful in doing so, so they do not offend those that came to the court of their own accord.



It doesn't do to give door prizes to those that hesitate, while failing to compensate those that seek out the Autumn Court to petition for membership, after all.

The Autumn Court looks with an especially covetous eye to those who have been scarred by exposure to fear, whose lives have been profoundly shaped by it; not because the court wishes to take in the broken and wretched, but because suffering such a passion is the first step toward mastering it. Changelings of the Leaden Mirror counsel prospective Autumn courtiers to confront and overcome their fears. Just as the artist is not (typically) her own canvas, neither is an ideal aspirant to the Ashen Court a slave to her own terror. Instead, she inspires that emotion in others, and gains power, insight, and sustenance thereby.

The court is often divided over seemingly “fearless” changelings. On the one hand, they are not likely to be adversely impacted by prolonged exposure to whatever the court has to throw at them, but, on the other, they are either lying (to themselves and/or to others) or else genuinely lack empathy for the driving passion of the Leaden Mirror. Some Autumn courtiers make a point of breaking such Lost of their illusions and demonstrating that they, too, can succumb to that most ancient and fundamental of feelings. Their reasons for doing so are varied (ranging from an active spiritual commitment to spreading fear, to a sense of pride in overcoming a significant challenge, to simple jealousy regarding someone who appears to have moved beyond the capacity for fear), but most eventually discover a way to inspire, or merely reawaken, dread in their quarry.

## COURT STRUCTURE

Life within the Leaden Mirror is a powerful *mé-lange* of occult wisdom and fear. So, too, is it with the governance of the Ashen Court, and many monarchs tend to fall back on one of a few time-tested structures that have always managed to work well for changelings of their season. Even when she rules openly, an Autumn Queen must practice a measure of secrecy and, even if she is known to be kind and generous, then she is also compelled to embrace certain practices that give her subjects — not to mention those of the other courts — a moment's pause and cause to wonder what sort of malevolence her gentle bearing conceals.

Some common methods by which Autumn monarchs take and hold power within a Freehold (note that these are by no means the *only* structures of Ashen rule, merely a sampling of those that the Leaden Mirror favors) are:

### *Bogeymen*

Particularly important to note is that not all Autumn fae adopt the aspect of horror movie monsters and the like. Fear is comprised of many different facets, after all: terror, suspicion, revulsion, mystery and a sense of the unknown, for example. Further, some Autumn courtiers reflect upon their own fears above any desire to propagate said passion in others; even Autumn changelings of particularly potent Wyrds — who are somewhat more strongly required to create fear for their metaphysical sustenance — do not always, or even often, do so through the specific tactic of inciting visceral horror. Indeed, discerning fae might look with distaste upon those who prefer staging slasher flicks to the subtler fear engendered by, say, the act of altering the negative result of a teenage girl's pregnancy test or arranging for the foreclosure of a struggling family's home. The latter sorts of fears can have significantly more nuanced and far-reaching consequences, after all.

The fact of the matter is that fear comes in thousands of flavors, and that the best and most discerning Autumn courtiers understand and appreciate the distinctions between them. Even the most jaded Scarecrow Minister knows that there is a time for abject horror and a time for less overt varieties of apprehension, uncertainty, menace, and disquiet. Without variation, changelings become predictable, and what is predictable can eventually be puzzled out by the Others, thwarting the very purpose to which the great seasonal oaths were originally enacted. Furthermore, as some Lost of the Leaden Mirror put it, great outpourings of terror are like a perfectly-cooked dinner of steak and potatoes: delicious and filling, until the twentieth time in a row that you've had it. Changing up the menu, as it were, helps Ashen fae to better savor such fare when it *is* both available and appropriate.

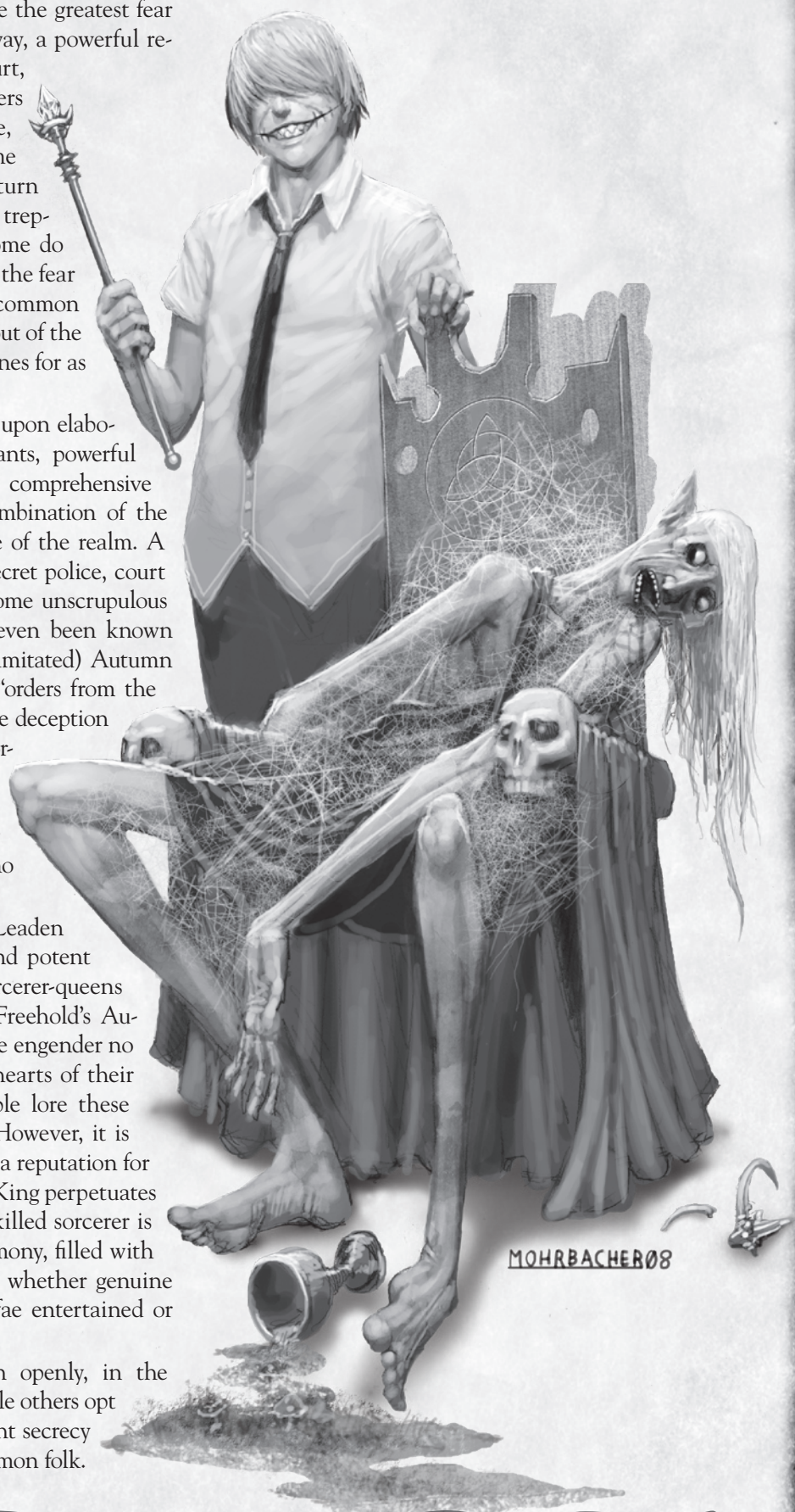
- **Rule by Fear:** Not uncommon for Autumn Kings and Queens, this sort of strategy goes well beyond Machiavellian applications of callous brutality and cunning fear-mongering. After all, the Ashen

courtier who can successfully inspire the greatest fear in others is, in a very meaningful way, a powerful resource for the members of her court, and apt to be highly regarded by others who share in her season. Of course, this sword cuts both ways, and some Autumn monarchs are known to turn their skills at engendering terror and trepidation upon other changelings. Some do so out of a perverse desire to revel in the fear of their own kind, though far more common are those who resort to such tactics out of the simple desire to hold onto their thrones for as long as is possible.

Certain Autumn monarchs rely upon elaborate networks of spies and informants, powerful information-gathering Contracts, a comprehensive mastery of oneiromancy, or any combination of the above, to keep a finger on the pulse of the realm. A few even go far enough to involve secret police, court torturers, and the like. Of course, some unscrupulous viziers of the Leaden Mirror have even been known to murder a reclusive (or just easily imitated) Autumn Queen and then continue to issue “orders from the crown” for months or years before the deception is discovered — if ever it is. Many horrific declarations are just a little easier to stomach (or, at least, harder to do anything about) when delivered by an “innocent messenger” who has “no real power” to influence court policy.

• **Thrones of the Wise:** The Leaden Mirror is a court of deep secrets and potent wizardry, and druid-kings and sorcerer-queens sometimes rise to power among a Freehold’s Autumn fae. Naturally, the best of these engender no small amount of dread within the hearts of their subjects — who knows what terrible lore these witches and magi have mastered? However, it is primarily through mystic might and a reputation for great wisdom that such an Autumn King perpetuates his reign. A court ruled over by a skilled sorcerer is usually one of great pomp and ceremony, filled with rituals of metaphysical significance, whether genuine or fabricated purely to keep other fae entertained or merely to keep them guessing.

Some sorcerer-monarchs govern openly, in the manner of a typical courtly ruler, while others opt for layers of buffers — even of outright secrecy — between themselves and the common folk.



MOHRBACHER08



Such Autumn Courts can become almost like secret societies or mystery cults, with increasing levels of “initiation” needed to directly access more highly-placed changelings of the Leaden Mirror. In rare cases, these Ashen fae even go so far as to formalize such levels of access with titles, tokens of esteem (such as rings or lapel pins), or other similar indicators of increasing exclusivity. Under such an arrangement, a given motley (even one that includes one or more Autumn courtiers) may not meet the true Autumn monarch for *years*, or might be introduced to someone whom its members are led to believe is the ruler of the Leaden Mirror, only to later learn that they have been duped.

• **Palace of Dust:** Sometimes, the Autumn Court appears to be essentially absent from a freehold entirely, its presence felt only through the ripples in the passion of fear that echoes down from the changelings’ hidden actions. These Lost take the court’s mandate to an extreme, to be sure, but those that pull it off well are often afforded great respect (which may never end up being offered to them in person) by their fellows in the other three seasonal courts. To be clear, these fae do not hide in the manner of the Winter Court, but rather to the intended end of propagating a sense of unease among the Courts; for, who knows when an Autumn fae is watching or what frightful plans she might have in store? Under such an arrangement, the Ashen Court as a whole tends to be strongly unified, and the Queen may, in fact, simply be the best negotiator among them, skilled in the art of internal compromise.

In other, less extreme, cases, some part of the ruling body of Autumn retreats from freehold life, allowing lesser courtiers to conduct the business of interaction with the three remaining seasons. Some Ashen monarchs do so out of arrogance, while others simply feel that they best serve the passion of Fear from the shadows. In one such freehold, the Autumn courtiers claim that their hidden Queen is Clay Ariel herself, and stage elaborate tricks, both magical and mundane, to give others reason to wonder, if not truly believe. In another, a changeling wakes in the morning to find a small bruise in the crook of her arm, surrounding a pinprick, and a brief letter on her nightstand, written in her own blood, with instructions from the Autumn King.

## STATUS

It is not the practice of the Leaden Mirror to make entry into the Court a very difficult matter; the Autumn Court is, after all, as much a *political* entity as anything else, and it doesn’t do to enforce harsh

standards for entry, lest the other three seasons grow to radically outstrip the Ashen fae in numbers. Thus, earning one’s initial Autumn Mantle is typically no more difficult than simply swearing honest fealty to the Autumn Court. So long as the kernel of fear lurks within the changeling’s soul, she will find that the power of the season begins to settle upon her and she can draw both strength and comfort from the sense of belonging and safety inherent to a seasonal court.

Those whose Autumn Mantles strengthen with time tend to come in one of two varieties: those that ploddingly fortify their connections to the season through years of unswervingly faithful service, and those geniuses of fear or sorcery whose every deed in some way — great or small — brings them a little bit closer to fully embracing the Ashen Court’s dark passion. There is precious little middle ground to be had between these two extremes, so far as most Autumn fae are concerned. Of course, exceptions exist, but these rare few justify the rule. Such a changeling might be a bumbling screw-up in advancing the cause of fear, for example, but such a gifted sorcerer and seeker of the unknown that the season still appears increasingly to favor him, or someone very supportive and protective of all other local Ashen courtiers and the Autumn Courts agendas, even if she herself lacks great facility with the court’s avowed purpose. In the end, the season itself chooses whom it will, though certain patterns tend to manifest in the choosing and are only highlighted by the occasional deviation from the norm. Often, other Ashen fae look favorably upon those that seem to best embody the season’s passion and are justly rewarded for it, while many frown upon those that seem to blunder their way into the more powerful blessings of Autumn.

The most potent Mantles, however, are reserved for those changelings who do more than advance terror, horror, mystery, and uncertainty in the face of the unknown: these Lost must, increasingly, *become* the very passion that they represent. It is not enough merely to spread fear; such a fae must devour it and be consumed by it in kind. Its every nuance permeates the entirety of the changeling’s identity, and she learns to love the curse with which she has been afflicted — the scourging of her soul, the transformation into something simultaneously more and less than human, and the power that she can seize, if she will but reach a little deeper into the darkness — and she becomes something that mortal men and other fae alike fear. Perhaps most importantly, she evolves into something



that she, herself, has cause to fear. At such a point, the Autumn courtier almost certainly accounts few friends among the Lost, several enemies, and many more too cowed by her very presence to be either.

Of course, different (and, in some ways, far more variable and elaborate) sorts of trials await those that seek the goodwill of the Autumn Court. Those who aspire to alliance with the Leaden Mirror are not expected to be purveyors of fear (though the court certainly doesn't take objection to that sort of thing, provided such friends understand who the *true* masters of inspiring such a passion are), but they *are* expected to demonstrate their usefulness to the court and their belief in its methods and objectives.

It is possible to get one's foot in the door, so to speak (with a single dot of Court Goodwill), simply by proving one's usefulness to the court and by demonstrating appropriate respect for the goals of Autumn. The Autumn fae of individual freeholds may openly announce required services or ordeals for prospects for the court's goodwill, especially those involving the propagation of fear, with the best (whether grandest, most inventive or some other qualifier) acts of fear winning the court's goodwill for those that enact them. Indeed, this sort of thing is quite common, whether forcing would-be friends to the Ashen Court to confront or confide their own fears, or inviting them to spread the court's chosen passion on a wider scale, perhaps even into another local changeling court. (On the surface, it may seem that other courts would look unkindly upon this latter sort of activity, but the truth of it is that each of the seasonal courts tends to occasionally offer its individual view of the world to the other three.) Likewise, those that bring precious occult lore to the Autumn Court can reasonably expect to be well-received by such Lost, and may be extended the court's favor.

It is also possible for a changeling to outright petition for the goodwill of Autumn. Such fae are commonly set tasks to prove their mettle and to further the goals of the court locally, and perhaps even on a grander scale. The cultivation of fear is a possibility in such a case, but many Ashen changelings would rather receive a useful service than set an individual outsider to a task that the court itself undertakes as a matter of course; it is one thing to have a dozen well-meaning outsiders doing their part to propound the passion of fear, and quite another to give the task to a solitary changeling not of the Leaden Mirror. Thus, journeys into the Hedge to recover rare and interesting things (or to hunt rare and interesting things), pilgrimages to

foreign freeholds, quests to secretly pilfer lore or relics from other sorts of supernatural beings, and similar duties are often assigned to those that desire the friendship of Autumn.

Naturally, there exist other ways to ingratiate oneself with the Autumn Court, as varied as Autumn courtiers themselves. Perhaps a changeling saves the local Autumn Queen from the Wild Hunt by drawing its hounds astray, or turns over a much-needed token without hope of reward. The Ashen Court recognizes spontaneous acts of service just as readily (and perhaps even more so) than calculated ones. Still, earning the esteem of one Autumn fae is rarely sufficient to gain the favor of the court, unless that one changeling is exceedingly powerful, influential, or respected by the remainder of the local Leaden Mirror.

All of this, though, is merely the beginning for those that wish to enjoy alliance with Ashen Court. To progress through increasing degrees of the Leaden Mirror's goodwill, one must demonstrate ever-greater standards of service to the Court of Fear. Just *what* the standards are, exactly, varies from Freehold to Freehold. Some Autumn courtiers insist that only one who successfully completes an Ashen Hunt, for example, should be permitted to know great favor (Court Goodwill ●●●+) from the Autumn Court, and then only after demonstrating a consistent, years-long standard of good faith. This shows that a changeling is willing to kill over her friendship with the Leaden Mirror, thus demonstrating strong allegiance with not only the politics of the Autumn Court, but also its metaphysical foundations and sacred rites. Other local Autumn Courts assign quests or long-term duties to such Lost, allowing them to prove their dedication through more perilous or distasteful works. A capable warrior of the Summer Court might be tasked with the leashing of five briar wolves to be given as a gift to the Autumn Queen, or a beautiful young nymph of the Antler Crown publicly appointed the consort of a gruesome, gnarled old sorcerer highly placed within the Ashen Court. And those that aspire to the highest levels of goodwill are often called to greater sorts of service than even young and inexperienced members of the Autumn Court itself. While mistakes and failures are to be expected of the youth, those that have known years or even decades of friendship on the part of the Leaden Mirror must show themselves to be that much more exacting in their devotion to the beliefs and practices of Autumn.



The road goes both ways, as well, and it is certainly possible for a changeling to lose the favor that she has accrued. For instance, taking actions that suddenly free a large number of people from the grip of fear (say, perhaps, by taking down a brutal gangster who holds an entire projects community in his merciless grasp) can lose a changeling the esteem of the Autumn Court and even earn its enmity. Fear is an unpleasant passion and its demands are often equally unpleasant. Simple failure to perform routine tasks requests by the Ashen Court can, at times, lose a fae its goodwill, as can betrayal of sensitive information. Even just the simple act of going to another court (even one's own court) with unknown magic before bringing it to the Leaden Mirror can hurt one's favor within the Autumn Court.

Dark rumor has it that the Autumn Court occasionally assassinates, whether subtly or overtly, some of those changelings once in the Leaden Mirror's favor whose deeds lose them the court's Goodwill. Perhaps this is seen as a given fae's last (unwilling) service to the cause of fear, but the stories are persistent enough to be worthy of consideration on the part of one who would set out to earn the friendship of the Ashen Court. Certainly, few changelings can point to living Lost who are known to have utterly fallen from the good graces of the Autumn Court.

For those who abandon the Court *itself*, forsaking their Mantles for that of another (or no) season, the Ashen Court may not approve, but it can forgive. An understanding remains between the changeling and her former fellows. However, the Leaden Mirror takes a very poor view of its former citizens undercutting the Court's mystique by explaining its secrets and weaknesses. In game terms, a character who leaves the Autumn Court trades in his Mantle (Autumn) for a lesser amount of Court Goodwill (Autumn) as usual (*Changeling*, p. 94), but this Court Goodwill is quicker to vanish than usual if he acts in ways that might be interpreted as going against the Autumn Court's best interests.

## TITLES

Like the other three seasonal courts, the Court of Fear bestows many sorts of titles upon its members, and not merely for the purpose of entitlements. Some are purely measures of esteem and indicators of responsibility within the court itself, and, rarely, outside of it. These offices are not universal to the Ashen Court; indeed, some freeholds may bestow *none* of these titles to Autumn courtiers and opt for entirely different ones. This is especially common in locales in which the Au-

tumn Court is noticeably influenced by cultures other than those stemming from Western European descent, in which the responsibilities of the offices may remain consistent, but the specific names assigned to them are radically different.

For instance, a Freehold based out of a neighborhood primarily inhabited by Russian immigrants (and changelings who descend from them) may simply call its Witch of the Bitter Wind "Baba" (grandmother), a title made ominous by the dreaded Baba Yaga of Russian folklore. Likewise, a Freehold that cleaves to the ancient Norse traditions of northernmost Europe might call its Ghûl a "Draugr" for the vengeful undead that stalked the barrows of old, hunting the living.

- **Twilit Page:** While the title of Twilit Page is a humble one, the task to which such a changeling is appointed is a significant one. A Freehold's Twilit Page is responsible for overseeing aspirants to the Autumn Court, as well as new members. The job encompasses elements of educator, nanny, bodyguard, and other similar functions, as the Page instructs his charges in the lore of the Ashen Court, the dangers of changeling life, and other important information.

- **Paladin of Shadows:** This title is bestowed upon one who champions the cause of the Leaden Mirror through force of arms, defending the Autumn Court during its season of ascendancy and bearing fear upon the edge of a naked blade at all times. Paladins are so called because they typically stand as the mailed fist of an Autumn King, serving the will of the Ashen Court and acting as its instrument in time of battle. Further, a Paladin often acts as a direct bodyguard to the Autumn monarch, protecting as much by menacing presence as by martial skill.

- **Ranger:** Sometimes called the "Briar-Ranger" or "Ranger of the Thorns", this changeling is charged with exploration of the mysteries of the local Hedge and, often, with acting as a guide to those less knowledgeable in its nuances. These Lost may be harvesters of goblin fruit and other oddments, hunters of hobgoblins and other Hedge-beasts, and finders of Hollows. Some of these fae actually *live* in the Hedge, coming out only as necessary to serve the Freehold and to preserve their Clarity.

- **Legate of Mists:** When the Autumn Court must make its will known to the other courts of the seasons, it is the Legate of Mists that is sent to convey the will of the children of fear. Both socially adroit and frightful, the Legate of Mists is sometimes employed by the freehold as a whole, when a message must be borne

to outsiders and the locals either do not know what to expect or wish to make a terrifying impression. Particularly powerful and courageous (or, perhaps, merely insane and suicidal) Legates have even been known to treat with the ambassadors dispatched by certain Gentry, in the name of protecting the Lost from the depredations of the Others.

- **Fool of First Frost:** This Autumn courtier acts as a jester to the Ashen Court, using dark and uncomfortable comedy (which is not always synonymous with humor) to highlight political issues within the freehold, to demonstrate the social acumen of the Leaden Mirror, and, of course, to occasionally distract the attention of other changelings away from more meaningful endeavors. The Fool may, for example, tell an engaging and amusing story that abruptly ends in horror or stage a terrifying murder, the investigation of which rapidly strays into the absurd, before it is revealed that no one has actually been killed at all.

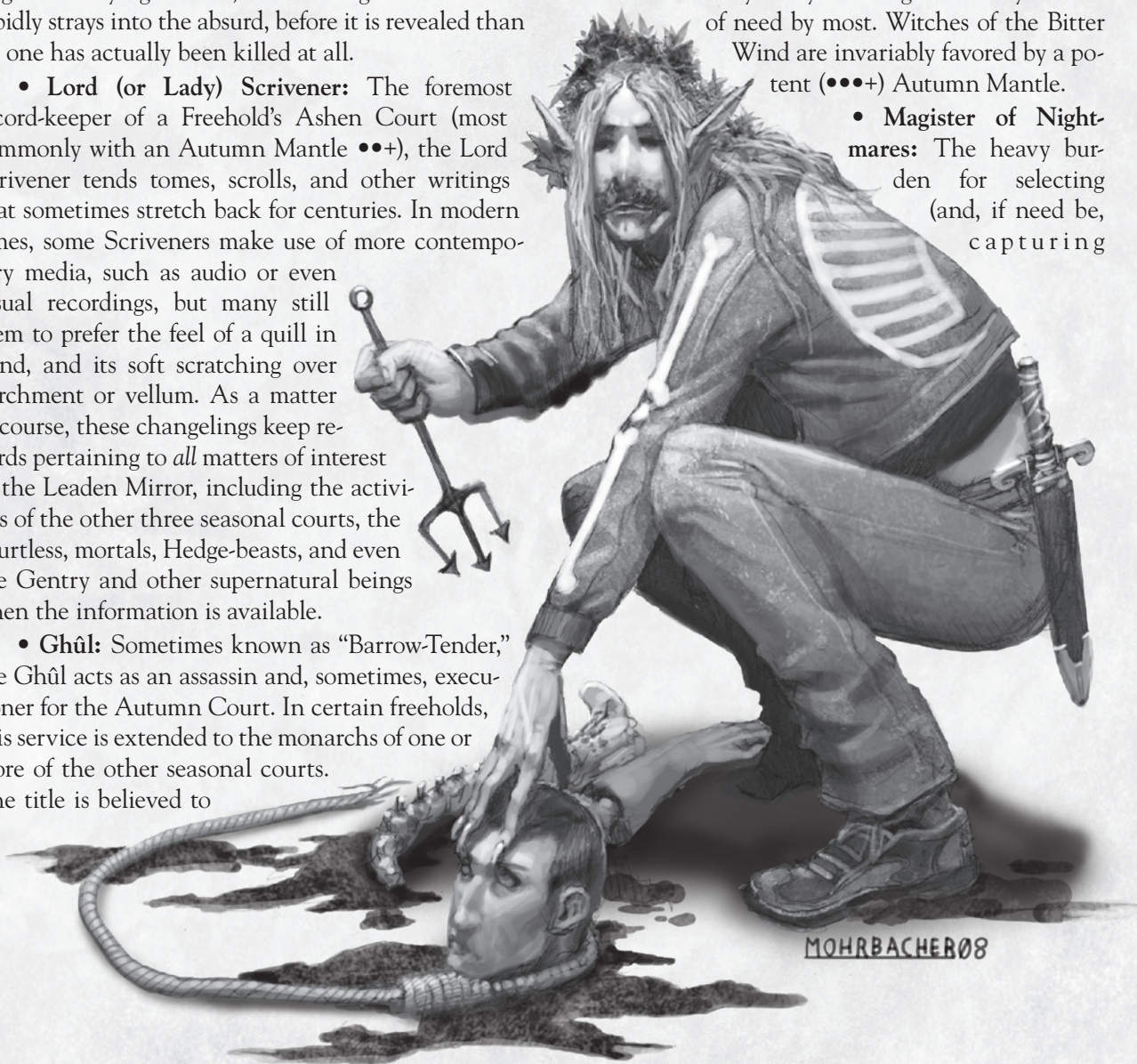
- **Lord (or Lady) Scrivener:** The foremost record-keeper of a Freehold's Ashen Court (most commonly with an Autumn Mantle ••+), the Lord Scrivener tends tomes, scrolls, and other writings that sometimes stretch back for centuries. In modern times, some Scriveners make use of more contemporary media, such as audio or even visual recordings, but many still seem to prefer the feel of a quill in hand, and its soft scratching over parchment or vellum. As a matter of course, these changelings keep records pertaining to *all* matters of interest to the Leaden Mirror, including the activities of the other three seasonal courts, the courtless, mortals, Hedge-beasts, and even the Gentry and other supernatural beings when the information is available.

- **Ghûl:** Sometimes known as "Barrow-Tender," the Ghûl acts as an assassin and, sometimes, executioner for the Autumn Court. In certain freeholds, this service is extended to the monarchs of one or more of the other seasonal courts. The title is believed to

have its origins in the practice (perhaps common to some few early Darkling and Ogre holders of the office) of devouring the flesh and even the bones of those slain. In modern times, the Ghûl is only used against the most heinous of criminals among the Lost: loyalists, the soulless, and the like. It is virtually unheard-of for one without a respectable tie to Autumn (Mantle ••+) to be awarded this title.

- **Witch of the Bitter Wind:** This title (given to both women and men) is one that some Freeholds maintain throughout the year, irrespective of which court is presently ascendant. The Witch is a counselor on all matters occult, known to be proficient in many different sorcerous practices and possessed of dark and terrible knowledge. Needless to say, the bearer of this title is often an object of dread within the Freehold, avoided by many and sought out only in time of need by most. Witches of the Bitter Wind are invariably favored by a potent (•••+) Autumn Mantle.

- **Magister of Nightmares:** The heavy burden for selecting (and, if need be, capturing



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and even temporarily incarcerating) the prey for an Ashen Hunt falls upon the shoulders of the Magister of Nightmares. This changeling (almost always possessed of an Autumn Mantle rating of ●●●●+) is a keeper of the Autumn Court's grim and final vision of justice. Not all freeholds bestow this title, and those that do are often seen as particularly traditional and unforgiving. Some say that the "nightmares" mentioned in this title are the fears that *all* Lost feel toward the notion of being prey, while others believe that they refer to the haunted slumber that many Magisters must, no doubt, endure as a result of their dark work.

- **Ashen Notary:** Pledges are among the most powerful and potentially lasting of changeling magics — promises so deep that they can echo down through the generations and radically impact the life of a freehold. In some freeholds, a changeling of the Leaden Mirror is sometimes entrusted to oversee and sometimes to record particularly grandiose vows (a pledge with one or more factors rated as "greater") sworn during the Autumn season and sometimes throughout the year. The Ashen Notary is almost always a trusted and highly respected Autumn courtier (Autumn Mantle of ●●●●+). Of course, in practice, many Lost choose not to employ the Notary's services — especially for pledges that would not be approved by, or even oppose, the present Ashen monarch — but a failure to do so is often considered inauspicious in a freehold that employs one.

- **Dread Esquire:** This title is extended to cherished allies of the Leaden Mirror (who must have at least 3 dots of Autumn Goodwill) and is intended to demonstrate the Ashen Court's esteem for the individual in question. This title is not lightly given. It shows that the changeling upon whom it is bestowed enjoys the friendship and perhaps even the protection of the freehold's Autumn fae.

## FREEHOLD ROLES

As shepherds of fear and dwellers in the house of the unknown, changelings of the Autumn Court are well-suited to certain roles within the freehold, many of which hold universal application, regardless of which season is presently ascendant. Not all freehold make use of all — or even necessarily most — of these roles, and in some cases in which they *are* employed, they are not held by Autumn fae. Consider the options outlined below to be suggestions to roles to which courtiers of the Leaden Mirror tend to be well-suited, rather than any hard rule for the duties that members of the Ashen Court must necessarily take up.

- **Counselor:** Fear, suspicion, and uncertainty abound in the world of the Lost: of the Gentry, of the loss of self, of the loss of Clarity. Some Autumn courtiers are well-suited to acting as counselors to those gripped by such powerful and fundamental fears, helping them to work through these feelings in constructive ways that fortify resolve and strengthen the spirit. Of course, not all changelings are willing to confide their fears in one empowered by that very emotion, but Autumn fae need not all be untrustworthy fiends, eager to betray any confidence, and so some Lost *do* come to a member of the Ashen Court when in need of someone with whom to discuss those things that test their courage.

- **Executioner:** The duty of a freehold executioner is a deeply unpleasant burden, but changeling law (as dictated by the mandates of Clarity) usually forbids incarceration for even the most egregious offenses. Thus, when pledges, corporal punishment, and other punitive measures fail to suffice, it must fall to *someone* to carry out that most final of sentences. In many freeholds, the Autumn Court accepts this harsh duty, viewing it as another sacrifice in the name of championing the cause of fear; in this case, the fear of one's fellow Lost. A freehold's executioner is often a social pariah, viewed as "unclean" by other changelings, and so the office itself may be held anonymously, so as to protect its holder from retribution, either subtle or overt.

- **Vizier:** Whether the cackling old madman on the edge of the swamp or the elegant sorceress gliding across the marble floor of the Winter King's ballroom, changelings of the Leaden Mirror do well as advisors to others, bartering their knowledge for a price. In some cases, that price is power, prestige or comfort, and, in others, it is something a bit stranger: a lock of hair freely given, a letter to be delivered (its seal unbroken) to a reclusive suspected loyalist, or a singular goblin fruit to be plucked from a place in the Hedge where the barest scrape from a bramble is a deadly poison. In keeping with the dictates of their season, most Autumn courtiers who act in a capacity as viziers offer their counsel in a roundabout fashion, using allegory and symbolism, so as to best preserve mystery and invite exploration of the unknown.

- **Seer:** Related in some ways to the position of vizier, the seer deals with the future, rather than observations upon the past and present. Of course, the Autumn Court has its fair share of charlatans skilled in the art of speaking much about times to come while saying little so that hindsight makes everything *ap-*

pear to make sense. Still, some few fae of the Leaden Mirror *do* possess more genuine divinatory powers and are willing to offer their insights to others. A Spring King or Summer Queen might, for example, keep such an augur on retainer, or else send enterprising younger changelings to seek out a skilled prognosticator. In keeping with their oft-unhappy role as stewards of times yet to come, particularly renowned seers are commonly loners and some grow rather eccentric (if not outright mad) with their self-imposed isolation.

- **Hedge-Guide:** In the pursuit of the unknown, some Autumn changelings seek out the mysteries of the Hedge and even the Thorns. Those that survive the experience and return with lore and artifacts that benefit the freehold sometimes acquire reputations as knowledgeable authorities on that strange realm and are eventually sought out by those wishing to traverse the Hedge or otherwise reap its bounty. As Autumn is the season of harvest, this is fitting for the court's mandate, and some see it as a sacred obligation of the Leaden Mirror to bear those that wish it into the Hedge, that they might reap the curious bounty of the Thorns.

- **Hedge-Farmer:** Despite the dangers inherent in the Hedge, the lure of its unearthly flora keeps calling the Lost back into its perilous embrace. Distinct from hedge-guides, who lead others through the Briars and sometimes come back with goblin fruits and other such trifles, hedge-farmers are actively committed to the cultivation and harvest of such strange delicacies and verdant oddities. In many freeholds, it is a member of the Ashen Court who boasts the most extensive knowledge of what grows and thrives in the Hedge: which plants are safe to eat and which spread roots from within succulent seeds to strangle the guts of those that consume their fruit.

- **Grave-Tender:** Autumn is the dying season, when the leaves begin to fall from the trees and the harvest is mercilessly reaped. Death is, in many ways, the ultimate unknown, the greatest source of fear. Thus, it is unsurprising that some Autumn courtiers take upon themselves responsibility for the dead. Changelings of the Leaden Mirror may prepare the bodies of dead fae for interment, preside over funerary rites, build or maintain tombs, or otherwise involve themselves in the process of shepherding the deceased on to the next world. Some go so far as to interact with ghosts and other such restless dead, seeing this also as part of the court's mandate to embrace and assimilate fear and uncertainty.

- **Historian:** Just as it is a time for dying, so, too, is Autumn a season of wisdom brought to its fullness.

Ashen fae can serve as a freehold's historians, keeping lost lore for the times when it is needed, collecting the learning of those long gone, and researching subjects of interest to local changelings, both fantastical and mundane. Given the court's penchant for delving into secrets best left uncovered, the Leaden Mirror occasionally stirs up knowledge that should have remained lost and forgotten, but many such changelings consider the power of hidden truths to be worth their terrible cost. On a less lofty level, however, the diligent work of Autumn scribes and librarians often serves to preserve the history of a freehold for generations to come.

- **Bounty Hunter:** In keeping with the Leaden Mirror's devotion to fear and symbolic theme of harvest, some freeholds employ one or more martially inclined Autumn fae in the capacity of bounty hunters, tasked with the recovery of fugitives, that they might be turned over to receive the justice of the courts (or even just the court currently ascendant). Some of these hunters are paid by the job, while others receive a retainer — on the condition of perpetual readiness for their appointed task — and others do the job for free, whether out of the sadistic glee of the chase, a spiritual dedication to the court's principles, or something else. Only rarely, however, is such a hunter so astray from the path of Clarity as to place her quarry in fetters or to imprison him.

- **Gaoler:** Of course, as awful as it may be to do so, when another changeling *absolutely* must be put behind bars, one way or another, many Lost turn to the services of the Autumn Court to shoulder the weight of the deed. The terror experienced by many fae when they are imprisoned — often echoing the harsh circumstances of a Durance — is, in this instance, not so much an experience for Ashen courtiers to savor as a burden to weather. Placing other changelings in chains is uncomfortably close for most fae of the Leaden Mirror to taking on the role of the Gentry, and the court watches closely for those that seem to grow desensitized to this harsh duty, or even to enjoy it. Naturally, people and things other than changelings must also occasionally be locked up, whether for their own good or that of the freehold, and, in some cases, the Autumn Court is willing to take on that responsibility as well.

- **Sorcerer:** Magic is the province of the Autumn Court and some fae within it practice the arcane arts with great proficiency, ranging from the subtle enchantments of a skilled herbalist to the earth-shaking Contracts of an arch-druid or elemental sorceress. Years of delving into forbidden lore can make an Ashen fae wise in many dark and potent magics. Those that need



to understand an unknown artifact, to research a rare and esoteric Pledge, or to unravel a curse placed by a vengeful True Fae would do well to consult with one of the magi of the Leaden Mirror.

- **Provisioner:** Autumn is the season of harvest, a time when that which has ripened is plucked from the earth and stored for lean times. In rural Freeholds, Autumn fae may be entrusted to literally act the part of farmers, hunters, and woodsmen: bringing in crops to store, meat to dry and smoke, and wood for feeding fires through long, bitter winters. In more urban environments, Ashen courtiers may instead reap other assets to be stockpiled and distributed by the Freehold: cars or clothes, money or groceries, and perhaps even the trappings necessary to create and maintain new lives.

## RELATIONS

How does the Court of Fear interact with other Lost? When one's foremost drive is to sow horror and trepidation, and to build upon the seductive allure of the unknown, how does a changeling get close enough to others to form meaningful relationships? The truth of the matter is that different fae of the Leaden Mirror enact their Court's mandate in different ways and every season *needs* every other. Without the balance of the four courts, the very system that upholds these ancient oaths, vital to the defense of the Lost against the Gentry, falls apart. Thus, every Court is bound by a timeless law to the fate and wellbeing of its sister seasons.

Overall, when something is known (or even just strongly suspected) to smack of uncertain magic, it is the Autumn Court that other changelings seek out. These powers are the Leaden Mirror's purview and, if anyone is apt to be able to unravel an arcane mystery, it is the changelings of the Ashen Court. Some do this out of a sense of seasonal obligation, while others are simply glad to have the unknown and potentially dangerous relic out of their hands and into those of Lost who will keep them as safe as possible from any deleterious effects.

Otherwise, Autumn's typical sorts of inter-season relationships are as follows:

- **Spring Court:** The children of the Antler Crown are, in many ways, alien to those of the Leaden Mirror. Fear and Desire are passions of two entirely different sorts and, while they occasionally intersect (like when the captain of the chess team is trying to work up the courage to ask the most popular cheerleader in school to the prom), these examples are the exceptions that prove the rule. If forced to choose between the two passions,

people generally either desire a thing and pursue it or else fear and avoid it. The fact of the matter, though most would not admit it, is that many Autumn fae simply do not understand the Lost of the Antler Crown. Desire is, ultimately, rooted in a sort of hope — the hope of fulfillment — while fear is an emotion that denies such hope. Some Ashen courtiers believe that Spring fae are cruel (by manipulating the wants and needs that others will never truly be able to satisfy) and others consider them to be naïve (for thinking that a lifetime of playing upon covetous feelings is worthwhile), but most simply fail to grasp the reasons that motivate them.

Despite this, however, powerful alliances have, in the past, been made between a Freehold's Autumn and Spring Courts. When Fear and Desire work hand-in-hand, a considerable degree of control can be asserted over mortals and other changelings alike. Some such alliances become intoxicating tyrannies of terror and want — a perfect merger of the iron fist and the silken glove — occasionally captivating the entire freehold within the equivalent of an abusive relationship. At other times, these two courts work together to facilitate healthier partnerships between their respective passions. In such places, the Lost learn to appreciate what they have and to dare to hope for more, while being forever mindful of the cruelty of fate (and of the Others), and so remaining vigilant against threats to personal wellbeing as well as the common good. Of course, many pacts between Autumn and Spring fall somewhere between these two extremes, being neither wholly altruistic nor unapologetically despotic.

The best and strongest ties between Autumn and Spring deal with stewardship over the mortal populace. Fear and Desire are the passions that most powerfully and consistently motivate the greatest number of ordinary people, thus enabling the Lost sworn to these emotions to find common ground in one another. These relationships with mortals may be healthful, parasitic, or something in-between, but they generally make for successful dealings, and almost everyone enjoys a solid working partnership. Certainly, a few naysayers on both sides might reject the idea of alliance with an “opposing” passion, but, under such an arrangement, they either get with the program, find that their objections are quickly hushed, or else they are simply ignored outright, in the face of a steady flow of Glamour. When undertaken with an eye for either generosity or political gain, this sort of alliance can yield benefit for the freehold as a whole, making both courts treasured assets to *all* local Lost.

Discord between Autumn and Spring cuts deeply into the life of the freehold. When Fear and Desire are turned against one another, the results can be disastrous; arguably they are even more volatile than outright hostilities involving both the Iron Spear and the Leaden Mirror. A fight between fear and wrath is, in its own unpleasant way, predictable. When the Ashen and the Emerald go up against one another, whether martially or otherwise, the results are often anything but. Most commonly, the end result is chaos within the freehold, often (but not always) dividing changelings between the first and second halves of the year. Unfortunately, given the disparate passions of the two courts, this situation can persist for quite a long time if calmer heads cannot find a way to prevail.

• **Summer Court:** Those sworn to the Iron Spear are well-regarded by many (though by no means all) Autumn fae. Wrath is a passion easily turned to fear; even the most stout-hearted person must often choke down a shudder of terror when he beholds a warrior of the Summer Court charging headlong in his direction, and many Crimson fae place themselves in situation in which they themselves must confront the unknown and the horrific. Indeed, while the spiritual bonds between the Autumn and Winter Courts run deeper, a number of the Leaden Mirror's changelings actually prefer the company and methods of the Summer Court. The directness (some might say bluntness) of many Summer courtiers appeals to the sensibilities of the Ashen Court and the two groups often find common ground for alliances of mutual benefit.

In freeholds in which the Autumn and Summer Courts are closely aligned, fear and wrath walk hand-in-hand. In quite a few cases, the middle seasons of the year claim a brutal and unyielding hold over the Freehold as a whole, too powerful to be challenged even during the ascendancy of either Spring or Winter. More commonly, however, this simply means that the freehold tends toward a powerful, dynamic and frequently unobtrusive style of governance. Under such a system, Spring courtiers tend to go along with the flow, while Winter fae go even deeper underground than usual, fearful of the consequences of such obviousness.

The most obvious cooperative endeavor between the Ashen and the Crimson, and one that bears a bit of exploration, is that of war. While martial conflict is often considered to "default" to the Iron Spear, many Autumn changelings would argue that assumption; the battlefield is a place of many different shades of terror, after all. When these two courts are working

to a singular purpose in time of armed conflict, woe to the freehold's enemies (or unto the other changelings of the freehold, if their attentions are focused in such a direction). In some parts of the world — violent dictatorships, war-torn Third World countries, and the like — the Autumn and Summer courts form a sort of ghoulish symbiosis, each side feeding off of its own native passion and, in turn, contributing to the other's. While the dangers inherent in doing so are ample and the practice is morally questionable in the extreme, the rewards in harvested Glamour can be vast, indeed. Under such an arrangement, these two courts tend to either become a unified tyranny, or else drag the Spring and Winter Courts down to their level (for there are invariably many desires and sorrows to be found in lands ruled openly by fear and wrath).

When the Autumn and Summer Courts are in contention, or even a state of outright hostility, freeholds as a whole tend to suffer. Arguably the two most forceful of the seasonal Courts, when the Ashen and the Crimson butt heads, the results are often spectacular and terrible. Unless the Spring and Winter Courts are as powerful as the middle seasons, if not more so, those two Courts tend to keep their heads down and wait to see who emerges as victorious, or else forge an agreement to join with one side or the other, simply to bring the hostilities to an end in as expedient a manner as possible. Still, when Autumn and Summer are bound and determined to come to blows, there is often very little that can stop them.

• **Winter Court:** Sorrow is the passion most aligned to the fear cultivated by the Autumn Court. Many Ashen fae tend to look upon the changelings of the Silent Arrow as well-meaning though somewhat depressing, retiring, and perhaps cowardly elder siblings. The Winter Court's belief in silence and unobtrusiveness can sometimes rankle fae of the Leaden Mirror, whose overriding passion demands an occasionally direct touch, but, overall, those sworn to the Court of Fear often feel a certain kinship with those devoted to the Onyx Court. Often held to be the two wisest courts, Autumn and Winter frequently confer on matters of far-reaching import to the freehold and, between the more active methods of the Ashen Court and the typically cautious stance of the Onyx, a strong middle path is usually navigated.

When Autumn and Winter are in accord, they can benefit a freehold greatly by their knowledge and understanding. The most dynamic tendencies of Autumn are tempered by Winter's retiring ways, while



Winter's passivity benefits from Autumn's more outgoing nature. The balance between the two courts places them in an ideal position to enhance the prosperity of the freehold through their maturity and sagacity. Winter has information and Autumn has mystical lore. In such an arrangement, Spring and Summer often follow the lead of the two "elder" seasons, guided by their combined insight. Of course, just as often, the two "younger" seasons feel a need to band together to preserve and protect their agendas, creating a rift in the freehold. In this latter sort of circumstance, it is commonly Autumn and Winter that take the first steps (and, usually, accept the deepest compromises) to heal the breach, well aware of the often disastrous consequences of such conflict within the community.

When the Gentry and their slaves are about, an alliance between the Ashen and the Onyx truly shines. The Leaden Mirror often defaults to reconnaissance, mystical defense, and the occasional hit-and-run measures, while the Silent Arrow entrenches and creates safe retreats for their compatriots. Long acquainted with all manner of fear, the Autumn Court is often well-equipped to deal with the terror of an incursion on the part of the True Fae — or, at least, better equipped than most other Lost would be under similar circumstances — while the Winter Court's creed of secrecy and flight from peril helps to protect the local changelings from the attentions of the Others. The system is by no means perfect, but it almost always yields far better results than standing and fighting.

In the event that the Leaden Mirror and the Silent Arrow are at odds, however, fear and sorrow are turned against one another. The polarizing effect of the contention between the last two seasons of the year can often deeply divide the freehold as a whole, though circumstances decide which courts fall on which side or, indeed, if the entire freehold ends up being the seasonal equivalent of "every man for himself." In quite a few cases, such enmity erupts into a silent war, with the warriors of Autumn and Winter alike fighting in the long shadows and deep silence that suit their courts best. Still, the inherent ties between the Ashen and the Onyx conspire to ensure that such hostilities are almost invariably short-lived. In all save the most unusual cases, the two courts are too much alike in ideology and temperament to be at one another's throats for long.

## OTHER TRAVELERS UNDER THE SETTING SUN

Given the Autumn Court's devotion to fear and occult lore, both of which are strongly attached to the

unknown, these changelings have more reason than most to seek out the other denizens of the unseen world. While no Autumn fae has ever mastered such powers (to anyone's knowledge, anyway), great progress has been made in some freeholds toward better understanding the nature, society, and even abilities of other supernatural beings. Some changelings of the Leaden Mirror go so far as to suggest that Contracts might be forged with such creatures granting powers akin to their own — powers perhaps completely unknown to the Gentry and, thus, usable in the long struggle to defy the inhuman masters of Arcadia. The prospect, however dangerous, is just tempting enough to take root, here and there, inspiring Ashen fae to walk down paths hewn far more by hope and ambition than by wisdom.

- **Vampires:** The Autumn Court is deeply divided on the subject of the undead. Surely, they are creatures of fear; humanity's tales of the walking dead go back to the days of the first recorded stories and, doubtless, beyond. Vampires are monsters in truest form, slaking their immortal thirst upon the blood of the living and trafficking in powers too dark for the light of day. That said, they are also extraordinarily perilous things to work with, always looking for advantage and willing to destroy almost anything that conflicts with their alien ambitions. As vampires often wield a good deal of influence over mortal affairs, many of them can easily shatter a given changeling's current identity, sending a careful, years-long deception tumbling down like a house of cards in a matter of weeks or even days. Thus, the Leaden Mirror counsels extreme caution in even the most cursory dealings with the undead.

- **Werewolves:** What little the Autumn Court knows about the shapeshifters is unappealing at best. Rather than the objects of dread and horror that folklore makes them out to be, werewolves seem to be much more creatures of Summer than Autumn. An unwholesome fury seethes just under their protean skins, impelling them onward to acts of stunning violence. Still, werewolves occasionally make for a scrumptious feast of fear for those that know how to follow them discreetly and not to interfere in their self-proclaimed "sacred" tasks. Therefore, Ashen fae are sometimes known to reach a state of non-interfering equilibrium with shapechangers.

- **Mages:** It is the experience of most changelings of the Leaden Mirror that encounters with willworkers don't go well. From a purely occult standpoint, mages seem to practice a form of magic that is impossible for changelings to duplicate. Worse, some have a certain something to them that reminds the Autumn Court



of the power of Arcadia. The Ashen Lost are quick to warn their kin to beware of those mages who wear the thistle as a badge, for they may be witting or unwitting agents of the True Fae.

Those that are usually the most reasonable (and safe, relatively speaking) in conversation are often those least interested and conversant in the language of fear. Those that *do* understand and appreciate the power of fear, however, are commonly terrifying in ways wholly beyond the comprehension of even the Autumn fae. While they can occasionally produce great upswellings of horror upon which such Lost might glut their hunger for Glamour, there is often something dark and unhealthy about the “flavor” of such sustenance. Worse still, some mages seem to practice their own kinds of oneiromancy and oneiromachy, invading dreams, pillaging them, and even fighting within them for some purpose ill-understood by the Ashen Court. Most wise Autumn courtiers advise younger members of the Leaden Mirror to stay well away from willworkers and their craft.

- **Prometheans:** If legends are to be believed, the long shadows of the world conceal a handful of created people, alive but soulless. Naturally, this prospect is fascinating to many Ashen fae, many of whom remember the many nightmarish cautionary tales about artificial life and the fear that they’ve created in generations. In fact, some of the more horrifying Autumn courtiers (especially some Darklings and Ogres) look like nothing quite so much as creatures stitched together from dead flesh and granted animation. If such beings truly exist, the Leaden Mirror could perhaps benefit greatly by their lore. Actually *finding* such an abomination proves easier said than done, however.

- **Ghosts:** The unquiet dead are, by their very nature, harbingers of fear, ripening that passion by their very presence. Thus, many Autumn courtiers are well-disposed toward the shades of the departed — provided, of course, that said shades can behave themselves, or at least direct their rancor toward targets other than the Ashen Court. Mortals can be moved to dizzying varieties of terror by ghosts, and some Lost of the Leaden Mirror make it a point to reside in areas frequented by the ghosts of the departed.

- **Others:** Stranger creatures than vampires, werewolves, mages, ghosts, and changelings walk this world, and many members of the Autumn Court consider it part of their seasonal mandate to seek out and understand such creatures: their powers, their motivations and, most especially, their fears and the ways in which they might be bent to the purposes of changeling so-

ciety as a whole and the Leaden Mirror in particular. These beings are many and varied, and trying to categorize them all is an exercise in futility. Still, the enormity of the prospect doesn’t keep some Autumn fae — deeply devoted to their court’s province over the unknown — from at least making the attempt.

## CONTRACTS OF SPELL-BOUND AUTUMN

The season of lengthening nights and falling leaves is possessed of magic that is more than simple symbolism. Changelings who use the Contracts of Spellbound Autumn call upon the season’s affinity for sorcery and otherworldly phenomena.

### WARLOCK’S GAZE (◉)

The character detects the presence of the supernatural; even those beings, objects and effects that are deliberately concealed.

**Prerequisites:** None

**Cost:** 2 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Wyrd + Occult (vs. Composure + Wyrd, in the case of supernaturally concealed persons, effects, or things)

**Action:** Instant (and possibly Contested; resistance is reflexive)

**Catch:** The character physically makes contact with a non-allied supernatural being other than another changeling when activating this clause.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character falsely detects the presence of one or more supernatural creatures, objects, and/or phenomena, as well as failing to detect any such presences that are *truly* in his vicinity.

**Failure:** The character either rolls no successes or fails to exceed the successes accrued by a character concealed by or concealing a supernatural effect, and does not detect any supernatural creatures, objects, and/or phenomena. He is aware that the clause was not successfully enacted.

**Success:** The character scores successes in excess of those accrued by a character concealed by or concealing any supernatural effect, if any, and detects any non-concealed supernatural creatures, objects, and/or phenomena within a number of yards equal to his Wyrd. (Note that the character may succeed against some subjects and fail against others, depending upon how many successes are scored by each character in the contested roll. The character using this clause, however, rolls only once and com-





pares his total successes against all other nearby individuals using supernatural powers of occlusion.)

**Exceptional Success:** No additional result, beyond the possibility of penetrating especially strong methods of supernatural occlusion.

### BARROW-WHISPER (••)

The changeling learns how to utter the sepulchral tongue of the unquiet dead — to hear and be heard by such restless shades.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Autumn) • or Court Goodwill (Autumn) •••

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Wyrd + Expression

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** A ghost in the area *wants* to communicate, either with the character specifically or with anyone who will listen.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character's presumption angers any nearby ghosts, who will do what they can to inconvenience, harass, or even harm her.

**Failure:** The character is unable to communicate with or otherwise perceive the presence of any ghosts in the vicinity.

**Success:** For the remainder of the scene the character can hear and be heard by (though not see) any restless shades in her presence.

**Exceptional Success:** As a normal success, but the ability to hear and be heard by ghosts lasts for the entire night, should the character wish it.

### SMITH'S WISDOM (•••)

By studying an unknown object of power — whether a token or something else — the fae learns its abilities and intended purpose.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Autumn) •• or Court Goodwill (Autumn) ••••

**Cost:** 3 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Occult + Mantle (Autumn)

**Action:** Extended — 5 successes required per dot of the item (Storyteller's discretion for items without dot values); each roll represents four hours of uninterrupted study.

**Catch:** The character has stolen the item from a friend (the theft must be malicious; items left unattended in the hopes that they will be taken don't count) or been freely given the item by an enemy.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character radically misinterprets the object's abilities and implicitly believes his assessment to be correct, to the point of being willing to stake his wellbeing or that of his allies on it.

**Failure:** The character accrues no further successes in his attempt to discern the item's function and powers, and suffers a -1 die penalty to all subsequent rolls to unravel the object's secrets. This penalty is cumulative for multiple failures.

**Success:** The character scores one or more successes and grows closer to learning the purpose of the item in question. When the Storyteller rules that the appropriate number of successes has been accrued, the character learns the object's supernatural capabilities. Note, however, that this does not necessarily equate to being able to actually make use of these powers.

**Exceptional Success:** No additional effect, beyond accruing five or more successes toward uncovering the item's mystic secrets.

### ARCADIAN COMMANDMENT (••••)

The character gains the power to speak with the authority of a True Fae to a hobgoblin or other such minion of the Gentry, even those normally incapable of understanding speech.

**Prerequisite:** Mantle (Autumn) ••• or Court Goodwill (Autumn) •••••

**Cost:** 3 Glamour and 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Wyrd vs. Resolve + Wyrd

**Action:** Instant and Contested

**Catch:** The character knowingly comes unarmed and unarmored into the presence of the creature to be commanded.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character automatically earns the enmity of whatever creature she is attempt-

ing to command. It immediately reacts in a manner appropriate to its nature.

**Failure:** The character either accrues either no successes or fewer successes than the creature she is trying to command, and cannot exert any influence over it.

**Success:** The character scores more successes than the creature she is attempting to command. For the remainder of the scene, she may compel the being to any course of action that doesn't directly endanger its wellbeing, or that of the Gentry that created it and/or acts as its direct master, if applicable. If the changeling sends the creature out of her direct presence to perform a task, it will do so to the best of its ability, subject to the parameters outlined above, until an hour is up, whereupon the creature will immediately break off from the task. The creature is aware that it has been supernaturally compelled and may pursue revenge or other action against the character, if such is in its nature.

**Exceptional Success:** As above, save that the creature may be dispatched on a task taking up to a full day and night, and will believe its actions to have been of its own choosing, unless the character's influence is subsequently pointed out to it.

### OATHBREAKER'S HONESTY (•••••)

The changeling manipulates the power of a pledge to violate its strictures without falling under its Sanction.

**Prerequisite:** Mantle (Autumn) ••••

**Cost:** 5 Glamour and 1 Willpower dot

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Wyrd

**Action:** Extended — one success per level of bonus or penalty involved in each factor of the Pledge (in other words, a -3 penalty Alliance Task factor would require three successes, and a -2 Poisoning of Boon Sanction another two successes); each roll takes one turn.

**Catch:** The changeling is begged to enact this clause by someone who will *knowingly* come to disaster (loss of life or loved ones, loss of Clarity to the point of a descent into madness, etc.) on account of his betrayal.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character immediately falls under the Sanction of the Pledge, just as though he'd broken it normally, and may never again attempt to circumvent this pledge. The spent Glamour and Willpower dot are lost (the Willpower dot may, however, be re-purchased for eight experience points).

**Failure:** The character fails to circumvent the pledge and loses his Glamour and Willpower dot, as above, though he may later attempt to cheat the Pledge if he so wishes.

**Success:** The character accrues successes toward the process of sidestepping the Pledge. When sufficient successes have been scored, he may do so for the remainder of the scene or an hour, whichever is less, without incurring the pledge's Sanction. As above,

the character's Willpower dot may be re-purchased for eight experience points.

**Exceptional Success:** No additional effect, beyond scoring numerous successes toward circumventing the Pledge.

## MAGI OF THE GILDED THORN

*I vow to pursue the mysteries of the Thorns until I have mastered every changeling's first and greatest fear, and taken its power for myself.*

The Hedge is a strange and mysterious place, a realm of wonder and terror. From the most luscious goblin fruits, to the most horrific hobgoblins, to the occasional wandering Gentry, the Briars conceal uncertainty and odd magic. Some Ashen fae aspire to learn the every secret of the Hedge, to tame this unfathomable realm and to reap its powers. The so-called Magi of the Gilded Thorn are a group of Autumn courtiers devoted to unraveling the ages-old riddles of the Thorns, claiming its many assets, and, perhaps, eventually learning to control its dangers. While the perils of this pursuit are many, the rewards are greater still. Or so the Magi maintain.

These changelings call themselves Magi of the Gilded Thorn for many reasons. Perhaps foremost among them is the understanding that treasure hides amongst the Briars, awaiting those who have but to demonstrate the courage and resolve needed to penetrate the depths of the Hedge and claim that bounty for their own. In terms of personal transformation, gold has long been considered the pinnacle of the physical practice of alchemy, a metaphor for the far more profound spiritual transmutation undertaken by those devoted to the so-called Royal Art. Magi see themselves as delving into a crucible of the will, taking elements of that which the Lost hold in dread into their bodies and,



indeed, their very souls, and becoming something stronger, wiser, and better able to survive. Within the Thorns, these changelings say, is found greater power, both exploitable and, just as importantly, infinitely renewable.

To those freeholds that know of them, Magi of the Gilded Thorn appear as rugged foresters and survivalists, masters of the mutable ways of the Hedge. They are often viewed with a bizarre blend of awe and distrust, outsiders more at home among the monstrosities of the Thorns than in the company of other Lost. While the truth of the matter is somewhat different, the Magi don't always mind projecting such an image. The suspicion of other fae keeps them at arm's length, enabling the Magi to do their dangerous work in peace, free from the interference of those who usually do more harm than good in their well-meaning eagerness and ignorance. Often, the "standoffish, mysterious wanderer" stereotype isn't terribly far off the mark. In many cases, though, Magi deliberately adopt the image to hold others at arm's length, whether out of altruism, a desire for solitude, or some other reason.

If there's one characteristic that all Magi share, it's the drive to confront and overcome their fear of the Hedge, a fear that grips the heart of every person who's ever been dragged through the Briars and into the inhuman heart of Arcadia itself. While this pursuit often batters and scars them, Magi come back more knowledgeable, ever less enslaved by their terror

and increasingly skilled in their mastery over it. Still, they do their part to protect and spread the fear so cherished by the Ashen Court, bringing back stories (some true, some exaggerated, and even a few outright lies) of the horrors to be found there. By building up the dread mythology of the Hedge, the Magi not only keep other Lost safely out of a place shunned by the wise, but they also serve to make that realm just a little bit more exclusive to their entitlement, which suits most Magi just fine.

Of course, with an inherent mandate to gather the lore that drives back one of the fears inherent to the changeling state, the Magi of the Gilded Thorn are not without enemies, even within the Autumn Court itself. The gruesome Scarecrow Ministry — a secretive cabal of bogeymen and monsters in the dark — tacitly disapproves of the avowed purpose of the Magi, as one of the Ministry's more significant self-appointed tasks is to keep others *away* from the Hedge and all of its awful splendor. Whenever the two groups are forced to coexist, they tend to clash, with the Ministers often acting the part of the aggressors (their skulking ways make it hard for outsiders to preemptively target them, after all) and the Magi retaliating shortly thereafter. At the worst of such times, the Hedge itself becomes something of a battleground and all of the local fae shudder at the thought that such commotion will eventually draw the attention of the Others.

The Scarecrows are not alone in their disapproval of the Magi of the Gilded Thorn. Many other changelings feel that the Magi should leave well enough alone and not poke at the Hedge, out of the fear that it will inevitably poke back. For every fae who is glad to have a Hedge-wise Magus at the Freehold's disposal, there is one who just wishes that the "dangerous instigator" would go on her way and trouble the locals no more. Naturally, the things that lurk *within* the Thorns themselves are no friends to the Magi. Those Hedge-beasts that can reason and remember often harbor grudges against the upstart Lost who intrude upon their territory, and some are known to set traps for the Magi, using kidnapped fae, strange relics, or tempting oddments for bait. Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, certain Gentry stalk the boundless expanses of the Briars and one or two may have come to comprehend the existence of this order of changelings sworn to unravel the timeless mysteries of the Thorns. Every so often, a Magus goes missing and no amount of investigation or tracking turns up even the barest trace of her. Some speculate that perhaps one or more of the Others have

taken personal offense to the mission of the Magi.

Still, the Magi are not without their defenses. Despite their often rough-hewn exteriors, many of them have keen minds and most at least attempt to study martial magic. When swords and guns fail, strange Contracts, long-lost tokens, and potent pledges can frequently suffice. Indeed, many a changeling wonders at why these hardy woodsmen call themselves "magi" until such time as they have the opportunity to witness the mystic arts to which the Gilded Thorn has dedicated itself.

It is thus unsurprising that many changelings do all in their power to hire on a Magus of the Gilded Thorn when in need of a Hedge-guide. While the entitlement as a whole isn't a mercenary order, like the Tolltaker Knights, Magi are, nevertheless, almost always pragmatic enough to understand that accepting compensation for something that they'd normally just do for free is simple good sense. For the most part, the things that Magi want are entirely ordinary: clothes, wilderness supplies (like rucksacks, compasses, and such), firearms — all the sorts of equipment that normal people take for granted, but which can be devilishly difficult to acquire when one lives as a semi-nomadic forester only halfway on the grid at best. Of course, Magi also won't turn their noses up at more interesting forms of recompense, especially yet-unknown lore of the Thorns or sources of Hedge-bounty.

**Title:** Magus (either gender; though some very traditional fae use "Maga" to denote a female member of the Gilded Thorn)

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Autumn) 2, Wyrd 2, Occult 2, Survival 3

**Mien:** As the Magi of the Gilded Thorn tend to spend more time in the Hedge than is normal for changelings, many of them prefer simple, sturdy garments that are easily mended and, when need be, cheaply replaced. Heavy boots and rough denim or leather is preferred, and several Magi make use of armor. Of course, Hedge-spun raiment is common to those entitled to the Gilded Thorn. Some older or more hidebound Magi prefer the garb of traditional wood-wise folk (ranging from heavy robes, to deer-skins, to little more than natural pigments), though these grow fewer and fewer with each passing year, as mortals develop ever more efficient ways of thriving in wilderness environments and the Gilded Thorn eagerly adopts them. Still, in rural freeholds and those based out of less industrialized societies, a considerable number of Magi cling to the trappings of what are, to



their thinking, purer and more venerable ways of life.

Upon adopting the Oath of the Gilded Thorn, a changeling's mien often manifests subtle markings suggestive of the Briars: faint patterns (looking like birthmarks or faded scars in the shape of thorny vines) on one or more limbs, for instance, or small, bloody and painless wounds upon a hand or foot that make it look as though the character's flesh has been pierced by thorns. As the fae's Wyrd grows, these telltale signs also become more evident, as writhing strands of golden thorns slither upon every inch of exposed skin or thorns poke out of bloody divots in the skin, forever wet with blood. These barbs are soft and supple — incapable of causing harm — but act as a visual reminder of the Magus' bond to the Briars. Eventually, slender vines may thread from one wound to the next, or small leaves (and perhaps flowers or even berries) sprout from their edges. Some say that the eldest and most powerful Magi are, themselves, almost indistinguishable from the Hedge that they aspire to master.

**Background:** Changelings drawn to the life of the Magi are often curious sorts, unwilling to back down in the face of the unknown or even the frightful. They delve headlong (sometimes with foolhardy zeal) into mysteries, ready and willing to suffer the occasional hurt in the pursuit of forgotten or wholly undiscovered lore. As perhaps one of the deepest and most universal uncertainties of the changeling world, the Hedge represents a powerful, instinctual fear native to the very condition of being Lost. Those drawn to the Gilded Thorn feel a certain need to explore and analyze that fear, to question and challenge it at every turn, until they understand the reasons behind the terror and, in so doing, dispel the hold that it has over their spirits.

Of course, a desire to know and overcome one's own fear isn't enough by itself. Prospective Magi must also have knowledge about basic wilderness survival to thrive in the innumerable environments encompassed by the Hedge. Accordingly, Beasts are common among the Magi, as are Elementals aligned to natural forces associated with the wild places of the world. Changelings of Seemings less inherently connected to the green and growing places, such as Fairest or Darklings, are considerably less frequently enticed by the Gilded Thorn.

**Organization:** The Magi are loosely-knit, at best, in all save the rarest of freeholds. Typically, a



teacher takes on one or, at most, two apprentices at a time (often, with long years between each such induction; many teach only one student in a lifetime). The master passes along much of what she knows to her student and then leaves the newly-entitled changeling to figure out the rest on his own. Sometimes, Magi encounter one another in the depths of the Hedge, while wandering the perilous road of a trod. At such times, they might swap stories and secrets, and perhaps even trifles, but these chance meetings are rare and not to be counted upon. Given the exploratory mandate of the Magi, these changelings do not often enjoy the competition engendered by having many Lost so entitled within the relatively small areas encompassed by most freeholds, as discoveries (and the power and influence that they can bring) quickly dry up, divided between many.

When Magi *do* manage to gather in any numbers (invariably in freeholds situated in wilderness environments), they tend to form a loose fellowship of foresters and Hedge-wanderers, each staking out territory according to some combination of skill, seniority, sorcerous power, and personal charisma. In such freeholds, the local Hedge is often as near to tame as that alien environment can possibly be, as Magi band together — occasionally directing the efforts of other changelings, as well — when need be, to destroy, contain, or drive out as many of the dangers of the Thorns as they can. Invariably, one or more Magi will begin to chafe at the “competition” inherent to even a bare-bones organization, however, and will strike out on their own, seeking new vistas to explore and wilder Hedge to master.

## PRIVILEGES

Below is a privilege shared by all Magi of the Gilded Thorn.

### WISDOM OF THE THORNS

The fervor with which the changelings of the Gilded Thorn seek the lore of the Hedge grants them some protection against its deleterious properties. Magi do not receive the customary -1 penalty to degeneration checks made while within the Hedge, just as if they were within sight of an exit at all times. In addition, they may go a number of hours equal to their dots in Wyrd before losing a point of Glamour to the Thorns, and an equal period of time thereafter between each such loss of Glamour.

Among other things, this means that the Magi can delve far more deeply into the Briars than other

changelings would dream of doing, enabling them to access some of the choicest goblin fruits, strangest Hedge-beasts, best-hidden trods, and deepest mysteries of the Thorns. Some Magi use this ability to establish Hollows in nigh-inaccessible locations within the Hedge, where they can find the solitude that many of them frequently crave.

### *Rumors of the Magi*

Those that dwell in such proximity to the dire power of the Hedge and the Briars that lash at the human soul are apt to engender a curious and even malevolent reputation. Listed below is a sampling of the many whispers that surround the Magi and their self-appointed tasks.

- The Magi of the Gilded Thorn gain their lore from a close alliance with one or more of the True Fae and many (perhaps even *all* of them) are Arcadian loyalists. Some say that two or three particular Keepers seem to be responsible for respective Durances of the overwhelming majority of changelings drawn to the entitlement — making them all the slaves of a handful of Gentry — though many dismiss this notion, given the difficulties inherent in remembering any sort of fact about existence on the far side of the Hedge.

- The Magi know secrets of penetrating the deepest reaches of the Thorns and leading others to the edge of Arcadia; a service that they will barter for a steep price. Of course, why they have delved deeply enough into the Thorns to learn such things (to say nothing of what manner of madness would compel another changeling to bargain for a guide to the borders of that grim and terrible place) is a matter of much speculation.

- The Magi can awaken kiths related to plant life in even changelings whose Seemings do not normally allow for such. Some believe that the Magi stumbled across this knowledge through their explorations of the Briars, while others maintain that the Gilded Thorn has uncovered lore allowing for *any* changeling to adopt the blessings of *any* kith.

# The Winter Court

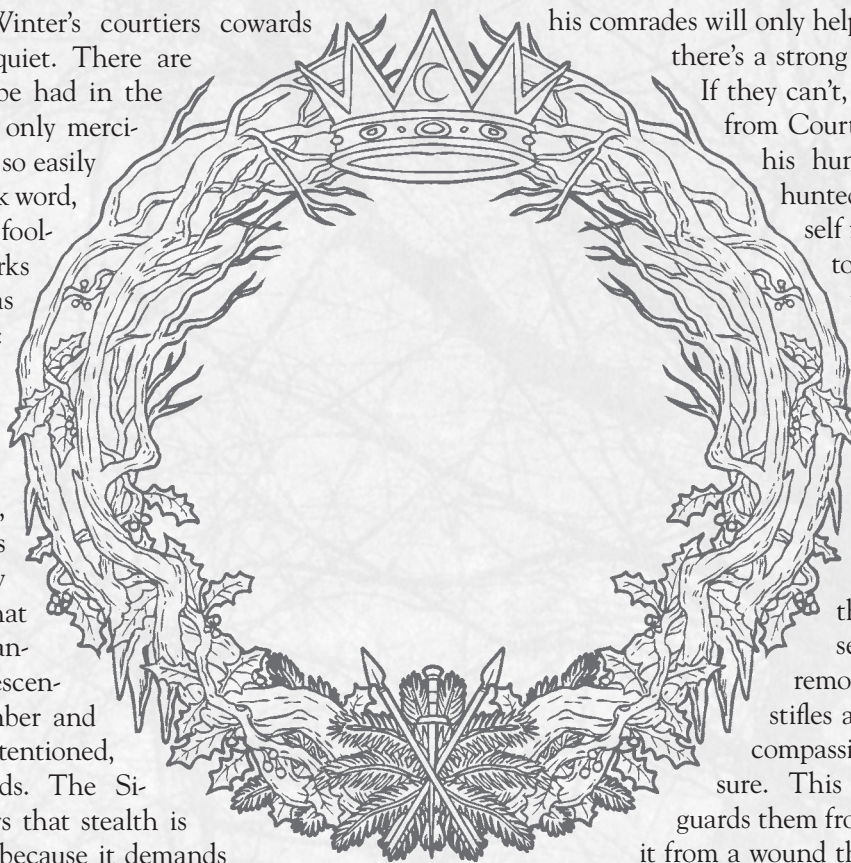
They call Winter's courtiers cowards because they're quiet. There are no accolades to be had in the trackless cold — only merciless, white purity, so easily sullied that a frank word, errant footstep or foolish dream marks it as violently as blood striking ice: a scarlet flag that calls all enemies. Winter is the hiding time, the punishing time, when cold kills fools and snow covers them, so that even heroes cannot hope that descendants will remember and sing of well-intentioned, rashly done deeds. The Silent Arrow knows that stealth is no simple thing, because it demands the supreme discipline required to hide your heroism and let the insults fall, unanswered, upon your ears. Act, plan, but do not *speak* until you've considered your words carefully. All the Lost are fugitives, only a step or two ahead of their hunters.

*Caution* is a watchword for the Winter Court. So is *stealth* and its cousin *humility*. It's easy to be strong when everyone watching; easy to fight for money, fame and sex. To join the Winter's subjects, a changeling must be willing to give up all the weak, ordinary motives of mortals and other Lost. She works without reward and prepares for the worst times during the best, lest the Gentry, who are desire personified, see the reflection of their nature shine brightly on the Earth and send their servants down. Finally, let's not forget the word *selfishness*. The Court exists for the benefit of its members above all, in proportion to their status and service. If one courtier exposes himself to the Gentry,

his comrades will only help him if they think there's a strong chance of success.

If they can't, they'll cut him off from Court and leave him to his hunters. In fact, the hunted should take himself far from his friends to die or be recaptured alone. The weak and fallible should lead the enemy away, not drag everyone else down with them. That's why a final word, *cold*, represents more than the Court's season. It's a studied, remote demeanor that stifles a courtier's ego and compassion in equal measure. This calculated denial guards them from Sorrow, turning it from a wound that saps the will to live to an icy shield for the soul.

Why join the Coldest Court? The inducements are subtle and strong. The Lost know that their old masters watch for them, ever searching for ways to lure their playthings back to Arcadia's fold. But ignoring that for a moment, simply being a changeling plunges one into a secret, dangerous world. The Onyx Court teaches its subjects how to survive freedom and taste it in stark, simple moments, because loud noticeable pleasures are far too dangerous. Other Courts disagree — likeminded changelings are free to leave Winter and join them — but they can't ignore the power of secrecy and vigilance. Winter courtiers advise them in exchange for proper payment: a policy that looks mercenary until one realizes that the Court pays outsiders in kind. It knows its place in the panoply of Seasons. Nobody can survive alone.





## THE ICELAW

Many (but not all) Winter Court customs are codified in the Icelaw. Legends say Snowflake John whispered it into the hidden rhythms of the North Wind. In the Silent Arrow's early days, none could claim Winter's mantle unless they found the Icelaw in its wail and sang it back to John, but these days it's basic knowledge, freely given to all who'd ask Winter courtiers about their ways.

Would-be lawyers will be disappointed to learn that the Icelaw isn't a creature of strict language and ironclad precedent. The Lords Unbidden treat them as overarching principles, subject to their discretion first, not the presumptuous arguments of junior courtiers. It guides the daily lives of courtiers, showing them how to treat each other and outsiders. No true courtier would obey the letter of the Icelaw over its spirit. On the other hand, this flexible outlook has let the law change from place to place. Fully half the Icelaw in any freehold is little more than exalted regional custom, shared among a handful of places. The other half is universal and based on the following rules.

### LET EVERY COURT KNOW ITS FUNCTION

An uncharacteristically blunt courtier might say, "Mind your own business and we'll mind ours." Winter's subjects shouldn't meddle in the affairs of the other courts. Spring, Summer and Autumn courtiers should stay out of Winter's way. If either side breaks this rule the answer isn't revenge, but withdrawal. If an Onyx courtier dives headlong into another Court's schemes, the answer is to shun her until she sees the error of her ways. If an outsider gets in the way of Winter's work the Court should dissuade him with as little direct confrontation as possible.

A few freeholds interpret this law as a separatist rule and forbid their courtiers from mixing with outsiders, but most of them believe that each Court has its own special role to play. When motleys go to war, Winter members believe it's Summer business. The Summer member should take the lead or at least approve of any plan. If stealth's the game, the Winter member expects his allies' attention. The Winter Court gives the other Seasons the respect it wants for itself. This way, the Lost maintain their alliance against the Gentry without creating ties that bind *too* tightly and let a few, fallible nobles reign over disparate Courts, Kiths and their respective abilities. Let every freehold unite its people, but let the people serve in the ways they know best.

The law works when members of every Court really *do* know their functions. The Silent Arrow is no place for noisy braggarts and the Winter Court believes its counterparts should be similarly choosy when it comes to picking their own courtiers. Cowardly Summer-changelings, ignorant scions of Autumn — they're shamefully useless. Winter's children ought to avoid these people. Even if they have other talents they aren't doing the Lost any favors by weakening the natural alliance of Seasons.

### HIDE YOUR LOVE AND HATE

All love should be courtly love: secretive, subtle, unselfish and satisfying even when it isn't consummated. Hate should never be Pride's brother, expressed in loud displays and the pageantry of formal vendettas. If the average freeholder knows who you love or hate, then you've strayed from Winter's ideal.

The Court promotes emotional restraint for two reasons. The first is philosophical. Like the Stoics, the Silent Arrow believes that changelings should attain freedom by mastering their passions. The True Fae demonstrate the evils of unrestrained desire. A changeling can only be truly moral by leashing desire with his mind, uncovering the right, rational path. This isn't the same as outright self-denial; Winter's children should approach their emotions with a sense of proportion.

Love and hate are also easy ways for one's enemies to lay a trap. Seduction and rash anger drive many of the Lost back into the Gentry's embrace. If a changeling *must* act on her feelings, she should do so according to a cautious strategy that considers the Court's safety. The old tradition of courtly love is ideal because it treads very carefully through the stages of desire. Consummation comes last, after exploring every danger and making one's feelings known with quiet, meaningful gestures.

Hate, on the other hand, is surrounded by a host of customs that Onyx courtiers find distasteful. Insults announce one's weakness to the world. Duels open the way to a poisoned blade or an endless cycle of vendettas. It's better to ignore insults and leash hatred until mere ceremonies won't do. After that, be swift, silent and practical. If someone needs to be killed, kill them — don't dress it up in decorum by calling seconds and arranging silly appointments in the Hedge. If a duel is truly unavoidable, lose it, then get on with whatever it was you were going to do anyway.

Most changelings who know a thing or two about the Onyx Court avoid challenging its subjects to duels.



This occasionally inspires enemies to cut right to ambushes and dirty tricks, but remember that the Winter Court's policy also depends on avoiding rivalries to begin with. If an Onyx changeling has drawn a legitimate grievance, he's already made a mistake.

### PREPARE YOUR FAREWELLS

The Lost should always be ready to move on. When the Gentry stalk the gates or mortals patrol with iron weapons it's time to go. Winter's children live simply, with few possessions. Even an Unbidden Lord's imposing mansion is usually rented or borrowed. Silent Arrow members aren't necessarily nomads, but the Icelaw tells them to avoid getting caught in any situation that would

slow them down if they need to fly away. Like snow before the sun, an Onyx courtier should melt and flow down to cool, secret places whenever a revealing light strikes.

The spiritual aspect of this precept is very similar to the ideal of non-attachment found in Zen and other mortal faiths, but it has a paranoiac twist. Whether the world is impermanent or not, the Lost have an especially tenuous foothold on it. The True Fae want them back. Supernatural dangers shadow their footsteps. A courtier should be ready to flee his old life at all times. If he gets too attached to a community his feelings will slow him down. He'll waste time saying goodbye, paying debts and tying up other loose ends. Pursuers could corner him, or steal his secrets from friends and things left behind.



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## Love in Winter

Combined with its reputation for deviousness, the Court's approach to love inspires songs and stories about forbidden romances between Winter's Lost and beloved of every other Court — and even a few stories about affairs with vampires and witches. The tales describe every phase of courtship in exacting detail: of flowers arranged to convey secret messages, discreet assignations in the Hedge and a tragic loss of control when the glacial demeanor of the suitor gives way to impulsive passion. Enemies exploit the star-crossed affair and allies abandon them. The villains are the Lords Unbidden on one side, and the beloved's associates on the other. People die, the audience weeps and laughs, and the tale ends.

Some of the best stories are true. Winter's subjects can be only *so* restrained. A once-human heart beats hot and red beneath the iciest changeling's breast. When an Onyx courtier's self-control stretches to the limit, he might make an uncharacteristically impulsive decision. He runs away with his true love or shares high secrets with her. He might even fall for a wildly inappropriate paramour like a sorcerer. The Court is surprisingly tolerant of these mistakes; most of its elders have been tempted to do the same. Unless the offender seriously harms other changelings he's given an opportunity to make amends. Of course, if these unfortunate affairs happen again and again, well... perhaps the courtier in question needs an extra measure of sorrow to learn his lesson.

Winter freeholds usually require subjects to have a "bug-out kit" ready at all times. This is usually a backpack with food, water, money, clothes and any possessions that a changeling absolutely can't leave behind. Some Winter changelings add survival gear, plane or bus tickets, weapons, fake IDs and portable valuables like gold and diamonds. An Onyx Court member should also have access to a working vehicle appropriate to the location (a car in most places, but boats and horses are the way to go in some regions).

Every courtier should have an escape plan. She should know exactly what to do when she needs to leave: where to go, how to get there, how to survive

the trip and how to rebuild her life at the destination. The New Identity Merit (**Changeling**, p. 98) is highly recommended. One of the primary functions of the Winter Court is to advise and assist changelings on the run, so a member in good standing should seek out senior courtiers for advice. If all the courtiers in the area are on the move, leaders should coordinate the evacuation and chip in with additional resources. These benefits trickle down in order of station, however; lowly courtiers often have to flee the wolves or face them without a helping hand.

## KEEP THE PEOPLE LOST TO EVERY OUTSIDER

The Winter Court believes that secrecy is the most powerful survival mechanism the Lost have. The Silent Arrow is responsible for that secrecy, not only for themselves, but for all of Arcadia's refugees. Therefore, changelings should keep mortals at a distance. This is more difficult for newly escaped changelings, some of whom have spent years fantasizing about returning to friends, families and lovers. According to the Icelaw, these are the very people she should abandon if she can and drive away, if she must. Court poets sometimes call this situation the Second Great Sorrow. (The First Great Sorrow is one's tenure with the Gentry.) Combined, both Great Sorrows define the sense of loss that follows Winter's subjects through life, adding a whisper of pain to experiences both magical and mundane. Still, despite the pain of parting, the Icelaw discourages changelings from returning to the people they once knew. Ideally, the Lost should take new identities, but that's not always practical.

Things get a little more complicated when one considers the fetch. Strict Unbidden Lords forbid courtiers from disturbing the fetch at all; the changeling's expected to establish a new legal identity and leave his old life to its management. But this is an intolerable situation for most, so the majority advises Onyx courtiers to dispatch their fetches as quietly and anonymously as possible. Confronting one's Wyrd twin face to face might be cathartic, but it's also foolish for a number of reasons. Third parties (including lovers and family members) might see the changeling and fetch facing off. If the changeling's mortal companions know the fetch isn't really the person they knew (a more common situation than you might think), discovering that the genuine article's come back is liable to make them give chase, following the courtier into Faerie's embrace. Winter's Lost should approach their fetches like assassins, not duelists.

## Cottager and Kings

The Winter Court maintains a series of safe houses (“winter cottages”) virtually everywhere the Seasonal Courts hold sway. Each cottage is a part of its sponsoring clique’s Winter Lore (see pp. 93); the exact level of Lore depends on the sponsor’s preferences and the cottage’s features, but for the most part, Flowing Lore cottages are modest, ordinary properties stocked with enough supplies to support half a dozen changelings for a month. Higher Lore includes information about cottages that are Hollows, with individual features no higher than the courtier’s Mantle dots -1. Of course, not every freehold has a wide variety of cottages to choose from.

Winter cottages aren’t always near the freeholds that sponsor them. Some courtiers maintain hide-outs in faraway places. This occasionally creates some friction with Lost who live near them. They don’t always trust the foreigners who keep property in their neighborhood. If they find them, they might take them away. After all, why should they respect some distant freehold’s claim over a deserted Hollow or empty flophouse?

At the storyteller’s discretion, changelings with Winter Mantle •• or higher can add Mantle -1 bonus dots to a new Hollow if that the player devotes Hollow dots in kind to create a new winter cottage. The bonus dots represent his fellow courtiers’ help, since it’s in the common interest to build new safe houses. Unlike a normal Hollow, the changeling doesn’t have exclusive rights to the place. In the event of an emergency, he must shelter fellow members of the Court. Some generous freeholds allow Lost from other courts to take shelter in a winter cottage, but there must be a genuine need. Winter cottages aren’t changeling hotels. Even Onyx courtiers can be criticized for overusing safe houses, since the more they’re used, the more exposed they are. In the Silent Arrow’s Mourning Cant, “cottager” has two connotations. One is an insult aimed at free riders abusing the system; the other refers to changelings who’ve gone into hiding. Context helps educated listeners tell the difference between them. Compare: “They’re lazy cottagers, the lot of them,” with, “Lucas and his friends are *cottaging* for the remainder of the lord’s visit, so they won’t offend him again.”

The Icelaw has a very clear policy when it comes to foreign supernatural beings: Avoid them when you can, lie as much as possible and never, ever, deal with them without allies at your side.

## RECRUITMENT

To join the Winter Court, run and hide. If you’re newly Lost, they’ll find you hunched in your basements, shivering in your shacks and shambling, thumb out, on the roadside. Newly-free changelings rarely have enough skill to hide from determined supernatural pursuers. If the Onyx Court can find these newly-minted fugitives from Faerie, so can the Gentry. Veteran courtiers appreciate the fact that their prospects came into the world with the right idea. Now it’s time to teach them how to *really* hide.

The elder doesn’t introduce herself right away. She attends to her own safety first. She sniffs for the stink of a Gentry plot around the runaway and takes a long look at the lives he’s touched. Sometimes, she joins him in disguise to better examine his character. Once she knows to her satisfaction that he probably won’t bring ill favor on the local freehold, she invites him into the Court community.

It might seem like this process would keep restrict introductions to a favored few, but this isn’t the case. So many changelings are found in flight that even the most cautious Court elder is liable to find prospects among them. For the frightened and newly arrived, the Court’s an attractive refuge. They flock to the Silent Arrow, eager to keep their heads down until they make sense of their newfound freedom. Perhaps half of them stick around. They learn to trust the world again and want to enjoy their liberty. The Silent Arrow cuts them loose and wishes them well, but will not save them when they step loudly through their lives and draw the enemy. Members who can’t follow the basic customs of the Court aren’t wanted; no veteran wants to stick their necks out to make loud, boorish Lost change their ways. It never compels obedience — at least, not at first. The Silent Arrow has no time for indiscrete fools. Changelings who don’t have the stomach for stealth are free to leave, but as a rule, established Court members never help them again. That’s how a Winter changeling first experiences the callous, disciplined side of his Court.



### *The Mourning Cant*

Every Onyx Court member is encouraged to learn at least one secret method of communication. The oldest traditions were usually elaborate systems of slang terms and unintuitive metaphors, varying widely by region and especially by language. Inspired by Navajo, Comanche and other Second World War code talkers, courtiers learned Inuit languages in the late 1940s. These had the advantage of being understood by few people blow the far north and having native teachers in North America, Europe and Asia. By the 1960s, the Cold War introduced new communication techniques. Winter courtiers spied on the spies, learned their tricks and used them amongst themselves. Nowadays, you'd be hard-pressed to find courtiers who don't use PGP cryptography on email, employ rigorous network security or have hard to guess passwords.

Unfortunately, not every changeling is patient enough to learn a new language or smart enough to master espionage tradecraft. So even though many of Winter's Lost know these methods, they're usually clustered within cliques of experts. But almost everyone uses Mourning Cant.

The Cant is highly specialized slang. There used to be many different versions, but the rise of English as an international language has made its dialect almost universal. Mourning Cant redefines dozens of words, borrows others from languages as diverse as Inuktitut, Russian and Old Norse and applies a throaty, slurred accent to it all. Anybody listening in on a Cant conversation hears a rapid exchange that's hard to understand but sounds *mostly* like English (or in some cases, an alternate base language). The accent makes it hard to tell for sure. In game terms, Mourning Cant is treated like a normal language. Its only advantage over most is that it doesn't sound like a different language, so much as badly pronounced and peppered with the odd, weird idiom.

After a time — the duration varies from place to place — a smart initiate earns the trust of established Onyx courtiers. It's time to tell her the local Court's Flowing Lore and assign her a bit of responsibility. It's the beginning of an elaborate process: a system of customs designed to bring young courtiers deeper into the fold with time, without sacrificing their elders at the altar of youthful folly. The Winter Court doesn't accept members in a decisive, defining moment, but reveals its full, secret majesty to those who prove themselves time and again.

## THE PRECIOUS CRYSTAL RITE

Some Winter cliques employ the Precious Crystal Rite: an ironic name for a simple test of the candidate's discretion. One courtier tells the prospect a fake secret about another. She could reveal a love affair, addiction or political ambition — anything that isn't serious enough to merit a panicked response, but is interesting enough to tempt gossip. Once the elder courtier lets the secret fly, she and established courtiers listen for it. The candidate fails if he tells the secret to anyone but the person it's supposed to be about. He also fails if he refuses to listen to the gossiping courtier. A member of the Silent Arrow should keep secrets well but shouldn't pass up opportunities to learn them.

There are two basic ways to pass the test. The candidate's successful response affects how other courtiers treat him. If he keeps the secret for a prescribed period of time (usually a lunar month), they let him in on the test (which is of the Flowing Lore) and welcome him into the Court. If he tells the subject of the gossip (and nobody else) what he's heard and how, he's lauded for honesty and loyalty. He's given a bit more trust than changelings who just keep their mouths shut. Add 2 dice to mundane social rolls when he deals with Winter courtiers who know how he passed the test for the next month or so.

## COURT STRUCTURE

In the Winter Court, status is a matter of trust. The Court uses stealth and deception to protect subjects against the Gentry. Traitors and fools endanger the Silent Arrow, so its customs are designed to filter them out before they learn enough to harm anyone or assume duties they can't carry out. The Court rations out knowledge and favors based on this trust. At the lowest levels, an Onyx changeling has to prove her worth by surviving and volunteering to help experienced Winter courtiers with their objectives. She can't expect much help in return; courtiers worry about themselves before their juniors. This is a gesture born of cold pragmatism, not contempt. If a courtier drags along every loudmouth

or straggler before saving himself he risks recapture by the Gentry or death at the hands of other Court enemies — things that would not only cost his life and liberty, but most likely those of the people he stopped to help. If he leaves them in the lurch, they might fall, but he survives. The Winter Court keeps its heroes and sages as safe from harm as possible, even if they need to throw a few youngsters to the Faerie's lions.

The Onyx Court's culture of secrecy includes a taboo against boasting, so it's hard to achieve recognition unless a changeling catches the extended attention of a senior courtier. As lovers, mentors or commanders, elders form close partnerships with less seasoned courtiers. This benefits them both. The veteran argues the neophyte's virtues before her seniors, while the neophyte helps her with projects that will improve her reputation. These groups of two to five courtiers are the Silent Arrow's basic political units. Some are autonomous, but many are linked so that the senior member of one is junior in another. This creates a natural cell structure, superior to one imposed by top-down rule due to the shared interests of members and the fact that it betrays no overall leader. When the Lords Unbidden and other high courtiers do take a hand in the system, they'll only force members of different cliques to work together when it's absolutely necessary. Cautious leaders limit close contact between the cliques so that only one or two changelings in a given group can expose anyone outside their own group. The Court has no formal name for its cells, but in older freeholds Winter changelings develop local traditions, naming their cliques after Norse *drotti* or Italian *camorrae*.

Once a courtier joins a clique, it isn't hard to earn respect. If she survives without endangering others and pays lip service to the Icelaw, that's enough to propel her to the Lore of Flowing Crystals. For the newly-Lost, survival is a significant accomplishment; there are too many ways for a fool to die or fall back to Arcadia for anyone to take that accomplishment lightly.

After these initial, dangerous days, a changeling's usually learned to avoid the simplest dangers. To build a stronger reputation, a more experienced courtier needs to impress the Onyx Court with active service. His advancement depends on his ability to uncover useful secrets, hide changelings from their enemies and protect his Court from enemies as quietly as possible — and he has to do it all without revealing a hint of personal ambition because Winter's subjects believe pride is dangerous and gauche. He isn't forbidden from praising other courtiers, however. Once again, cliques built on reciprocal praise prove their worth.

## *The Coldest Shoulder*

Lore and tradition contain many penalties for disobedient (or stupid) changelings, but the Winter Court only doles out two universal formal punishments: ostracism and death. One of the hazards of Court status is that senior courtiers are more likely to be executed. They know too much about the Silent Arrow.

Ostracized changelings are still members of the Court, but the Court refuses to associate with them in any way. The ranking Onyx courtier lets the rest of the freehold know about the offender's status. Outsiders can talk to the ostracized courtier but are forbidden to give him anything but food and shelter. Ostracism ends when a specific period of time has passed or the offender proves he's learned his lesson. Sometimes the Court assigns the required gesture of contrition, but in many cases the Court wants him to devise it.

The Winter Court executes subjects by stealth whenever possible. Ideally, the offender never sees it coming. Three courtiers (usually the highest ranking in the freehold) must consent to the killing; two of these must carry it out. There is no official announcement, but when the ruling courtier says that such-and-such a changeling is "no longer of the Court," experienced members know exactly what it means. All three judges are responsible for destroying the body and eliminating all evidence that the execution ever took place. All that remains of the incident is a brief record of the offense and the time of death, preserved within the Lore of Armoring Ice (see below).

## LORES AND LORDS

Status is trust. In the Silent Arrow, power belongs to those who can keep secrets, stay alert and thwart the Court's enemies through knowledge, evasion and misdirection. Reputation determines who flies to a sanctuary and who, like slow deer before the wolf pack, gets left behind to keep opponents busy. Winter is a time of harsh choices that are never made without regrets but

are made, nonetheless, in moments of icy pragmatism that reward the Lost who survive. Rank determines one's value to the Court. Lesser changelings will throw themselves to their doom to save one of the Lords Unbidden, but neophytes can expect no special efforts.

Winter courtiers value those who've proven they can direct the Onyx Court effectively. These nobles haven't betrayed any secrets to outsiders and so have earned the right to not only demand service, but to become privy to the Lores: the Court's hidden resources, strategies, laws and weaknesses. A Winter courtier takes her title from the Lore at her command, from the Flowing Pages that run messages and watch freehold borders, to the Lords Unbidden, who know names that should not be spoken, places that should not be trod, and Contracts that should not be entered into until some desperate, final day of the world.

The following Lores and their attached titles have minimum Winter Mantle requirements, but this shouldn't be the only criterion for membership. Word of the changeling's deeds should permeate the local Onyx contingent. Some groups demand particular skills, Contracts and secret rites. This doesn't mean that a changeling's Mantle is worthless, either. A courtier with a low title but a powerful Mantle earns respect as a veteran member of her rank. She might not be privy to the high secrets, but her personal competence can't be denied. Many Winter courtiers don't care for high politics; they joined the Court to survive, nothing more. Status adds selfless responsibilities that they don't want to bother with. The Silent Arrow respects this point of view. These changelings are free to be more loosely associated with the Court as long as they accept that the Court is proportionally less interested in helping them.

Each Lore's exact nature varies from freehold to freehold. The Court rates its secrets based on what local courtiers have to hide. As a rule, courtiers keep their policies a secret so that outsiders won't exploit the Silent Arrow's rules for their own purposes. Higher Lores often include policies directed at lower-ranked changelings, such as how to plan suicide missions or quell internal revolts. Otherwise, Lores feature local secret codes, winter cottage locations and anything else that a freehold's Winter citizens think should be treated with particular discretion.

**Flowing Lore (Mantle • — Flowing Page):** Flowing Lore is named for liquid water: the ever-moving predecessor of ice. In the Onyx Court, liquid symbolizes flexibility, mobility and unreliability. Most Flowing Pages are responsible for little more than relaying messages

and keeping quiet. Flowing Pages are occasionally asked to travel, scouting locales to see if they could support winter cottages or host threats to the Lost. These missions are requested, not ordered; the Court doesn't want involuntary, unreliable servants. All the same, a smart courtier knows that the more she volunteers, the more she proves her worth. Flowing Pages are the most disposable Winter courtiers. If they don't make a good impression they're left to fend for themselves. Changelings who throw themselves into Winter's business from the start can easily forge political pacts with other courtiers. When the going gets tough, the elders might actually stick their necks out to help them.

Flowing Lore includes the name, kiths and positions of local Winter changelings, the locations of minor winter cottages and the basics of the Mourning Cant. Senior courtiers also let the Page know when and where the Gentry's local agents patrol so that he can better avoid them.

**Lore of Creeping Frost (Mantle •• — Squire of the Frost):** The Lore of Creeping Frost introduces the courtier to his Court's broad security policies. He knows what Winter's citizens will do when enemies assail the freehold and learns the lies everyone's supposed to tell about confidential matters — even if he doesn't know the whole truth himself. More winter cottages reveal themselves at this stage, along with some of the Court's other resources: money, political connections and even a few Trifles. At this rank, players can justify purchasing new Contacts, organizational Status and Resources Merits by exploiting their Silent Arrow connections.

He learns how to personally contact local courtiers; he's probably responsible for relaying information through a phone tree or small mailing list consisting of himself and a group of Flowing Pages. If orders come from on high, it's a Squire of the Frost's duty to pass it on. Sometimes he's not permitted to let anyone know who's giving the orders, but he should have enough social acumen to make sure they're obeyed. Flowing Pages aren't supposed to be ordered around like soldiers so the Squire needs to find ways to induce the spirit of volunteerism with meaningful rewards. Superiors often provide the means, but not always. His newfound access to Court resources comes in handy here, since he can use them to pay courtiers for their trouble.

**Lore of Armoring Ice (Mantle ••• — Iceclad Armiger):** In many freeholds, the Armigers and their Lore sit at the pinnacle of the local Court. Squires of the Frost spend the Court's basic resources, but Iceclad Armigers are expected to invest them in projects that leave

Winter's Lost wealthy and safe. The Lore of Armoring Ice helps courtiers achieve that end. It contains the Court's knowledge of local supernatural personalities: changelings from other Courts, vampires, werewolves and other weird creatures. If there are Hollows and strange places nearby, it's also recorded. The Lore of Armoring Ice is difficult to pass on orally, so this rank often includes a written cipher. One of the first things a new Armiger does is learn the local code. After that, she explores the Court's secret files to learn the fullness of her Lore.

An Armiger should always try to expand the Court's knowledge of the whole supernatural world, filling gaps in biographies, writing reports on anomalies and exploring the ways that the secret world influences the mundane. A skilled Armiger uses the Lore to avoid supernatural entanglements. It's her job to keep the local Court wealthy and prepared, not plunge it into a political conflict. If a cabal of sorcerers has a chokehold on the longshoremen, the Armiger takes a piece from the local truckers instead.

**Lore of the Onyx Mirror (Mantle •••• — Onyx Thane):** An Onyx Thane studies mystical matters, above and beyond the simple demographics and warnings of previous Lores. The Lore of the Onyx Mirror contains maps of the Hedge and dream-lore. Onyx Thanes inherit responsibility for the local Court's Tokens, goblin fruit preserves and other supernatural artifacts. If the Court has a secret Trod, the Lore tells of it. He also learns the Immutable Signs of the Lords Unbidden, so that he might recognize their commands. If there are ancient oaths that affect the Court or freehold, it's the Thane's job to learn them. Venerable collections the Onyx Lore contain strategies for employing these secrets in a variety of situations, including times when treachery threatens from within.

Internal discipline is one of the Thane's chief duties. He ensures that every Winter subject keeps her assigned secrets. His rank's Lore includes specific policies and punishments, though he may amend them if he wishes. He customarily records all investigations for the benefit of colleagues and successors, so he usually learns a new language or secret code to keep them secure. He uses Court Tokens and oubliettes in the Hedge to enforce the Icelaw, if he must, but for the most part he employs Armigers and Squires to do what needs be done. In some freeholds, the Thane also presides over trivial disputes. He settles arguments between his subjects. If one of the aggrieved belongs to another Court, he plays diplomat so that the Silent Arrow's interests don't fall before a clash of personalities.



**Lore of Unbidden Mourning (Mantle ●●●● — Unbidden Lord):** The Lords Unbidden hide at the cold summit of the Winter Court, privy to a Lore that encompasses the great mysteries of the Lost — or so the legends say. One myth says that between them, the Lords know the true names of all the Gentry, and could speak their unmaking, but that somehow doing so would also destroy the world. Another says that the Lords know where Snowflake John sleeps, beneath jet black ice and snow in a Hedge-realm of eternal winter. Many such legends exist, but there's little in the way of hard facts to back them up. There's no doubt that the rumors include lies and exaggerations — and that some of these are spread by the Winter Court. At the very least, the Lore of Unbidden Mourning contains secrets that matter to every member of the Court, no matter where they live.

Unbidden Lords don't identify themselves unless they deem it absolutely necessary. They pretend to be members of any rank they choose. If they need to make their wishes known they communicate through the Onyx Thanes. They confirm their status with Immutable Signs, issue orders and analyze the results with the help of their own unfathomable knowledge.

## TITLES

Besides the Lores and their associated titles, the Winter Court assigns a few special positions to courtiers of any rank who are suited to particular tasks. The most prestigious offices are in fact entitlements; the Knights of Utmost Silence (see pg. 102) is one example. The reverse is not always true, however, because entitlements often revolve around obsession, not function.

The Winter Court only accepts volunteers for such positions. As mentioned before, junior courtiers are strongly encouraged to pick up additional duties if they want to be valued by those above them. Subject to the particulars of each title, courtiers can relinquish them whenever they wish. They need only inform their superiors and finish whatever they were up to when they were on the job. In a typical freehold, the changeling holding Winter's crown (The Feast of Ashes — see **Changeling: The Lost**, p. 98) has the power to grant and revoke the following titles.

- **Archer of the Lonely March:** The Archers are the Winter Court's scouts. Centuries ago, they ranged through the coldest wild places, looking for mountain caves and secret valleys where Winter's Lost could flee in troubled times. Nowadays, an Archer of the Lonely March is more likely to explore foreign cities, hidden tunnels and abandoned warehouses. She either marks

## *The Immutable Signs*

The Immutable Signs are products of an ancient pledge, said to have been made by Snowflake John at the dawn of the Court. There are three Immutable Signs: the White Seal that Unbidden Lords can draw, paint or press in wax beside their directives; the Cold Grip they use with a left-handed handshake; and the Mourning Words, spoken in any language: "The sun destroys nothing but what Winter freezes anew."

Anyone can use the Seal, Grip or Words, but it's hard to use them to impersonate an Unbidden Lord. The magic of the pledge ensures that any member of the Onyx Court who witnesses an Immutable Sign immediately knows whether or not it was used by a changeling with at least 5 dots of Mantle (Winter). This helps the Lords Unbidden rule anonymously because in most cases, courtiers can trust a Sign even if they don't know the one using it.

No known supernatural force can undo the power of the Immutable Signs. Even mind control powers that might compel Winter changelings to believe anything else won't make them think an Immutable Sign was inscribed by someone with 5 dots of Mantle (Winter) when it wasn't or vice versa. This doesn't extend to indirect methods that change the *context* of the Sign. Someone might cut and paste a genuine Seal onto fake orders, for instance. Copies and recordings of the Immutable Signs don't retain their power, either, so there's no way to ensure that a photocopy or voice recording is authentic.

The power authenticates the Signs of anyone with the requisite Winter Mantle rating, not just the Lords Unbidden. The Court's aware of these flaws. For added protection, the Immutable Signs are usually a part of the Lore of the Onyx Mirror, unknown to lesser courtiers. In a few under-populated freeholds Armigers learn them as well, but the Court as a whole discourages this.

places for safe settlement (or conversion into winter cottages) or walks ahead of traveling courtiers, searching for danger in their path. According to tradition, suitable

candidates should know enough about the wilderness to keep “five of the Lost running strong for a fortnight,” but these days almost nobody insists on these skills.

- **DJ Ötzel:** DJ Ötzel (named for the mountain range where hikers found Ötzi, a prehistoric hunter preserved in the ice) isn’t so much a title as a character: a role played by Winter courtiers who speak on Radio Free Fae. Everyone who plays the part speaks in the same, rapid-fire whisper. Each pirate radio station under the Free Fae banner has its own Ötzel. Some of them are public about their alter ego, but others are not; they want to preserve the mystique of the gossiping, anonymous figure that annoys conservative courtiers so much. More than one DJ Ötzel claims to not remember what he or she says during a broadcast, claiming a trance state or some benign form of possession.

- **Lord of the Inhospitable Chamber:** This title belongs to courtiers who interrogate and imprison people on the Silent Arrow’s behalf. The “inhospitable chamber” is an allegory; the ideal Lord knows how to isolate his prey and without locks and bars. Friends keep their distance, enemies chase him to places where he’s a disconnected stranger — and all the while, the Lord monitors him, even appearing in disguise to extract secrets. This degree of subtlety isn’t always possible, so shackles in basements and whipping posts in the middle of nowhere bear silent witness to more extreme forms of confinement.

- **Sun Banisher:** Sun Banishers destroy evidence. They burn notes, wipe hard drives, vacuum stray hairs and wreck DNA evidence (though this last is tricky business, to say the least). The Sun Banisher’s title is usually one of the best-known in the freehold, because the Court allows them to hire out their services. So many changelings find themselves under unwanted mortal scrutiny that a good Sun Banisher is a popular, influential figure. Most of them have a background in forensics or law enforcement.

## FREEHOLD ROLES

Winter’s Lost are notoriously selfish and deceptive, but they’re not *exactly* untrustworthy. Onyx courtiers lie to other changelings, but rarely do so to cause harm. They hate making promises, but are no worse at keeping them than anyone else. They’re not altruists but they don’t hold grudges either. In most freeholds, the Winter Court’s liked and hated for the same reason: they stay out of the way.

There’s only so much silence, secrecy and forced humility a person can take — even a Winter courtier.

Radio Free Fae demonstrates another side of the Court that’s a bit more carefree. These rebels never rise high in the hierarchy of Lore (unless they’re putting on an act while they’re up to something *really* devious) but they do put a more sympathetic face on the usually-taciturn Winter crowd. Most of the more vivacious changelings respect their elders enough to replace the Court’s traditional silence with some degree of misdirection, so Winter’s black sheep are more fun, but harder to trust.

Freeholders see the Onyx Court as a nest of benevolent spies. You can hire them for the right price and they won’t stab you in the back, but don’t expect them to share anything for free. The best way to judge the Court’s view of a local freehold is by their attendance. If the Winter contingent just disappears one day, brace yourself for trouble.

Fortunately, most freeholds cultivate good enough relations with the Winter Court that a Flowing Page will warn everyone about an incipient exodus. The key to winning the Court’s favor lies not in public gratitude or lofty titles, but a willingness to listen to its advice and stay out of its way. “Giving way” can sometimes prove to be a considerable burden, however; Armigers and other Court nobles frequently have designs on trods and mortal connections.

Winter courtiers are spies, scouts and cautious counselors. The Silent Arrow is ever-vigilant for signs of danger, especially if it’s connected to the Gentry. There are plenty of courtiers who don’t care for these roles, but the Icelaw strongly discourages Winter’s subjects from duties that traditionally belong to the other courts. This is bad for a would-be Winter warrior but good for freehold unity; Spring, Summer and Autumn courtiers know that the Onyx Court won’t unduly interfere with their plans. The Court wants every citizen to protect the freehold in his own way, as part of an intelligently planned whole. Courtiers don’t volunteer for work that doesn’t suit them, but they do constantly search for ways to complement others. Summer warriors lead assaults, but Winter’s subjects run ahead, observe and tell them where to strike. Spring politicians bind allies and entangle enemies in obligations, but Winter spies show them who can be bought.

Courtiers are not natural leaders. They normally only take command of a freehold when there are no other qualified candidates or the Court dominates all others with sheer numbers. When Winter’s Lost rule, they usually convene a council that includes members of every Court and kith. Excepting grave emergencies, they don’t act without the consent of the council.

Even a ruler respects the Icelaw's command to let every Court do its proper duty. Some rulers steal consensus with a combination of bribery and blackmail, but most would rather not. This is less a moral concern than a fear of being trapped in political obligations. The changelings under a ruler's thumb might look for an easy, treacherous way to avoid paying their dues.

## OF THE WINTER MARKET

The Winter Market is the Court's best-known tradition. The classic event takes place in the week leading up to the Winter Solstice, but a Winter ruler can call them at any time. Courtiers plan for weeks or months in advance. They interview would-be merchants about their wares, wants and personal details. If one of them deviates from her declared policies, the Court shuts her operation down and bans her from future Winter Markets.

If the Winter Market were just another bazaar (even a changeling bazaar), the Fall Fair and Goblin Markets would doom it to irrelevance. Fortunately, it has one great advantage: within the Market, merchants and buyers alike can enjoy the Winter Court's trademark secrecy. No changeling can compel buyers and sellers to reveal their transactions unless he belongs to the Silent Arrow. Winter courtiers usually record everything that happens but don't say a word about it unless it's relevant to the freehold's safety. Courtiers who blather about transactions for no good reason are severely punished. Of course, Lost in some freeholds keep transaction records of Winter Markets over decades, even centuries. An innocent sale doesn't always remain so. In any event, careful analysis can tell the Court many things about the freehold's resources and fortunes.

## OTHER RITUALS

The Winter Court's rituals are sober, quiet affairs. Secrecy works against standardization, so that every locale has its own rites for elevating courtiers to a new Lore, bestowing titles and convening meetings. Most freeholds have public Winter rituals as well. The Court is keenly aware that these give outsiders a rare window on the Silent Arrow's ways, so they execute them with special dignity. The best-known rites are detailed below, but there are others.

- **Embers to Ashes:** The morning after the first heavy snowfall of the winter, the local Court builds a gigantic bonfire for all to see. (In sunnier climes, the Court picks an arbitrary date — usually the first day of winter.) At noon, the fire reaches its peak; the Court

invites every citizen of the freehold to cast something symbolizing his secrets or his old, human life into the blaze. Some freeholders write letters to mortals who will never read them, or confessions that will never be read. These join other symbolic items on the blazing heap. By nightfall, the fire's been reduced to dull coals; at midnight, the coals are cold ash. Courtiers spend the rest of the night burying most of it.

The next morning, the courtier who wears Winter's crown gives a traditional sermon, reminding the freehold that once revealed, their secrets burn bright. It's better to let them cool inside one's heart, so that they will not be destroyed. He dips his hand in a pail containing some of the remaining ashes and marks the foreheads of new Winter courtiers to let the freehold know who they are.

- **Nameless Mourning:** This ritual is a symbolic funeral for every changeling who died at the hands of the Gentry. It's sad because one of the Lost has died, but joyful because in death she has escaped recapture. The Winter Court builds an effigy out of woven black branches. It invites the other Courts to dress and decorate it. Winter tradition says that the result symbolizes the state of the freehold. A manikin with gaudy, mismatched accoutrements belongs to a confident, disorganized freehold. One in solemn, matching clothes stands for harmony and secrecy.

A pallbearer from each Court and two other Winter courtiers carry the effigy to its gravesite, and a full funeral plays out according to local mortal customs. In America, multi-denominational services are common, but they're accented with Fae superstition and freehold traditions. Once the effigy's been laid to rest, the freehold celebrates the freedom of death — a rowdy wake is the usual way to do it. Winter celebrants provide the venue and refreshments, but maintain their distance from the actual event. This not only improves the Court's popularity, but teaches its subjects self-control. A true Winter courtier never lets her guard down, even at a party.

## RELATIONS

The Winter Court treats outsiders with a great deal of respect. Sometimes this respect takes the form of extreme caution, as it does with powerful beings who are not of the Lost, but inside freeholds and motleys courtiers distinguish themselves by giving their companions' abilities due consideration. The Silent Arrow looks clannish and selfish, but at the same time it expects other groups to act the same way. Winter's



Lost don't like to demand anything they haven't paid for in favors, goods or personal sacrifice.

## THE COURTS AND COURTLESS

The Icelaw says that every Court has a purpose it must be allowed to fulfill. It isn't a courtier's place to play with Desire, Wrath and Fear. The other Seasons have sharpened their particular passions into unique powers that serve all the Lost. War, temptation and the eldritch mysteries of the Hedge are fitting areas of study for any Onyx scholar, but a sword, secret kiss or word of power should be used by those destined to use it best.

This is a fine theory, but no Court cleaves to its supposed purpose as fervently as the Silent Arrow would like. Summer has its timid citizens; Spring has its fair share of buffoons. This makes Winter courtiers uncomfortable. Some take it on themselves to educate wayward changelings in the ways of their own Courts, even going so far as to spy on the other Seasons in search of things to teach. The irony is that these advisors often become better at another Court's business than their students. Does this violate the Icelaw? These mentors say that they only master the social, martial and arcane arts to give their allies informed advice — and the advisor role is a Winter tradition.

Here, then, is what the Onyx Court believes its counterparts are for, even if reality is a bit more flexible.

- **Spring is for Society:** The Spring Court should have precedence in social affairs. Freehold titles, public alliances and matters of etiquette should fall under its purview. This doesn't mean that only Spring courtiers should rule freeholds, but no freehold should conduct its business without Spring protocols. Desire is a creative emotion that teaches the Lost the true value of their freedom. Winter courtiers should moderate Spring's joy with Sorrow, reminding them that the dance of politics and prestige must hold itself in thrall to security. Still, Onyx courtiers have no business giving speeches or playing diplomat. They should defer to a skilled Spring courtier's judgment, but always stay by her side to keep her apprised of secrets that should guide her actions.

- **Summer is for War:** Rage, bravery and battle! That's Summer's path, and it's Winter's job to clear it for them. When it's time to fight, obey the captains of Wrath. They're the ones that train with weapons, test each other in brutal contests and burn away weakness in themselves and their plans. Winter's Lost are their best scouts and informants; they help Summer courtiers pick the right times, places and tactics. There's a fine line between information and input, however. Some Onyx courtiers believe they should decide when Sum-

mer opens its wrath on an enemy, but others are content to lay down the facts before a ranking Summer warrior and let him decide. Besides, if the thunderous charge fails, Winter courtiers won't hesitate to run away.

- **Autumn is for Magic:** The Winter Court collects arcane secrets, but it's very cautious about using them. Autumn courtiers know the deep secrets of fae magic and should lead the way during Hedge quests, dream journeys and magical studies. If the Winter Court has information that would unlock the secrets of a powerful Token (or better yet, the Token itself) it should offer it to Autumn occultists — for the right price, of course. In practice, both Courts keep haggling to a minimum in the face of a common threat. Nevertheless, Winter's favors are sometimes a bit pricier when Autumn courtiers call. Part of the reason for this is the rivalry between the Fall Fair and Winter Market and part of it is that it's hard to set a clear divide between each Court's proper roles. Occult knowledge is secret by definition. Is a coded tome about mystic Contracts an Autumn or Winter matter? The orthodox answer is, "Winter in the Glimpse, Autumn in the Chants." Onyx courtiers should *learn* a thing, but Fear's children decide when to *use* it.

- **The Courtless are for Watching:** The Courtless don't really fit the Icelaw's assumptions, so the Winter Court's unsure what to make of them. That's why courtiers spy on them as much as they possibly can. The common view is that Courtless changelings are easier to tempt into the Gentry's service. When the True Fae invade, they're the first to fall and the last to understand their predicament. Some dialects of the Mourning Cant call them "canaries" after the miners' birds that die first when poisons fill a tunnel. Winter courtiers watch the Courtless, but leave them in peace as long as they don't endanger anyone else.

## THE OTHER SECRET PEOPLES

Save for the half-foolish legends that tell of fairies and other worlds, vampires, werewolves, wizards and stranger things avoid mortal notice. This is an excellent state of affairs. Ignorance protects everyone — the ignorant included. The Gentry seem to love mortals with strange histories and superstitions. They're always taking "witchy" children, seventh sons and people born under the full moon. Besides, imagine what would happen if normal men and women applied their science to the Thorns! They might anger the power within or they might just *break through*.

The Winter Court studies the rest of the supernatural world as thoroughly as it can without compromising the Lost's security. The Court doesn't want to

battle with blood-drinkers for control of some holding company, or range through wastelands claimed by a stitched-together horror. Sometimes avoidance isn't possible. The Winter Court needs something these beings have, or they come looking for the Lost. It's tricky business, so the Court reserves specific information about supernatural beings for higher Lores. Tradition provides the following advice:

- **Vampires are the Dragon's Teeth:** They're aggressive and replenish their numbers easily. Eliminating them is a waste of time, but they're fearful, desperate creatures who can be reasoned with when you appeal to their self-interest. Unfortunately, they've had a lot of practice being desperate and selfish, so these deals can sour quite easily. To deal with a vampire, enlist the aid of a Spring courtier.

- **Werewolves Devour the Lonely:** Winter courtiers should hide their natures around werewolves, lest they be mistaken for the spirits that these creature claim dominion over. They follow a philosophy of balance, where the magical world should not tread too firmly on mortal ground. Their dedication greatly depends on what they think they can get away with, so it's easier to deal with them if one appears strong. Make sure Summer soldiers stand behind you and you may survive.

- **Magi Open Forbidden Gates:** They know too much about the world and, worse, *think* they know more than they actually do. One of their cults actually *wants* to go to Arcadia. The Winter Court knows many things that mages would doubtless love to discover and weave into new, terrifying spells, which is exactly why one should share nothing with them save lies. Lie to mages as much as possible and consult the Autumn Court.

- **Earth is Stranger than Arcadia:** It's true; Arcadia may be full of wonders and terrors beyond mortal description, but they all have their oaths and obligations. Contracts rule fire and frost. But the mortal world has no such guarantees. Natural laws break their own rules, giving rise to bizarre phenomena and unique monsters. Study them, but never assume that the patterns you see are a set of rules. Beyond Arcadia, rules are not promises – merely habits that change at the most unusual times.

## CONTRACTS OF THE SORROW-FROZEN HEART

Sorrow is the paradoxical torment: the suffering that eases suffering. In Arcadia, pain was a species: a hundred races of hurt, each devoted to its own method and taste. But Sorrow set itself apart from the simple

animal pains of Burning, Cutting and their cousins, for it induced a special numbness: a fatalism that allowed contracted changelings to endure other discomfort. Sorrow is a pain of contemplation. Once the Lost accepts its inevitability, other hurts fade.

In the Winter Court, the Sorrow-Frozen Heart is an unpopular Contract, but it is theirs nonetheless. Most Winter changelings prefer to master sorrow through calculated denial. They fight despondency with hope, but only apply it to attainable things. To live for today and revel in a quiet life is hardly spectacular, but serves cautious courtiers well enough. The minority who embrace the contract take the radical step of accepting their sadness, even reveling in it. She crosses that threshold and strikes a powerful, heart-wrenching bargain.

As the Lost explores this Contract's clauses, she inevitably loses her empathy for others. Practitioners become absorbed in the particulars of their own sorrow. How could anyone else's pain compare to that which they've come to know so intimately? This is a power of the Sorrow-Frozen Heart. Its warriors do not flinch at inflicting pain. Compared to sorrow, anything else is like a snowflake compared to a glacier.

The Sorrow-Frozen Heart is a subtle Contract, suited to the Court. It doesn't cause any obviously supernatural displays. The Court desires quiet survivors who can protect Winter's holdings even in extreme adversity. Practitioners treat it as a memorial in action. They remember the sorrow of slavery and channel it into tools that will protect them from it ever after.

This Contract's nature makes it fundamentally incompatible with the ability to regain Willpower from fulfilling a Virtue. Inspiring moments disrupt the character's sorrow. If the changeling satisfies a Virtue while using Contracts of the Sorrow-Frozen Heart, the player can refuse to refresh his character's Willpower. (The character chooses to dwell within his sorrow instead of the moment of inspiration.) If he does not, the Contract's benefits end immediately.

### A MERE VESSEL FOR LOSS (●)

The changeling focuses on her own sorrow to exclude debilitating physical conditions. Numbness sets in, followed vitality, driven by a sense of the inevitable. She can ignore the effects of pain and discomfort.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Winter) ● or Court Goodwill (Winter) ●●

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Occult + Mantle (Winter)



**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The character pierces her skin with a thin needle (this does not inflict damage).

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character is overwhelmed by physical pain and discomfort, even minor irritations that she could normally endure. She suffers a -1 die penalty to all actions until the end of the next turn.

**Failure:** The character feels physical discomfort normally.

**Success:** Reduce the character's dice pool penalties for physical discomfort, pain or illness by the number of successes scored. This includes wound penalties, drowsiness, nausea — any physical irritation, no matter which actions these would normally penalize. This does not remove the actual injuries. A cut still bleeds, bones are still broken, flesh is still burnt and so on. This effect lasts for a scene.

**Exceptional Success:** In addition to the effects of a standard success, the character cannot be incapacitated by physical injuries or sensations for the rest of the scene.

### FEAR IS NOTHING (••)

The changeling takes refuge in sorrow: memories of a terrible loss or knowledge of a doom to come. He accepts his destiny with fatalistic fervor, warding off fear.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Winter) •• or Court Goodwill (Winter) •••

**Cost:** 1 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Composure + Expression + Mantle (Winter)

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The character empties his hands and leaves them open at his sides, as if he feels no need to arm himself against danger. (If necessary, he can arm himself after invoking the clause.)

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character drifts from his sorrow into fear. He suffers a -2 penalty to dice rolls to resist a source of fear, or reduces the applicable Resistance attribute by one for the purpose of determining a fear-inducing power's effects if that power's dice pool is normally reduced by the attribute.

**Failure:** The character deals with fear as well or as poorly as anyone else.

**Success:** The character reduces the dice pool of supernatural powers that might cause him fear by his

Wyrd dots. This effect lasts for the scene. He can freely ignore mundane sources of fear or disgust. Things like butchered corpses and big, growling dogs don't faze him at all. Mundane terrors cannot induce derangements while he is in this state.

**Exceptional Success:** As for a standard success, except increase the penalty of fear-inducing powers by the character's Wyrd + 2. Furthermore, the character does not suffer from any Phobia derangements for the rest of the scene, even if they were imposed beforehand.

### GRIEF IS STRONGER THAN DEATH (•••)

The changeling is so immersed in his own sorrow that her injuries are irrelevant.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Winter) •• or Court Goodwill (Winter) ••••

**Cost:** 2 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Survival + Mantle (Winter)

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The character contemptuously tosses a chunk of cold iron to the ground.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character's attention snaps back to her body, leaving her vulnerable and clumsy. Add a die to the next attack directed against her during the scene.

**Failure:** The character does not benefit from the clause.

**Success:** The character staves off the effects of injury. When she is struck in combat, tally the damage (any abilities or equipment that would affect it apply) and leave it aside for the rest of the scene. The character can "ignore" damage equal to her successes. Do not apply it to the character's health levels.

Once the scene ends or she runs out of successes, inflict all of the damage that she "ignored" in the order in which it was inflicted. This takes effect over successive turns, effectively "paying back" the wounds that were delayed.

**Exceptional Success:** As a standard success, but the character also benefits from one point of armor until the power's effects end.

### REMORSELESS STRIKE (••••)

The changeling has as little regard for others' pain as his own; all are doomed to sorrow. He strikes with cold savagery, holding nothing back. Compared to his own pain, the enemy's suffering means nothing.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Winter) ••• or Court Goodwill (Winter) ••••



**Cost:** 2 Glamour

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Brawl + Mantle (Winter)

**Action:** Instant

**Catch:** The character slashes himself with a sharp instrument and suffers a point of lethal damage.

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The character is struck with a torrent of overwhelming compassion. He cannot harm another person for the rest of the turn.

**Failure:** The character fights and acts normally.

**Success:** If the character's next Brawl or Weaponry attacks inflict any damage at all by scoring at least one success, the target suffers additional damage equal to the character's Wyrd. This damage is of the same type as the original attack unless the character's using a cold iron weapon.

**Exceptional Success:** The unrelenting force of the blow also stuns the victim for a turn. Note that this assumes that the target has a Size of 5. If the target's Size is

more or less, the victim suffers the stunning effect if the clause's successes meet or exceed that Size number.

### A COLD HAND ON THE HEART (.....)

The changeling learns how to give others the "gift" of his sorrowful fatalism. They share her power and outlook.

**Prerequisites:** Mantle (Winter) ....

**Cost:** 3 Glamour + 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Composure + Expression + Mantle (Winter)

**Action:** Instant and Contested. Roll the target's Composure + Wyrd to resist (though he may choose not to do so).

**Catch:** The character clutches the recipient of her power with one hand and anoints her forehead with the ashes of a suicide or someone who died from a crime of passion.



## Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The target's unaltered emotions flow back to the character. She cannot use Contracts of the Sorrow-Frozen Heart for the rest of the scene.

**Failure:** The target feels none of the character's sorrow.

**Success:** The target's fatalism rows powerful enough to benefit from either the first, second or third clauses of this Contract. The character chooses the recipient's benefit. Use successes scored on The Coldest Comfort to determine the effects of the clause on the target. If the recipient uses Fear is Nothing, use the character's Wyrd to determine its benefits instead of the recipient's. The character can cancel the effects of this power at any time.

There are significant drawbacks to the power. The recipient's sorrow is taxing; he loses a Willpower point. The power also automatically wracks the recipient with sorrowful, fatalistic Bedlam. The clause's effects also automatically end if the recipient regains Willpower points from satisfying a Virtue. A changeling

can choose to deny that inspiration and stick with The Coldest Comfort, but a mortal cannot.

The Coldest Comfort cannot affect supernatural beings other than changelings. Normal humans can be subjected to this power, but at a grave price. The recipient suffers a new, permanent mild derangement (one that belongs to the character or a new one determined by the storyteller) at the end of the scene unless he succeeds at a Resolve + Composure roll. If the recipient already suffers from a mild derangement, "upgrade" it to a related, severe derangement. Thus, a changeling can turn a mortal into a powerful ally, but repeated uses of this power will drive him irrevocably insane. Fortunately, a mortal can evade this danger if he fulfills his Virtue while he's under the throes of the clause. Its benefits cease, but he finds his own way out of maddening sorrow.

Needless to say, using this power on a mortal usually demands a Clarity check.

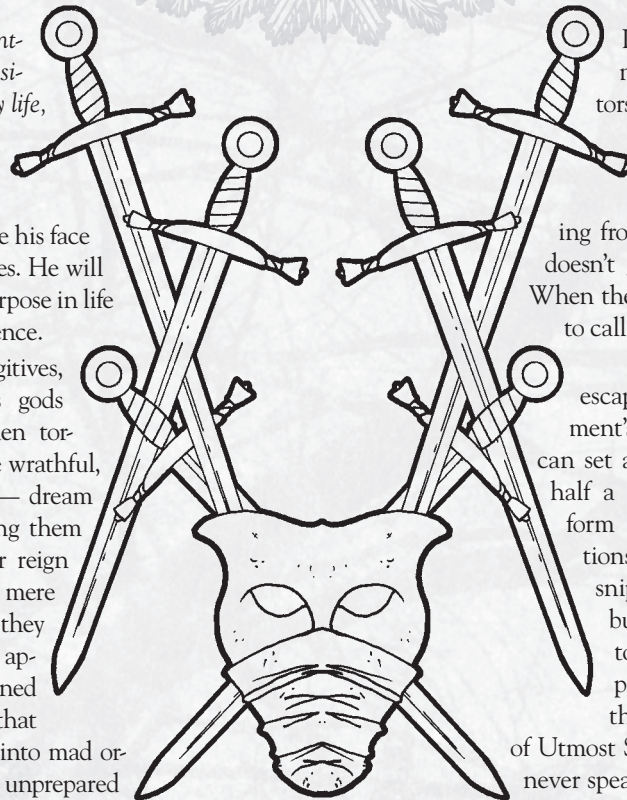
**Exceptional Success:** The powerful emotions the clause arouses are refined enough to prevent the recipient from losing a point of Willpower.

# KNIGHTHOOD OF UTMOST SILENCE

*My steps confound all hunters. Follow them. My voice is silent before them. Listen. On my life, they will not find you.*

Look for the one with the sword, his mouth invisible. Perhaps it's in shadow, or maybe his face is blank except for the alert eyes. He will hide you, protect you. It's his purpose in life — he's a Knight of Utmost Silence.

All changelings are fugitives, on the run from capricious gods who'd take them back to alien torment. Some of the Lost — the wrathful, the puissant and the foolish — dream of fighting the True Fae, telling them with a blade's sting that their reign has ended. The Gentry are not mere monsters, though monstrous they are. They are boundless things, appetite and intelligence combined into a singular mystic gravity that sucks minions and stratagems into mad orbits. An individual can kill an unprepared



Loyalist or exile. A strong motley might even rout a cult of servitors. For now, though, the idea of a crusade against the Gentry is pure folly. The best policy is to walk quietly in the world, hiding from Arcadia's attentions, but that doesn't guarantee your freedom forever. When the Gentry's hounds circle, it's time to call a Knight of Utmost Silence.

The Knights help changelings escape without a trace. On a moment's notice, an experienced team can set a motley up with new identities half a continent away. Lesser knights form the rearward guard of evacuations. When enemies pursue, they snipe and harass from the shadows, buying the time their charges need to get away. Discretion is a more powerful tool than violence for the work they do, so the Knights of Utmost Silence live up to their name by never speaking of their charges. This poli-



cy applies when they're among allies, enemies and strangers alike. The Gentry have quislings in too many freeholds to trust in friends. Knights are secretive even by Winter Court standards. To them, it would be unthinkable to let the details of their work fly from the lips of some Spring Court gossip.

The Knights have expanded their role in the unknown centuries since they formed. Originally formed to evade the True Fae, they now help changelings leave other situations by stealth. The Knights help changelings who are in trouble with the law or are pursued by enemies of all kinds. Sometimes they'll even help someone who just wants to start a new life, far away from everyone and everything she's known before. This is a much more complicated task than it used to be. These days, everyone leaves detailed traces on government records, commercial databases and internet searches. Where the Knights used to recruit outriders and troubadours they select hackers, counterfeiters and even real estate moguls. They don't try to erase every sign of their charges' old identities, but do ensure that they have viable new lives wherever they end up.

The order keeps its own counsel about who to help and why. When changelings accused of crimes against a freehold vanish, some loudly wonder whether the Knights were paid to help them flee. The Knights' Vow obligates them to help anyone evading the Gentry, but there are no such obligations when it comes to other tasks. Some Knights are pure mercenaries, but most are honorable enough to help deserving changelings.

Outsiders sometimes believe that the Knights are assassins, but this isn't true. They have no interest in meaningless killing and don't make a habit of hunting down their enemies. Sometimes, though, it's tactically preferable to pursue the pursuers, taking them out of the chase before spiriting a ward to safety. In the past, crafty changelings have manipulated the Order into killing their enemies for them. 200 years ago, this led to one ironclad policy: "Once you accept my protection, you must reach your sanctuary — willing or not." Even if a knight eliminates all of a ward's enemies, that ward is going to start a new life somewhere, whether she likes it or not. Knights routinely spy on their charges for a time after releasing them to ensure they are truly renewing their lives. If it was a ruse, the knight considers that betrayal and is entitled to seek revenge.

The Knights do themselves no favors with their taciturn attitudes. Other Lost invariably suspect that they're up to something. It doesn't help that the order doesn't believe in conventional signs of honor. They care nothing for duels, loudly declared oaths or anything else where a Lost's word is bound to more than his Court, entitlement and conscience. By the Knights' standards, honor is keeping your promises — nothing more. The order also values contemplation and humility. They don't want members avenging meaningless slights or playing at superficial freehold politics. If absolutely necessary, it's the local Quiet Marshal's business (see below).

**Titles:** Silent Knight (The Knights are well aware of the potential pun. It annoys some, but charms others, who think the idea of watching over a secret, sacred king is rather appealing.)

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 3, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 2, Weaponry 1, Mantle (Winter) 1

**Mien:** Knights arm themselves with blades: symbols of their calling. In freeholds and other places where open tradition is viable they wear light swords. In public places they prefer sturdy fighting knives, concealed in easy reach of their hands. Knights of Utmost Silence carry other weapons when necessary, but the blade is important to them. It not only symbolizes knighthood itself, but it can be used quietly, swiftly cutting the throats and kidneys of pursuers. Good knives are also multipurpose tools, suited to the many non-combat tasks Knights perform to protect their charges.

Aside from the blade, Knights wear very little that distinguishes them from anyone else. They tend to dress conservatively, behind the latest trends but ahead of anything dated enough to notice. They wear dark colors when they can to help them hide. Deep red, blue and black — the natural colors of a dimly lit night — are favorites. Of course, in trendy fashion districts, snow-covered woods or scorching deserts they dress to blend in, discarding their habitual wardrobe. They're reluctant to do anything or go anywhere unarmed or dressed in anything that would hamper their movements. This isn't so much to help them fight but to allow them to run. The order favors flight and ambush over standing their ground and taking enemy steel face to face.

The Knights have a distinctive mien that would seem to defy their subtle role, but most welcome it as an easy way for changelings in need to find them. To anyone who can see their mien, their mouths are invisible. This manifests in any number of ways. Some Knights' miens have no mouths at all. Others are partly concealed in mist and shadow. A few wear a mask or veil that looks like clothing, but is integral to the mien. This in no way restricts a Knight's ability to speak, though it sometimes adds odd features to the voice that are apparent to those who can see the mien.

**Background:** The Knights believe that one of their own should be able to give himself the new life he promises others. They recruit fugitives, con artists, actors and other people who've exchanged old lives for new. These aren't the most trustworthy folks around, but the knights know that abduction by the Gentry often sparks a perverse redemption. Those who've lived their lives as exploiters and deceivers learn what it is to be nothing more than a tool for another creature's pleasure. The Lost do not reform, per se, but the trauma of being taken makes their old self-indulgence unbearable to contemplate. Still, the old skills *itch* in them. The Knights of Utmost Silence provide an outlet for these people.

Other changelings often start anew after escaping Arcadia, but the order looks for people who've taken an extra step. If an outcast from one freehold sets up shop in another using a new name, the Knights get interested. This serves a twofold purpose because rogues who aren't suitable recruits might be a danger to the community. The order circumspectly investigates the potential recruit's character. If local Knights are

absolutely sure that he'll obey the rules, they'll quietly let him know that if he wishes they'll let him into their ranks.

In this century, the Knights of Utmost Silence have increasingly scouted for recruits with applicable skills: bureaucrats, IT experts, private investigators and other people who know how to track, attack and create the information trails that permeate the modern world. There's an increasing attitude that the order should look for these strong skills and then teach inductees anything else they need to know. The old tradition of searching for people who've discarded an old life still applies, but it is no longer the central criterion for membership.

The order has never forgotten its military origins. Members have to be able to fight with a blade. They should be athletic, sneaky and capable of swallowing their fears in the face of danger. Some of the most talented prospects need some severe guidance to get ready for duty. To put not too fine a point on it, a lot of them are cowards. They learned useful skills by running away from something. The Knights want the skills, not the personality problems.

**Organization:** The Knights' habits, work and magical privilege make it difficult for them to maintain a formal organization. If they use the Shadowkiss on a charge they can't really talk about him with comrades without making misleading statements. Furthermore, a knight's promises apply to her charges first. Some changelings specify that she should not tell *anyone* about the situation. A virtuous knight respects her oath enough to keep secrets even from other knights. Thus, knights use code, allusions and allegories extensively at their councils, balancing their obligations against the need to keep the order informed about current affairs. Despite this, they usually come away from any gathering with a good sense of local threats, political issues and which members are busy with missions.

Knights call one freehold or neighborhood home, but their work prompts them to travel widely. They can only meet on irregular occasions, called by the most senior among them: the *Quiet Marshal*. The Marshal has the power to compel knights to work together on a common cause, but only if his juniors are currently helping a changeling escape his current situation. He's an information hub for scattered knights and deals with freehold politics too. These duties mean

he pursues fewer missions than the common *knights* who make up the bulk of the entitlement. Some *knights' councils* have a strict policy of only talking business in person to avoid information leaks, but the benefits of telephones and the Internet are often too potent to pass up.

The Quiet Marshal decides how many knights he wants to manage. If there are too many, he contacts his counterparts in other freeholds and sends them the excess membership. If there are too few, it's time to recruit *Whispersquires*. The Quiet Marshal charges off-duty knights with finding suitable candidates, but he interviews them personally (and if possible, in an assumed identity) before ever initiating them.

Officially, the Knights of Utmost Silence do not have traitors or rogues. As far as the order is concerned, members who leave cease to exist.

The Knights shun them and refuse to acknowledge their existence. If the knight has committed a terrible crime, the order actively ensures the criminal's nonexistence. As is customary for the Winter Court, they kill him secretly, destroy the body, eliminate all traces of the crime and never, ever discuss it again.



12

## PRIVILEGES

All fully initiated Knights of Utmost Silence enjoy the following privilege:

### THE SHADOWKISS

Once a knight completes his training the Quiet Marshal bestows the first Shadowkiss, welcoming him into the order. He can employ the privilege ever after, concealing friends and charges under its mark.

To use the Shadowkiss, the knight lowers his face to some exposed part of the recipient's body. To mortal eyes, he kisses a hand, a cheek or some other area. But anyone able to see the world of the Lost sees the mouthless part of the knight's mien brush against the spot. The recipient feels searing cold and then numbness: the sensations of frostbite. An imprint of the knight's invisible lips appears as a red, blistering burn mark that will not fade until the privilege's effects wear off.

The knight spends a point of Glamour to seal the kiss, activating its benefit for a day. While it lasts, the Shadowkiss imposes a -3 dice penalty to all attempts to uncover

information about the recipient. This is a broad benefit; the penalty applies to everything from attempts to find the beneficiary while she's hiding in the woods to examining her tax records. Subtle twists of fate make an investigator's task more difficult. On a wilderness manhunt, tracking dogs get their noses into wasps' nests and fall down cliffs. In the city, bureaucrats lose records. Bartenders are too busy with attractive customers and brawling drunks to notice the beneficiary's passage. Even the knight is subject to these effects. If a pursuer tortures him, he says vague and mistaken things even if he sincerely intends otherwise. The benefit is indiscriminate, affecting allies and enemies alike.

Once a day passes, the knight can choose to let the benefit end or spend another point of Glamour, extending it for another day. The knight doesn't need to physically renew the Shadowkiss to extend it; he doesn't even need to know where the recipient is. If the knight lets the privilege's benefits lapse for even a moment however, he must kiss the subject again.

Knights of Utmost Silence cannot benefit from the Shadowkiss themselves.

### *Rumors of the Knighthood of Utmost Silence*

If the Knights of Utmost Silence become a part of your chronicle, consider spreading the following rumors about them:

- It's well known that the Knights of Utmost Silence have a great rivalry with the Tolltaker Knighthood (see **Changeling: The Lost** pp. 317–319). The Tolltakers stalk and kill; the Utmost Silence hides and defends. In most freeholds, this enmity results in little more than insults and occasional Hedge Duels, but when a Tolltaker is after someone under the Utmost Silence's protection, matters can escalate into bloody vendettas. One wag on the sidelines referred to these conflicts as "a debate to answer once and for all the burning question of whether an ax in the face is nobler than a stiletto in the back, or vice versa." Tolltaker Knights normally have the advantage when the argument turns political because they're more willing to explain exactly who they're after and why. Knights of Utmost Silence are never so forthcoming about their wards, leading others to believe the Tolltakers by default.

- Some knights sell their services to anyone willing to pay the price. These changelings often help fugitives escape from freehold justice, but there are always rumors of more unlikely, dangerous clientele. They say that one knight took a fetch to follow the changeling he replaced — the very changeling that the knight herself spirited away to a distant city — so that the creature could steal his victim's new life much as it had taken the old. There's also a tale that a certain sorcerer uses the blood of the Lost for his rituals, reaping the unwary from a dozen American freeholds. He has a mercenary knights' council on retainer who cover up his crimes and help him to his next hunt. He pays them with mage-forged weapons and jewels. The knights don't respond to these accusations.

- An old myth says that the order has a special fortress in the Hedge called the Commandery Windless: a castle of ice in a valley of utterly still air, where torches burn silver and cold. The Commandery has two great towers. In the Tower of Peril Delayed, the order imprisons the Gentry's greatest hunter-thralls. Too powerful to kill, they were bound to the place to be studied by the mightiest Quiet Masters. Across from it, the Tower of Flight's End has 33 apartments for the use of those who cannot find a safe place to dwell anywhere in the world. In the tales, the tenants include renegade True Fae, witches who offended the sun and stars, and Lost heroes who'll return when the proper omens come, armed and refreshed enough to lead legions to Arcadia. They say the prisoners in one tower are oathbound to hunt the inhabitants of the other and that somehow the tension between hunted and hunter generates the power that preserves the entire Commandery.





he blade wavered before his face and he almost flinched from it. He could remember being cut by iron, once. He didn't want to do this. Yet he reached out and closed his hand around the naked sword.

It bit into him, acidic, almost fiery. He felt his blood run down the iron blade and was almost surprised that it didn't hiss and boil.

"Your blood on the iron. Say the oath."

He drew a breath. "By my blood on the iron, I swear dedication to the pursuit of excellence and distinction among my brothers Marquis and my sisters Marquise. My blade shall be a firebrand among thorns, my bullets shall be hunting falcons diving to strike, until our Lady is returned to us in fullness to—" he almost faltered, the iron still stinging him, "to bring the light of the Moon to where it has been forgotten."

The last of it came easily, and on *forgotten* he reflexively squeezed the blade tighter, a confident tension in his shoulders temporarily blotting out the pain. He could feel the approval wash over him, a pulse of emotion. The sword trembled in his grasp, and he gratefully released it.

"On your feet then, Marquis," commanded the voice. "You do not kneel before your equals."

# CHAPTER 3

## *Noble and Eldritch Orders*

*Is it not passing brave to be a king,  
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?*

— CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, *Tamburlaine the Great*

The various noble and mystical entitlements of the Lost can take many roles in a chronicle. They can provide new communities for the players' characters to join or interact with. They might offer potent mystical advantages to suit a character's ambition. They are a source of potential antagonists. They can be catalysts, introducing new stories or directions to a chronicle without ever directly benefiting or opposing the players' characters at all.

Entitlements are a wonderfully versatile mechanic. The majority of them mix the qualities of secret society and noble rank, but more can be done with the general concept. In effect, an entitlement can be an enabling device for a new twist on changeling society or a slightly different sort of chronicle. Consider the Solstice Court from this chapter. Mechanically, it's an entitlement like the others: it has prerequisites, social advantages and disadvantages, and a privilege that has a real effect in-game. Socially, it isn't a noble order as such. It's potentially the larval form of a Great Court, and the events of the chronicle might elevate them further — or undo their dream. Similarly, the Lord Sages of the Unknown Reaches aren't just an entitlement; they're a storytelling device for implementing a crossover story or even a chronicle in a plausible fashion. The Ancient and Accepted Order of Bridgemaçons and their privilege of Wyrdbuilding opens up the

option for unusual architecture of changeling make, perfect for providing a key plot hook in a story or even just a potent visual background for a scene.

One narrative advantage of entitlements, of course, is that they're small enough in number that there's no pressure to include them in a chronicle for plausibility's sake. The odds don't require there to be a representative of the Scarecrow Ministry or the Barony of the Lesser Ones in any given freehold. Yet at the same time it's also easy to add a potential representative to an ongoing chronicle; many go where there's need, and if a character is interested in learning more about a specific entitlement, it's not just plausible but likely that her path will cross with such a noble. Changelings are children of twisted fate, and it's often the case that *appropriate* things happen around them.

The entitlements listed here are all designed to potentially appeal to players, but they also offer new story options. Each one has something different to bring to the table. Here you'll also find some examples of the eldritch order, an entitlement of a different color. An eldritch order is an entitlement of particular strength and age, bound by stronger magic and reaching farther beyond the bounds of simple politics. They have more stringent requirements for admission, accepting only those who are growing legends themselves — and they confer greater privileges as well.

# ANCIENT AND ACCEPTED ORDER OF BRIDGEMASONS

*Every sacred construction is a mirror of the causeway to freedom, built by the Mighty before time. I will build in secret, so that the free folks will ever reside in mighty dreams of wood and stone. Should mortal eyes profane my work, let it crumble like a dying dream and let its falling shards pierce my unfaithful heart.*

Swords and strong words pull freeholds from deadly crises, but the Ancient and Accepted Order of Bridgemasons devotes itself to a quieter occupation, less glorious but stone-strong, enduring through the ages. Time is hard put to wear away its work, but the modern, urban age attacks the entitlement itself. In a world filled with construction, a Master Builder's skills aren't as valuable as they used to be.

The Bridgemasons' Order is an old one, dating back at least as far as the Dark Ages. Its doctrine says it was born during a distant mythic era, when the Gentry slipped between worlds with ease. The ancient True Fae took artisans as slaves. They taught them how to build bridges across the Hedge so that the Gentry could ride down safe and fast. They made some slaves into huge, strong laborers. They bound others into elemental forms, and then melded them into living rock and dream-stuff: the substance of each bridge.

The Order says there was a war — the first great battle between Earth and Arcadia — led by the Gentry's victims and fought by a great alliance of mystic beings that's never been matched. The True Fae withdrew, ordered their Ogres to smash the bridges and haul the once-human "bricks" and "mortar" back to Arcadia. The Gentry put their slaves to other tasks. The Ogres and Elementals never forgot their old roles and remembered the secrets of the bridges well enough to build them again — when they got the chance.

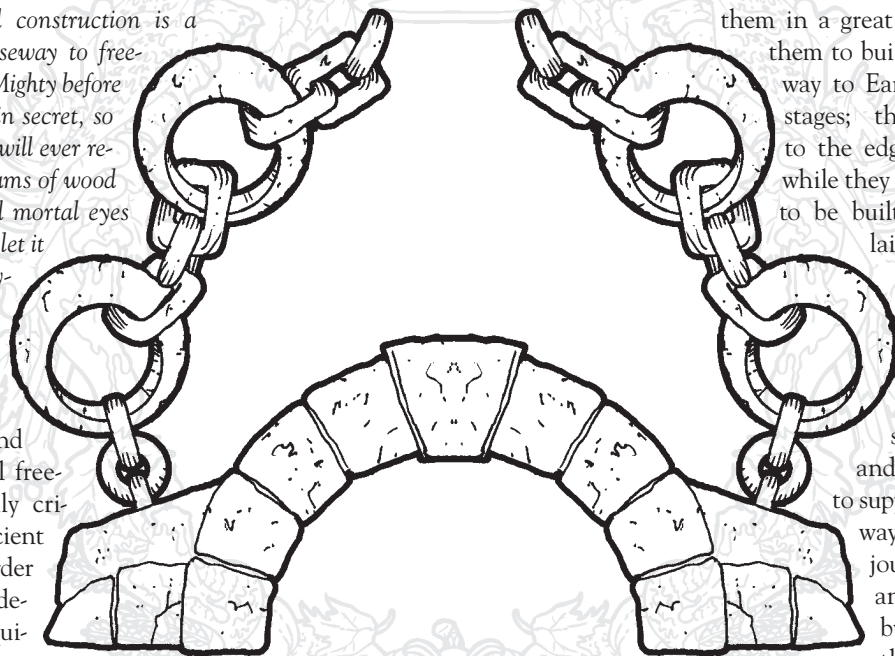
Two changelings studied bridge-lore in depth. In its ceremonies, the Order calls them Stoneman and Hammerwoman. They gathered a host of former bridge workers, led

them in a great rebellion and put them to building a new causeway to Earth. They built in stages; the host marched to the edge of each section while they waited for the next to be built. Hammerwoman laid the plans; she knocked stones and Elementals into their proper places. Stoneman took the shape of keystones and powerful columns to support them all. This way, they built and journeyed for a year and a day, pursued by the Fae war-host that followed them

along the causeway. Some of the Gentry fell to hidden traps and others were crushed between Elementals, but this only slowed them; they dogged the rebels all the way to Earth.

Only a handful of survivors reached the mortal world. The Gentry were close at their heels, so Hammerwoman took up her maul and shattered Stoneman. He was the final foundation stone of it all, so when he crumbled, the bridge's Elementals, mundane rocks and Hedge-stuff collapsed in a heap that shook both worlds. The Gentry and their warrior-slaves fell far into the Thorns, crushed beneath the wreckage of the mightiest thing ever built by the Lost.

Now free, the survivors safeguarded the secrets of their labor. So many died in the journey that they couldn't retain all the secrets, but the remaining fragments were still potent. They became the art of Wyrdbuilding. Practitioners founded the Order of Bridgemasons and made themselves a great guild among the Lost. They built mighty walls, tunnel-ridden mounds and high temples for their freeholds. Wyrdbuilding became a powerful asset for anyone able to learn it. Frauds pretended to know the trade. Some of them struck powerful pledges that made it *look* like they had the art, but long after they fled their obligations would come due, go unpaid, and reap a penalty in fallen towers. Lost lords died in the accidents and the Order's reputation suffered for it.



To safeguard the true craft of Wyrdbuilding, the Order instituted a strict regimen of training. It drew secret signs and mysteries from its legendary origin. If a Master Builder didn't know the signs, he would be exposed as a faker. Over time, the rites and signs became important in and of themselves, especially as cities grew and grew and the Lost found it easier to rent and buy homes than commission Wyrdbuilt constructions. Philosophy mixed with practical tradecraft to produce the modern Order.



Wyrdbuilding is still a valuable skill. Freeholds hire Bridgemasons to add secret rooms and concealed hideouts, and among the elite a Wyrdbuilt home is a powerful status symbol. Some freeholds have age-old agreements with the Order to handle all construction that takes place in the local lord's domain. That's tricky these days because changelings don't live in mounds and towers any more. Instead, the Order takes over local construction businesses, adding their own touch to mundane buildings when they know the Lost intend to live or meet there. Bridgemasons also focus on construction as an art. They build beautiful statues and elaborate experimental buildings. Some modern Master Builders are famous (if antisocial) architects who personally apply a few magical touches to flowing, novel designs.

There's always been a bit of tension between the Order and its employers. The Bridgemasons are still an artisans' guild: a power bloc that demands certain prices for services. They believe they have exclusive rights over their trade. If outsiders horn in they'll either put a stop to it or demand compensation. They also stand up for the "common changeling's" rights when a freehold's lords demand onerous services. Wyrdbuilding is now more of a luxury than a necessity, so the Order's power is on the wane. Nevertheless, they refuse to budge an inch on matters related to their age-old rights. When they stand for the low-status members of a freehold, they more often than not find support.

**Titles:** Master Builders

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 3, Crafts 3 + Specialty: Construction, Mantle (Autumn) 1, Elemental or Ogre.

**Joining:** For all the ritual and secrecy surrounding its initiation rites, the Order is surprisingly active when it comes to recruitment. A Bridgemason who sees potential in another Autumn Court Ogre or Elemental may encourage the potential recruit to work on his crafting skills, and guide him to learn a thing or two about construction. Most new recruits are sponsored in this fashion, and when their mentor deems them ready, they are taken into a secret room in one of the many edifices built by the Order, where an elaborate initiation ritual awaits them.

**Mien:** Bridgemasons are big. Even if they used to be small, slight people or (in the case of some Elementals) had a slender mien, this changes. Huge muscles sprout from their shoulders, backs and chests. Thick, knot-



ted quadriceps and calves envelop the bones of their legs. But the truly striking characteristic they develop are huge, thick-fingered hands of rough stone. These are easily three times the size they should be on a human of the same size, even after accounting for the unusual builds of certain changelings. Despite the transformation, the changeling doesn't turn clumsy; his new hands are as sensitive as the old ones. Members wear rough-beaten bronze rings on their left hands. This is a sign of the entitlement. They don't discuss its significance with outsiders, but plenty of rumors circulate among the Lost: it honors the memory of the order's founder, it is an emblem of their pact with stone and metal, it is part of a secret initiation rite, and so on.

Most Bridgemasons like to dress like construction workers, in reinforced denim, tool belts and steel-toed boots. They don't actually need the tools but sometimes use them to fine-tuning projects. A small number of Bridgemasons buck the trend, reveling in their eldritch ability to build with will and Wyrd magic. They wear tailored suits, tasteful safety shoes and carry tough briefcases or rugged laptops full sketches and blueprints.

**Background:** The Order takes its members from two main sources. Most were laborers, working in construction, roofing, home renovations and other hands-on jobs fixing, building and wrecking large structures. They support the dominant, working class Bridgemason ethos. They work hard, get their hands dirty and use their gifts for pragmatic reasons, but that doesn't mean they ignore the esoteric symbolism of the Order. They like it just fine, but when there's something to build, it's time to put the philosophy to rest.

A significant minority were (and many still are) architects, engineers and environmental designers. These educated, scientifically-minded changelings push the cutting edge of their fields. Thanks to their abilities they can realize their dreams at a whim. These Bridgemasons are fond of rituals and secret signs. They explore occult symbols with an eye toward rendering them in stone and steel. Still, they can't be unschooled in the brick and mortar side of things. Wyrdbuilt things can't defy the laws of physics.

These groups don't always get along, but when they work together they produce breathtaking results. Secret fortresses, hidden passages and labyrinthine mansions grow out of their "arguments" as each side demonstrates its points using the Order's trade. Lords of the Lost repose in magnificent chambers, barely aware of the contests, plans and sublime craftsmanship that built them.

**Organization:** Part guild, part mystery cult, the Order evolved from being the Lost's builders to an occult society, filled with secret traditions. The Order never asks anyone to join, but never discourages anyone from asking, either. There are two traditional paths to membership. In the first, an unskilled changeling spends four years learning the requisite craft skills from a *Bridge Master*, who intersperses lessons with tests of character. Apprentices are not members

of the entitlement. They pay for their education with constant service, so this path isn't a particularly popular one. Nowadays, it's more common for an established builder to petition for membership. He can join in a matter of months, provided the local Bridge Masters like him. The Order looks for creative, hardworking Lost who have an instinctive feel for metal, stone and concrete.

In a secret ceremony, the initiate learns a secret phrase and grip (handshake), vows never to reveal it to anyone else, and is thereupon known as a *Bridge Walker*: a member of the lowest degree. Bridge Master is the next title, gained after at least two years of membership, provided the Bridgemason has Crafts 4 and Mantle (Autumn) 4. In many places, these are the highest-ranking members of the Order around; they rule by council from the *Causeway Temple*: a special building filled with ceremonial chambers and the long, thin stone beam (the "Primordial Causeway") used in Bridgemason ceremonies. Some of a Causeway Temple's rooms are segregated by rank because they contain special writings and ceremonial implements that must not be profaned by unworthy eyes.

After a decade and the fifth dot in Crafts and the Autumn Mantle, the Master becomes a *Worshipful Pillar* who's usually the undisputed leader of all local Bridgemasons. At every rank, members learn new grips, secret words and rituals. The hierarchy is quite formal, but that doesn't keep members from using "brother" and "sister" as the customary forms of address.

There are rumors of higher, secret initiations, whose benefactors rule all the Bridgemasons from a secret temple in the Hedge, or a tunnel-filled mountain in the wild. Members scoff at this publicly, but most of them believe that there are *some* secrets kept from the Worshipful Pillars, for even they are at a loss to explain some of the stranger parts of their secret rites.

**Concepts:** Architect, construction worker, union rep, charity volunteer, secretive ritualist, urban elemental, modern geomancer

## PRIVILEGES

All Ancient and Accepted Bridgemasons enjoy the following privilege:

## WYRDBUILDING

The Order's power is spectacular to watch in action, but it's often disparaged by changelings who value martial or arcane abilities. Quite simply, the Bridgemasons know how to construct buildings, earthworks and other solid, monumental things. They don't need tools or other workers — just materials, time and secrecy.

Bridgemasons use Wyrdbuilding to create beautiful yet functional homes, monuments and fortresses for the Lost. They also alter existing constructions for changeling owners, adding secret passages, labyrinths and ornate

decorations. The Winter Court hires them to build secure hideouts, but demands a pledge of secrecy. The Order even fashions lairs inside old bridges and bleak mountains for the most antisocial elements of Lost society so that they can indulge their monstrous whims in complete privacy.

Each Bridgemason discovers her own form of Wyrdbuilding. Some of them sing their work together; each notes rivets into steel and bricks into mortar. Others yank the pieces into place by hand, displaying the superhuman strength to move tons of concrete, and benefit from strange luck as nails, planks and plumbing bounce into place. None of these benefits transfer to other feats of strength or twists of fate. The weakest Elemental can build a two story house by hand but still can't out-wrestle bears.

Bridgemasons work alone or in groups. Every hour, one Bridgemason can complete 20 Size points of construction at the cost of 1 point of Glamour. The building (or other construction) must touch bare earth or natural rock. He has to have all the required materials on hand, though exact sizes and shapes aren't necessary. His power can bend and cut sections with precision. He doesn't need any tools, but he needs to know how to build his project. For complex constructions, this requires an extended Intelligence

+ Crafts roll based on the difficulty of the project, just as if he was a normal foreman. An engineer or architect can assist with detailed plans (see "Teamwork," *The World of Darkness*, p. 134), providing up to half of the necessary successes. Bridgemasons can take breaks in the midst of construction, but must always work continuously for at least an hour at a time.

Bridgemasons can also use Wyrdbuilding to alter or destroy existing constructions at the same rate as they can build them, though faster demolitions (still taking no less than an hour) might work if the character targets a vulnerable point.

No mortal can witness the construction process, even via photographs or video, or else it fails. Once a witness sees the process, the project erodes at the rate of 20 Size points per hour (or one Size point every three minutes), regardless of Structure or Durability. This nullifies work in progress. If a mortal sees how a Wyrdbuilt construction was put together after the fact the whole thing gradually falls apart; examination reveals perfectly normal (though at times, unlikely) flaws in construction.

Wyrdbuilding can't be used to construct anything out of cold iron.

### *Rumors about the Ancient and Accepted Order of Bridgemasons*

Insert these rumors into any chronicle where the Bridgemasons play a prominent part.

- In the Middle Ages, the Bridgemasons built prisons for the Lost. Freeholds cast their traitors and intolerable madmen inside jails worked from bare rock and (as it cannot be Wyrdbuilt into place) hand-bolted cold iron. The so-called Wyrd Gaols are ruins now, filled with stone wreckage, rotted wood and sinister tales. The Wyrd's touch lingers; it changes animals and desperate people who live in the ruins. In the shadow of an old Wyrd Gaol, there are always rumors of talking foxes, sinister trees and witches' huts. The Lost also say that in some of them, prisoners were left to rot in the darkness. They never escaped, but raised families of blind, Wyrd-tainted mutants.

- Changeling lore commonly attributes all kinds of mysterious structures to the Bridgemasons. Examples include Stonehenge, the Giants' Causeway and Florida's Coral Castle. The claims are false — most of the time. When they're true, these structures usually have secret features that the order's Bridge Masters know about and might exploit during emergencies. Of course, accidents happen and from time to time, changelings and others stumble upon Trod gateways, Token vaults and secret libraries behind false walls.

- Changelings have circulated rumors about the Order's inner workings for centuries. Entitlement members are not well-liked in more traditional freeholds because they're so secretive about their rites, but effusive in their criticism of the power structure. People say that if a Bridge Master demands it, his inferiors will betray their own motleys and conspire against rulers. A few cranks even say that the Bridgemasons' myth is a lie, that they *bought* their way out of bondage with certain services, and that their buildings are mystical beacons for the Gentry. Almost nobody believes this, but when the Order leads a protest, a local lord might lend credence to stories like these if it suits her political agenda.

# THE BARONY OF THE LESSER ONES

*I swear to both guard my allies and freehold against possible hobgoblin treachery and to act as both emissary to and champion against the many and various hobgoblins that share the Hedge with our kind.*

The Hedge has its own inhabitants: a host of goblins, hobgoblins and Hedge Beasts who range from small creatures who cringe when changelings pass by, but occasionally dream of feasting on their bones, to strange and inhuman foes and even a few potential allies against the fae. The Barony of the Lesser Ones is charged with dealing with these hobgoblins. Its members negotiate with some, carefully watch the activities of others, and, when necessary, defend changelings from the depredations of the Hedge's hostile inhabitants. Barons of the Lesser Ones regularly go on expeditions into the Hedge to hunt down and slay hostile hobgoblins like border reavers, enticers or vileshrikes, as well as making deals or treaties with potentially non-hostile hobgoblins like hobs, spryghts or drudgemen.

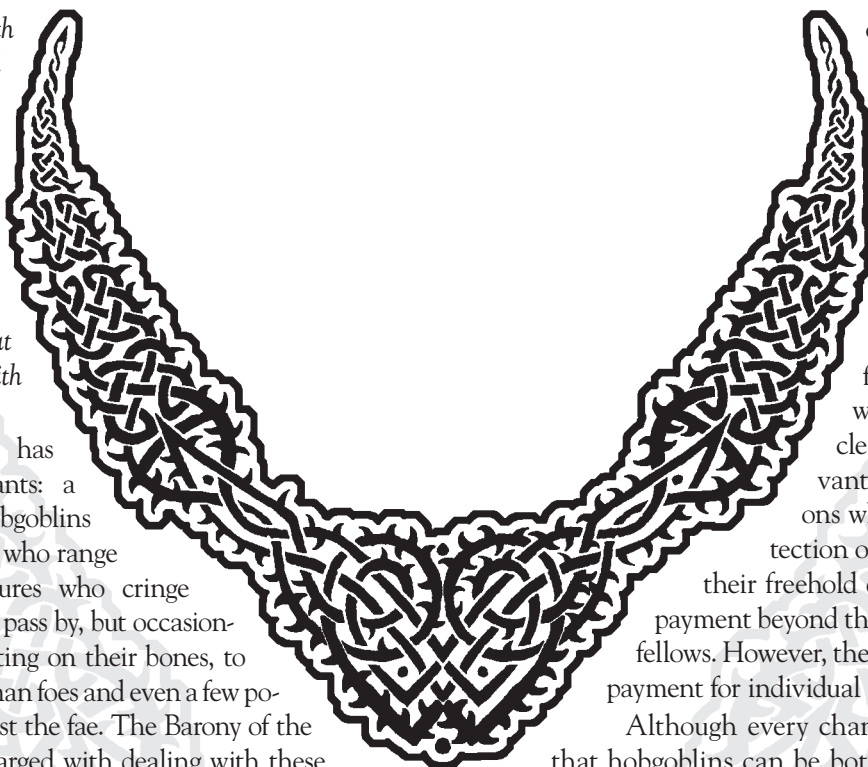
To most changelings, Barons are both sources of useful information about hobgoblins, especially regarding information about Goblin Markets. They are also the ones that changelings turn to if they have noticed suspicious hobgoblin activity or are having problems with hobgoblins, such as hobgoblins spying on or attempting to break into or destroy their Hollows. The Barons serve as fierce defenders against treachery or attack by dangerous hobgoblins, skilled diplomats who negotiate treaties between individual freeholds and tribes of hobgoblins and scouts who search the Hedge for Goblin Markets and uncover any other hobgoblin activities that might be of interest to their freehold or Court. They also negotiate with the least hostile and treacherous hobgoblins, brokering deals on everything from the location

of Goblin Markets or on rare occasions treaties of mutual defense against the fae between a freehold and a hobgoblin settlement. They occasionally even find hobgoblins willing to guard, clean or act as servants in a Hollow. Barons who act for the protection or mutual benefit of their freehold do not expect any payment beyond the gratitude of their fellows. However, they are free to accept payment for individual services.

Although every changeling recognizes that hobgoblins can be both useful and dangerous, many changelings consider them to be relatively minor foes and allies of limited worth. As a result, the Barony of the Lesser Ones is sometimes regarded as a haven for changelings who wish to look brave and heroic, but also prefer to avoid any sort of serious danger. While usually untrue, this stereotype is moderately widespread. However, even changelings who hold it cannot deny that sometimes Barons of the Lesser Ones are extremely useful.

Because they spend so much time in the Hedge and understand many of its dangers well, Barons are often asked to serve as guides through the Hedge for changelings less experienced in visiting it. In addition to being unusually skilled at Hedge travel, if they become lost, Barons have a far easier time asking directions or gaining aid from the Hedge's native inhabitants, making them exceptionally valuable traveling companions. (More than one changeling has noted that it must take some definite skill in diplomacy to get hobgoblins to help you when you're insulting them every time you introduce yourself by title.)

Barons also occasionally serve a judicial function. Hobgoblins that have a treaty with a group of change-



lings and feel they are being mistreated may approach a local Baron of the Lesser Ones and ask for redress, just as changelings who have been attacked by hobgoblins from a formally allied band can ask a Baron to locate and punish the guilty members. In such cases, Barons do everything from adjudicating a dispute over a deal at a Goblin Market to identifying and apprehending hobgoblins who are murdering changelings or the reverse.

Barons are also sometimes called upon to act as spies, peacemakers and military leaders. If a freehold or Hollow comes under repeated attack by hobgoblins, the local Barons of the Lesser Ones are expected to venture forth into the hedge and discover the cause of these problems and find some way to stop them. Such solutions range from making treaties, to defending the hobgoblins against the fae lords forcing them to attack the changelings, to leading the forces of the Freehold in battle against the hobgoblin host.

**Titles:** Baron or Baroness of the Lesser Ones

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 3, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3. However, if a potential Baron possesses either the Gentrified Bearing or Hob Kin Merit (**Rites of Spring**, p. 92) or at least one dot in the Hedge Beast Companion Merit (**Autumn Nightmares**, p. 132), the requirements are lowered to two dots in Intimidation and Persuasion.

**Joining:** Becoming part of the Barony of the Lesser Ones is largely a matter of proving your worthiness to join. In addition to having to demonstrate competence with various forms of negotiation and intimidation, the changeling must also either be able to gain the service or allegiance of a being from the Hedge or have the natural ability to awe and impress all such creatures. Changelings who can accomplish these feats are fairly rare and any who can meet these qualifications are accepted. Because this noble order is small and rarely considered either important or high status, few changelings are interested in joining and there is almost never any problem with having too many prospective members.

The Barons do not offer any form of apprenticeship or training for changelings who wish to join; instead the Barons tell prospective members that they must gain their own basic competency on their own. Whenever an applicant feels confident in her ability to meet the Barony's standards, she may then seek out whatever representative of the order is nearest. If the changeling meets all of the qualifications and seems both sane and sincere, she is then welcomed into this noble order.

Once a changeling has joined the order, she is formally considered the equal of all other members. However, novices are not simply sent off to make the best of

their duties. Recent members are expected to work with a more experienced partner. Most Barons prefer working with a partner because it minimizes the chances of unexpected betrayal by unfriendly or treacherous hobgoblins. After novices have worked with a partner for between six months or a year, they are considered competent to work on their own, but most either continue working with their original partner or find a new one. However, before this occurs, if they fail to prove themselves, their partner can call for a meeting of the Barons in the region and ask that the novice Baroness be stripped of her rank. This extreme action is only reserved for the most unsuitable novices and occurs quite rarely.

Because new members are relatively rare, many Barons are somewhat wary of recent inductees. The two best ways for a novice to gain the approval of her fellows is to either sufficiently impress the Barons who initially admitted her that she is taken on by a well-respected partner or by successfully resolving some difficult situation swiftly and sensibly. However, daring heroics can have exactly the opposite effect. Even the most martially inclined Barons have no patience with either pointless slaughter or overconfident daredevils who have no regard for their own safety. Novices who gain a reputation for carelessness or recklessness, but who are not sufficiently incompetent to be thrown out, find that only the least competent and lowliest of their elders are willing to partner with them.

**Mien:** Barons tend towards a mixture of comfortable but attractive clothing for wandering around the Hedge and sturdy dress clothing. While they must be able to fight, Barons also dress to impress, and many of them work hard to find clothing that is both dressy and highly durable. In addition, a fair number wear clothing that provides some protection against attack. Such clothing ranges from fancy but heavy long leather coats to concealed bulletproof vests worn under a shirt and suit jacket. As proof of their willingness to defend their fellow changelings against dangerous hobgoblins, Barons frequently wear weapons to official functions.

Their mien changes so that whatever they wear is decorated with complex knot-work patterns that resemble a stylized version of the Hedge, with various inset designs that resemble the faces or occasionally the entire forms of various sorts of hobgoblins. These patterns range from exceedingly abstract geometric designs to artistically rendered but fairly realistic images. As their Wyrd rises, a few Barons gain a few minor features that somewhat resemble those of some type of hobgoblin, like details of eye shape or color or fingernail shape. Such changes are uncommon and never

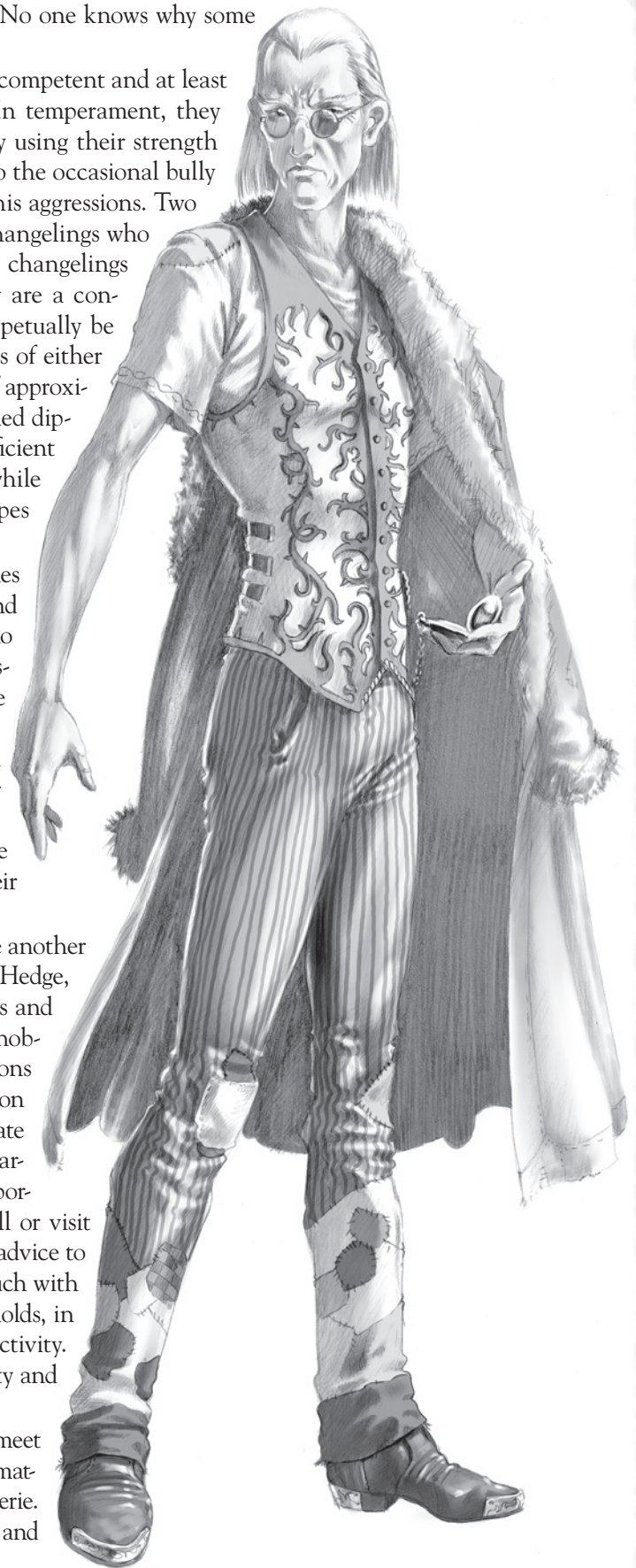
extreme, but can disturb many other changelings. No one knows why some Barons gain these features and most do not.

**Background:** Most Barons are both physically competent and at least moderately charismatic, or at least intimidating. In temperament, they range from physically competent people who enjoy using their strength to protect others and deal with legitimate threats to the occasional bully who seeks safe and not overly powerful targets for his aggressions. Two primary types of changelings join the Barons — changelings who are fascinated by hobgoblins and the Hedge and changelings who distrust all hobgoblins and believe that they are a constant, but occasionally useful threat that must perpetually be defended against. The Barons have use for initiates of either persuasion. Overall, the noble order is composed of approximately equal numbers of fierce defenders and skilled diplomats. The defenders are almost always most proficient in physical attributes and are skilled combatants, while the diplomats favor social attributes, but both types are well-advised to be able to fight and talk.

**Organization:** The Barons of the Lesser Ones have a fairly loose organization. All but the oldest and most experienced Barons are of equal rank; there is no formal hierarchy or power structure beyond the distinction between novices and members that are more experienced. The oldest and most experienced members of the order are known as elders. To become an Elder, a Baron must have belonged to this noble order for at least 30 years and be accepted by the other Elders. Less than half of the long-term Barons become Elders; most who fail to reach this mark die before their thirty years are up rather than leaving the order.

Barons are expected to keep in contact with one another and to share information about developments in the Hedge, details of information about specific Goblin Markets and any details of new types of hobgoblins or unusual hobgoblin activity. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Barons used a mixture of written notes and an oral tradition based around the Elders. Today, the Barons also operate specially locked websites and message boards for sharing information. Nevertheless, Elders remain an important resource for younger Barons, who regularly call or visit them seeking advice. Elders are expected to provide advice to barons who seek them out, while also keeping in touch with all other Barons in their own and neighboring freeholds, in order to better understand and correlate hobgoblin activity. The oldest or most infirm Elders retire from field duty and serve purely as administrators and record keepers.

Barons from neighboring freeholds also regularly meet at the house of the nearest Elder. Here, they discuss matters of mutual concern and share stories and camaraderie. Such meetings normally happen at least once a season and



frequently occur as often as once a month. The only other major contact between Barons occurs when they find some problem among the hobgoblins that is more than they can handle alone. They contact the nearby Barons, including the local Elder, who then spreads the word even further and calls in a sufficient number of Barons (or at least whatever number is available) to handle the problem.

All members are expected to respect and defer to Elders, who wield considerable amounts of influence in this noble order. In addition to giving advice and being in charge of all formal meetings, Elders can also call for a formal tribunal to investigate the behavior of members who are accused or suspected of wrongdoing. A tribunal consists of three Barons, including at least one Elder if at all possible, who all sit in judgment over the accused. These tribunals can levy fines, require that a Baron work with a partner of the tribunal's choice, order the baron to take a leave of absence or even strip the Baron of his rank. In the case of severe offenses, they usually turn both the accused and all evidence they have accumulated over to his Freehold for further judgment.

Personal reputation is of paramount importance among the Barony, and members develop significant amounts of informal status based on the performance of their duties. Successful or lucky barons command a great deal of respect among their fellows. In addition to gaining a baron the respect of their fellows, high status Barons are also regularly asked by elders to be a part of tribunals and usually go on to become Elders.

Barons prefer to work in pairs when they can. The ideal pair is widely regarded as a strong-arm, a changeling with considerable martial skills who distrusts hobgoblins and wishes to keep a close eye on their activities, and a more diplomatic Baron who likes hobgoblins and has many connections among various types of hobgoblins. The Barons regard this sort of "good cop, bad cop" pairing as an ideal way to handle the challenges of dealing with beings who are both invaluable and potentially deadly.

However, this sort of pairing also causes problems, since the division between defenders and diplomats is a continuing tension. Defenders regularly criticize diplomats for trusting hobgoblins too much and diplomats often criticize defenders for either being paranoid or for ill-treatment of non-hostile hobgoblins. For both ethical and practical reasons, the Barons of the Lesser Ones have strict rules against wholesale slaughter of non-hostile hobgoblins, since turning hobgoblins against their order or perhaps all changelings would make things very difficult for the Lost as a whole. However, they also regularly hunt down predatory "species" of hobgoblins

and punish any hobgoblins known to have either killed changelings or to be voluntarily working with the fae.

The difference between just punishment and wholesale slaughter is regularly debated at great length. If an individual Baron or particular pair seem to be too lenient or too strict with the hobgoblins they are dealing with, the local Elder investigates. If there seems to be problems, the results can be everything from a loss of status for the guilty to restrictions of punishments doled out by a formal tribunal.

**Concepts:** Careful bully, hobgoblin-loving outcast, dutiful defender, curious hedge explorer, vengeful coward, skilled Goblin Market trader

## PRIVILEGES

Barons learn a great many tricks of the trade for recognizing and dealing with the Hedge's inhabitants. As a result, they gain a +2 bonus to all Intimidation or Persuasion rolls made against any form of hobgoblin or other Hedge denizen as well as gaining +1 to their Defense against these beings and a +1 bonus for navigating the Hedge.

### *Rumors of the Barons of the Lesser Ones*

The following tales might circulate where the Barons have traveled:

- A few Barons have "gone native" and have become permanent members of communities of hobgoblins. Over time, they forget ever being human or changelings and transform into hobgoblins themselves. Maybe that's where the hobs came from in the first place.
- Bridgeburners have infiltrated the Barony in numbers. They sign up and become Barons so they can slaughter hobgoblins and attempt to disrupt the stability of the Hedge in order to help destroy the paths between Arcadia and the mortal world.
- Some Barons rule entire packs or tribes of hobgoblins, turning them into their personal slaves and hunting hounds. Some of these would-be Hedge kings hunt down mortals or changelings who stray into their territory and may occasionally allow their packs into the mortal world to steal, hunt mortals, and sow chaos. All this acting like the Gentry takes its toll, too; eventually, a few of these Barons transform into True Fae.

# COURT OF THE SOLSTICE

*I pledge myself to the between, and to the wisdom and strength that hides therein.*

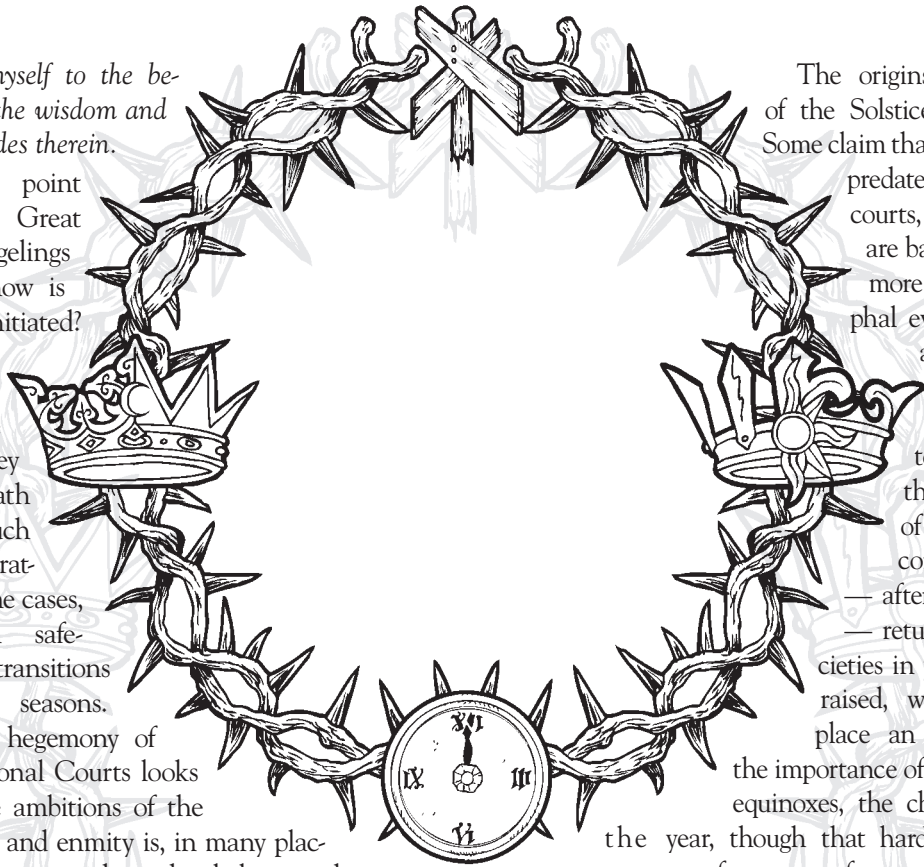
At what point does a true Great Court of changelings develop and how is the process initiated? The so-called Courtiers of the Solstice believe that they are on the path that leads to such a thing, venerating and, in some cases, perhaps even safeguarding the transitions between the seasons. Naturally, the hegemony of the “true” seasonal Courts looks askance at the ambitions of the Solstice Court, and enmity is, in many places, developing between those that belong to the four Great Courts and those that wish to become known as the fifth. Still, this entitlement and would-be seasonal Court is burgeoning, opening its doors to any who are willing to take up its banner and raise their voices in genuine support of the changing times (or, at the very least, offer the occasional semi-convincing lip-service).

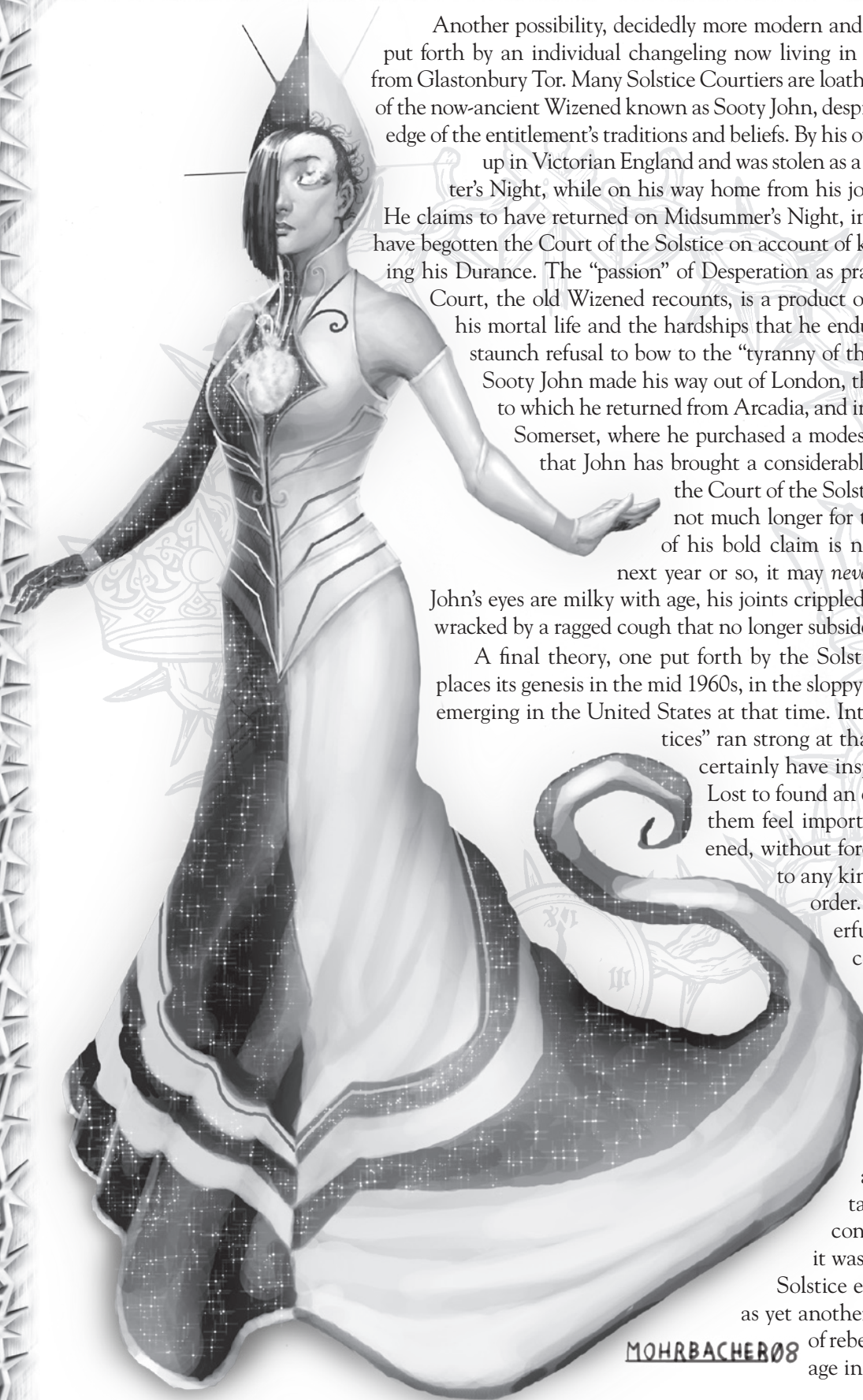
Thus, the Court of the Solstice serves as a sanctuary for idealists, an experiment for those curious about the power of the between-times and half-places, and, sadly, also as a dumping ground for those who couldn't cut it in any of the established Courts. Like any grassroots movement, the Court of the Solstice has its share of cranks and malcontents, passionate rebels, and political dynamos. It has campaigning proselytizers, armchair theorists, and “Easter and Christmas” faithful. Some join solely for the perceived perks, while others are rabidly devoted to the Solstice Court's avowed purpose. In the end, trying to categorize the adherents to the Court of the Solstice is an exercise in futility, for its members can vary so much from place to place and often within a single freehold.

The origins of the Court of the Solstice are uncertain. Some claim that the entitlement predates the seasonal courts, but these claims are backed by nothing more than apocryphal evidence, hearsay, and unconfirmed speculation. Naturally, it is to be expected that changelings of older times, coming from and — after their Durances — returning to the societies in which they were raised, would potentially place an emphasis upon the importance of the solstices and equinoxes, the changing-times of the year, though that hardly constitutes a guarantee of any sort of organized entitlement.

Conversely, even were one or more entitlements based upon these four particular times of the year to come about in antiquity, it is extraordinarily doubtful that they possessed the political agenda common to the modern Court of the Solstice. Courtiers claim that the politics have recently crept in out of necessity and a desire for equality, but more reputable fae scholars remain skeptical.

Many of the most serious theorists in the Solstice Court believe that it arose as a response to the foundation of the seasonal courts for changelings who did not identify with any of the four driving passions that motivated them. Some have a scant few tales of fae who went out on quests similar to those attributed to the legendary founders of the Emerald, the Crimson, the Ashen, and the Onyx, though all of these mythical journeys ended in one sort of failure or another. Some of the stories are clearly cautionary tales — perhaps, these historians speculate, spread by the seasonal courts — while others highlight the virtues of the seekers and play up the tragedies of their inability to find or, in some cases, successfully forge pacts with the between-times.





Another possibility, decidedly more modern and less fanciful, has been put forth by an individual changeling now living in rural England, not far from Glastonbury Tor. Many Solstice Courtiers are loath to believe the account of the now-ancient Wizeden known as Sooty John, despite his profound knowledge of the entitlement's traditions and beliefs. By his own account, John grew up in Victorian England and was stolen as a young boy on Midwinter's Night, while on his way home from his job as a chimney sweep. He claims to have returned on Midsummer's Night, in the late 1920s and to have begotten the Court of the Solstice on account of knowledge learned during his Durance. The "passion" of Desperation as practiced by the Solstice Court, the old Wizeden recounts, is a product of the circumstances of his mortal life and the hardships that he endured on account of his staunch refusal to bow to the "tyranny of the seasons." Eventually, Sooty John made his way out of London, the city of his birth and to which he returned from Arcadia, and into the hilly country of Somerset, where he purchased a modest home. Few can deny that John has brought a considerable number of Lost into the Court of the Solstice in his day, but he is not much longer for this world. If the truth of his bold claim is not learned within the next year or so, it may *never* be known. Already, John's eyes are milky with age, his joints crippled by pain, and his body wracked by a ragged cough that no longer subsides with treatment.

A final theory, one put forth by the Solstice Court's detractors, places its genesis in the mid 1960s, in the sloppy pseudo-mysticism first emerging in the United States at that time. Interest in "ancient practices" ran strong at that time. The fad could certainly have inspired recently escaped Lost to found an entitlement that made them feel important and even enlightened, without forcing them to conform to any kind of established social order. The '60s were a powerful time for the seasonal courts and many monarchs ruled with an indelicate touch. In some places, draconian measures were employed to put down dissenters motivated to stand up against rulers, in imitation of their mortal contemporaries. Perhaps it was that the Court of the Solstice emerged onto the stage as yet another example of the spirit of rebellion that gripped that age in the Western world.

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Regardless of the order's origins, those Courtiers of the Solstice most deeply invested in the beliefs and practices of their entitlement recall that times and places of transition were once sacred, venerated by people as the borders between one thing and the next. Mortals used to celebrate solstices and equinoxes, understanding the deep significance of the ending of one season's ascendancy and the beginning of another. To ancient peoples, these "between times" were sometimes powerful and important enough to warrant religious rites, schools of mysticism, and even the construction of great monuments. To the Lost, they are (or *should* be, as far as the Court of the Solstice is concerned) venerated as the changing-times that make the pacts of the seasons possible (as well as the limited protection from the Gentry that those agreements offer, in the form of Contracts that the True Fae cannot understand).

**Title:** Solstice Courtier or simply Courtier (often derogatorily referred to as "Betweenner" by those outsiders that know of them, though this title has been taken up as a badge of pride by some Courtiers).

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 3, Courtless (no Mantle dots)

**Joining:** The Solstice Court gladly welcomes anyone who shows an interest in joining them. The greatest barrier to entry is the Wyrd requirement, which demonstrates the difference between the Solstice Court and one of the "true" Great Courts; the entitlement itself doesn't have sufficient mystical power to bless any changeling. They must add their own strength to some degree. Another potential obstacle is the entitlement's rarity; they aren't present in all freeholds, and in some places few people are likely even to have heard of them. Otherwise, the Solstice Court is particularly enthusiastic about recruitment, turning away interested and qualified applicants only if their presence would do the Solstice Court great social ill (such as adopting a known privateer). The actual initiation varies from place to place, though tends to err more on the side of pomp and ceremony. The Solstice Court wishes to be seen as entirely respectable, after all.

**Mien:** Courtiers of the Solstice tend to dress in neutral hues, and many of them prefer smoky silver-gray or beige in their attire. Some also hold sable, burgundy and midnight blue to be appropriate colors for those so entitled. They tend toward symbols of the times and places of transition, as well: crossroads, clock hands set to midnight, the dawning or setting sun, a solar or lunar eclipse, the shoreline, and other such places indicative of the between. Some manage to incorporate these images into their dress, while others go for more permanent means, such as tattoos. Some Courtiers of

the Solstice find that the marks of their seemings or Kiths reveal them as creatures of the between, such as Beasts incorporating the features of two or more animals, or Darkling Gravewights, who straddle the line dividing life from death.

The mien of a Solstice Courtier might also manifest subtle changes, such as faint markings upon the skin indicative of all four seasons (green leaves for Spring, flames for Summer, bones for Autumn, and snowflakes for Winter, for instance.) Others may find themselves marked by images of the celestial bodies most closely associated with the annual periods of transition in their parts of the world. Still others find that hair and eyes take on the sheen of smoky silver. Solstice Courtiers of particularly advanced Wyrd tend to project a generally neutral atmosphere and temperature in their immediate vicinity; those closest to them often feel neither hot nor cold, save in the most extreme environments.

**Background:** Solstice Courtiers are often drawn up from the ranks of those changelings who do not feel strongly called to any one season, whether on account of political or philosophical differences, or merely because the fae in question doesn't care for the local Courts' leadership. Some few feel almost instinctually called to the service of transition. While the Solstice Court as a whole rejects the "moody loner" image, it is, nevertheless, true that a strong undercurrent of maverick behavior and solitary nature runs through many of the Lost who take up the cause of the between.

Conversely, the Solstice Court also resonates with trendsetters and trailblazers, who are eager for the opportunity to be part of something meaningful, right from its humble beginnings. The drive to innovate and to create runs strong within many Lost, and the Court of the Solstice appeals to the sensibilities of those that see its potential. Some of these are more creative and talented (and have more to offer to the entitlement as a whole) than others, but the Court of the Solstice isn't in a position to turn away changelings who want to join. Especially prized are those that have walked away from the established seasonal courts to take up the way of solstice and equinox, for they have known (from the perspective of the Solstice Courtiers, anyway) the "ease and comfort" of belonging and have opted to walk away from all of that in order to embrace a deeper, more meaningful truth and to serve the important cause of the between.

**Organization:** The Court of the Solstice is growing increasingly organized as time goes on. It is the intended objective of many Courtiers to develop the entitlement to the point that it can claim a position equal to that

of any of the seasonal Courts, a peer in the great community of the Lost. While this dream is almost certainly a long time in coming — if, indeed, it is *ever* fulfilled — those sworn to the between often feel the need to arrange their ranks as though they already are numbered among the more established courts. Given the Solstice Court's comparatively far smaller numbers (in all save the rarest and most unusual Freeholds), this usually means that the eldest and most experienced Courtier serves as “king” or “queen,” while those of lesser age, influence, and/or power fill roles designated by the “solstice monarch.” Naturally, many freeholds under the power of the “true” seasonal Courts have no particular regard for the offices set forth by the Solstice Court and many of them resent and even work to thwart such appointments; four Courts are plenty, and a fifth would only mean that everyone's slice of the pie gets a little bit smaller.

In many of the places where they are found, though, Courtiers of the Solstice remain solitary or, at best, come in twos and threes, meaning that the structure of a motley often better serves their purposes. Of course, nothing about the beliefs of the Court of the Solstice inherently makes such changelings have to get along with one another, any more so than, say, one Summer courtier must like and be willing to work with another, and so antagonistic relationships do sometimes develop within the entitlement. This most frequently occurs when ideological differences come between Solstice Courtiers, or one Courtier is more passionately involved in the entitlement than another (who might be one of the dregs of the local freehold, or, conversely, might just not be zealous enough for her fellows' tastes).

**Concepts:** Ambitious politician, estranged philosopher, rabble-rouser, trendy socialite, eccentric mystic, wannabe iconoclast, balance-seeker

## PRIVILEGES

Below is a privilege shared by all Solstice Courtiers.

## FEAST OF SCRAPS

Solstice Courtiers do not benefit from any pact with a fundamental force of terrestrial reality strong enough to keep the Others at bay, and so they do not truly comprise a Court as other changelings would understand (and recognize) the concept. That said, however, the fae of the between have searched for their own communal identity, something to set them apart and make them distinct from the courtless, and may have found something in what elder Courtiers have come to call the Feast of Scraps.

Courtiers of the Solstice may consider Desperation to be their native “Court” passion: an amalgama-

tion of the Desire, Wrath, Fear, and Sorrow preserved and propounded by the four proper seasonal Courts. Such changelings may, for example, harvest additional Glamour from this emotion and, with a potent enough Wyrd, may incite Bedlam based upon it. Any Solstice Courtier who joins one of the seasonal courts loses this benefit completely and permanently. Should the Court of the Solstice somehow eventually manage to rise to the station of a full-fledged court, then Desperation would almost certainly remain its driving passion.

### *Rumors of the Solstice Court*

Most of the rumors that circulate with regard to the Courtiers of the Solstice are unflattering. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the challenge to the balance between the four seasons inherent to the very existence of the Solstice Court. Of course, it is theoretically possible that a sinister agenda actually *does* lurk at the entitlement's heart, concealed from casual scrutiny by those that dismiss the “propaganda” of the four established seasons. Under the cover provided by jaded changelings, many dark dealings could go completely unnoticed...

- One or more Courtiers of the Solstice have set out on quests to strike a bargain with the four seasonal “between times” of the year (the two solstices and the two equinoxes) and are apt to turn up in foreign freeholds at or around those times, seeking provisions, advice or even aid. Some freeholds turn these vagabonds away, while others seek to bargain with them for lore, news from abroad, or strange treasures.

- Courtiers take it upon themselves to ensure the transition between seasons as the solstices and equinoxes, and are known to take action against monarchs who do not yield their thrones at the appointed hour. Some attribute assassination to the Solstice Court, though most tales merely speak of harassment, cruel pranks, and the occasional threat of non-lethal violence.

- The Court of the Solstice — given its uncertain status (presently undefended from the Gentry by any earthly constant) and its “court” passion — is actually a front for Arcadian loyalists. Sooty John never left the service of his Keeper and, whether or not he is the Solstice Court's founder, has used dark magic to bind all of his students to its will, and his corruption merely spreads with the passing of years.

# THE DUCHY OF TRUTH AND LOSS

*I swear to save mortals from the dangerous and alien fetches that invade their lives and to deal with all fetches in such a way that the mortals around them will never suspect the greater truth of abduction.*

To many changelings the greatest horror of their captivity strikes upon their return, when they discover that not only was no one aware of the horrors they suffered, but their friends and families did not even know they were gone. Instead, changelings must face a soulless fae-made imposter who has been living their lives and is often now their bitter foe. In an effort to prevent such horrors, the Dukes of Truth and Loss hunt down fetches before the changelings they are return from Arcadia.

Dukes of Truth and Loss consider Fetches to be dangerous abominations. They also are united by the firm belief that families who have had someone abducted by the fae are far better off suffering through the loss of this person rather than living what these changelings see as a horrible lie. Since the Dukes cannot reveal the truth of the original abduction, they attempt to make the fetch disappear in some fashion. Because the vast majority of mortals abducted into Arcadia never return, almost all of the fetches that the Dukes of Truth and Loss hunt down are those of mortals who will never return from Arcadia as changelings.

Many Dukes kill the fetches they find, while also making certain that the fetch's remains (whatever form they may take) are never found. The Duchy's goal is to convince everyone the abducted person knew that this person has inexplicably vanished, not that they were murdered under mysterious circumstances. Dukes who kill fetches either do so in the Hedge or dump the

body in the Hedge, often returning after a few days to see if any of the pieces have become tokens.

A substantial minority of the Dukes do not kill the fetch. Instead, they abduct the fetch and take it into the Hedge. There they may dispose of it by selling it to hobgoblins, since

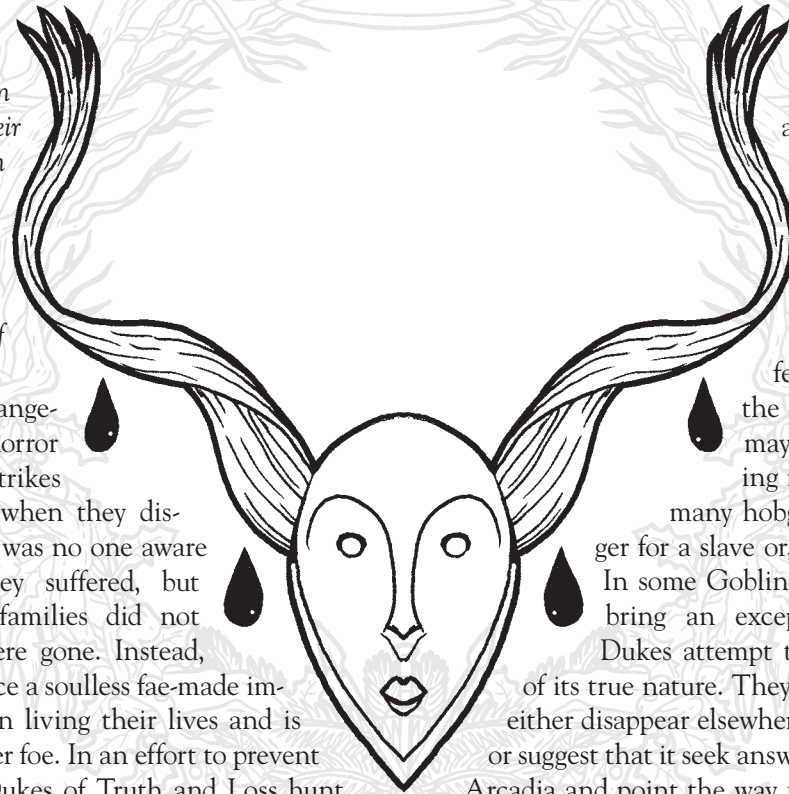
many hobgoblins are always eager for a slave or, occasionally, a meal.

In some Goblin Markets, a fetch can bring an exceptional price. Other Dukes attempt to convince the fetch of its true nature. They then ask the fetch to either disappear elsewhere in the mortal world or suggest that it seek answers about its nature in

Arcadia and point the way there. Fetches who go towards Arcadia are, naturally, never seen again. The fate of the other fetches varies; some attempt to hunt down and kill any fae who appear in the mortal world, others attempt to lead quiet but isolated lives, and a few take up hunting changelings and sometimes become devourers (*Autumn Nightmares*, pp. 107-108).

The first and most obvious obstacle to the Dukes' efforts is actually locating a fetch. While they are obvious to the changeling they are duplicating, Fetches are otherwise indistinguishable from any other mortal. The only obvious difference is that like changelings, they can see a changeling's mien and can sense the approach of any of the Lost. So, while a Duke of Truth and Loss who is hunting a fetch cannot sneak up on it, she can possibly determine if the individual she is hunting is a fetch, based upon how this person reacts to her. Unfortunately, even this process is fraught with error and locating potential fetches in the first place is far from easy.

Dukes look for stories of individuals who suddenly changed their behavior or who told their friends and loved ones about feelings of being watched or followed



or recurring nightmares, which suddenly stopped. A particularly strong sign is if the individual either no longer remembers these feelings or nightmares or refuses to talk about them. On rare occasions, the hunters also find deeply distressed mortals who are convinced that a loved one has been replaced by a clever imposter. Some of these mortals are correct. Dukes only hunt fetches of changelings who have not yet escaped from Arcadia. Unless asked by the changeling herself, they refuse to hunt the fetch of any changeling who has returned, because the Dukes believe that once changelings are back, their fetches are ultimately their responsibility. If a changeling wishes to have a Duke of Truth and Loss kill or abduct his fetch, he must pay the duke for this service. Some dukes consider changelings who ask this to be cowards and refuse all such requests.

Because locating fetches is exceptionally difficult, even the most successful Dukes never find more than a handful a year, and most find less. Instead, they spend most of their time chasing red herrings and occasionally dealing with incidents ranging from ordinary mortal insanity to temporary disappearances or brief episodes of insanity brought on by other supernatural causes. Most Dukes ignore these false leads, but some attempt to help the mortal involved, regardless of the origin of the problems.

Most other changelings are pleased when they hear that a Duke of Truth and Loss has located a fetch, and the handful of changelings whose fetches vanished because they found by the Duchy before the changelings returned are mostly grateful. However, finding even one fetch requires many weeks or months of effort. When this effort is combined with the fact that so few of the Lost ever return from Arcadia, the majority of changelings consider the Dukes of Truth and Loss to be obsessed and bitter individuals whose hunting has more to do with their personal hatreds than with any desire to help others. The fact that the Dukes are all members of the Winter Court is also not lost on other changelings — their actions are notable for causing despair in the families of the abducted, which may not be for all the right reasons.

**Titles:** Duke or Duchess of Truth and Loss

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 2, Resolve 3, Investigation 3, Mantle (Winter) •

**Joining:** The first step in joining the Duchy of Truth and Loss is correctly identifying someone who is a fetch. Lacking the token that all properly initiated Dukes possess, prospective members must use a

### *The Capgras Delusion?*

One of the complications that can bedevil the Dukes of Truth and Loss is the Capgras delusion, a psychological disorder in which a person believes that a loved one has been replaced by some sort of impostor. This can lead to them mistaking a human being for a fetch, which ends tragically. On the other hand, a doctor may diagnose a person with the Capgras delusion where a substitution has in fact taken place.

mixture of careful observation, keen deduction skills, and intuition to locate a likely fetch. Then, the prospective member must explain how she decided that this person was a fetch to three Dukes, who decide if her methods were sufficiently meticulous, or if she was merely lucky. The Dukes check and see if the target actually is a fetch. If the prospective member is correct, then these three Dukes tell her to go and deal with the fetch as she sees fit. The Dukes wait nearby, in case the fetch tries to escape or if the changeling calls for help. Anyone who can correctly identify a fetch and successfully deal with it in the manner they choose is eligible to become a member. Changelings who fail at this task cannot try again for one year.

For their first few hunts, new members must work with experienced dukes who critique their performance and prevent them from either letting a fetch get away or mistaking an innocent person for a fetch. If the new Duchess does well, she is permitted to work on her own. If she does poorly, the more experienced Duke remains with her. Initiates who are insufficiently careful or competent are stripped of their rank. Hunting fetches is a dangerous business. Some Dukes who sufficiently distrust or dislike the new member that they are observing are said to be deliberately slow in coming to the aid of their apprentice.

**Mien:** Dukes of Truth and Loss value functionality over appearance and tend to wear clothing that is easy to move in and within which they can conceal weapons, lock picks, small surveillance cameras and similar devices. Most favor dark-colored clothing and because a few Fetches are profoundly dangerous and attempt to hunt them instead, most always carry various weapons and other useful gear with them at all times. The primary changes to a duke's mien are their armored breastplate and the face-shaped token

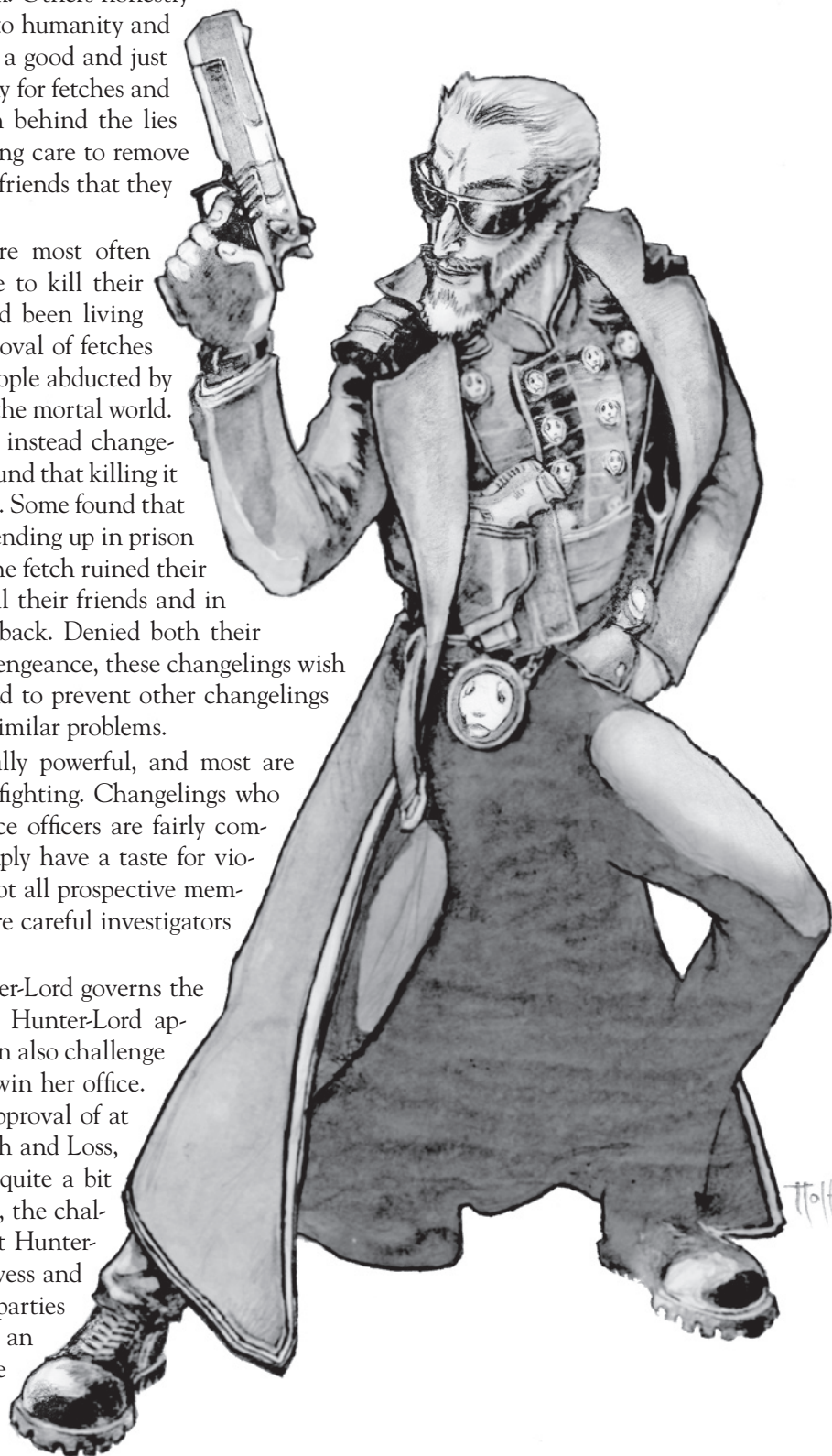
(see below). In addition, their fingers lengthen and become somewhat skeletal and claw-like in appearance and their faces take on a slightly predatory appearance.

**Background:** Many Dukes of Truth and Loss are bitter and somewhat brutal changelings who see killing fetches as a way to both strike back at the fae and a method of causing the mortals left behind to suffer a lesser version of what happened to them. Others honestly believe that fetches are a danger to humanity and that ridding the world of them is a good and just act. Some dukes also feel sympathy for fetches and wish to let them know the truth behind the lies of their existence, while also taking care to remove them from the mortal family and friends that they think they have.

Dukes of Truth and Loss are most often changelings who did not hesitate to kill their fetch after they found that it had been living their life. These Lost see the removal of fetches as a useful service for both the people abducted by the fae and their families back in the mortal world. A few members of this order are instead changelings who either had no fetch or found that killing it was either impossible or irrelevant. Some found that their fetch destroyed their life by ending up in prison or as a wanted felon. For others, the fetch ruined their marriage, estranged them from all their friends and in some cases died before they got back. Denied both their lives and any sort of satisfactory vengeance, these changelings wish to strike back at other fetches and to prevent other changelings from returning home and facing similar problems.

Members tend to be physically powerful, and most are familiar with both weapons and fighting. Changelings who used to be either soldiers or police officers are fairly common, as are changelings who simply have a taste for violence and bloodshed. However, not all prospective members are hardened killers; many are careful investigators with an abiding passion for truth.

**Organization:** A single Hunter-Lord governs the Duchy of Truth and Loss. Each Hunter-Lord appoints her successor, but Dukes can also challenge the Hunter-Lord and attempt to win her office. Challengers must first gain the approval of at least a dozen other Dukes of Truth and Loss, a process that typically involves quite a bit of travel. To become Hunter-Lord, the challenger must then best the current Hunter-Lord in a contest of physical prowess and cunning, which involves both parties fighting a duel to first blood in an area 300 yards on each side. The current Hunter-Lord chooses where this area is located. Dense



forest, industrial parks, or sewer tunnels are all frequent options for this location. Both parties must then stay within this area and hunt one another. Leaving the area results in an automatic forfeit.

Hunter-Lord is an office of significant status but only moderate power. Hunter-Lords keep track of all fetch hunts and of either calling for or approving investigations of individual hunts that may be suspect or of Dukes suspected of carelessness, endangering others, drawing mortal or fae attention to the Dukes or other serious improprieties. To help identify of such problems, each Duke of Truth and Loss is charged with keeping track of all nearby Dukes. Every Duke reports the details of each hunt to both their neighbors and to the Hunter-Lord. If anything seems suspicious about the hunt, one or more of Dukes investigates, while also notifying the Hunter-Lord of this investigation.

Almost all Dukes of Truth and Loss are well aware that the difference between their order and serial killers is small but vitally important. Therefore, they are eager to make certain that their fellows only kill or kidnap actual fetches. Also, many Dukes are as concerned about protecting mortals as they are about hunting down fetches and understand that Dukes who care little for the safety of others must be stopped.

**Concepts:** Brutal killer, tirelessly obsessed detective, would-be savior to fetches, alienated wanderer, thwarted family man.

## PRIVILEGES

Dukes of Truth and Loss gain two two-dot tokens upon their initiation. The first is a Hedgespun raiment (**Changeling: The Lost**, pp. 203-204). This two-dot raiment is armor that always has the mien of an elegantly simple leather breastplate that looks more like a heavy leather vest than actual armor. It is decorated with polished bone buttons, which are each carved in the form of a smaller and simpler version of the same doll face as their other token, the False Face of Truth. To mortals, this armor appears to be either a simple but well made suit jacket fitted with Kevlar armor or a long coat with similar armor. Although not immediately obvious as armor, mortals trained to look for concealed armor, like most criminals and law-enforcement personnel, notice the armor if they make a successful Wits + Investigation roll.

## THE FALSE FACE OF TRUTH (••)

This token always comes in the shape of a small badge or pin, around two inches in diameter, made in

the shape of a disturbingly inhuman-looking doll face that appears to be made from painted porcelain. The face's mouth is slightly open. If the changeling touches a drop of blood or a strand of hair to the face, the changeling using it instantly knows if this person is a fetch, a changeling, or a mortal. This token is one of the very few ways to tell a fetch from an ordinary mortal.

**Action:** Instant

**Drawback:** After every use, the changeling must then feed the face a small amount of her own blood. Doing this simply requires the changeling to place her finger against the face's mouth. It drinks a bit of blood and does one point of bashing damage to the changeling. The token cannot be used again until it has been fed.

**Catch:** Any mortal or other character using this token without the requisite Glamour expenditure or Wyrds roll must feed the face at least a tablespoon of the target's fresh blood to determine if the target is a fetch. In addition, before he can use it again, the user must feed the face a sufficient amount of his own blood, which causes him to suffer one point of lethal damage.

### *Rumors of the Duchy of Truth and Loss*

The Duchy cannot help but stir up whispers wherever it hunts. The following are a few that might be overheard:

- Their tokens don't really work and many of them don't bother to use them anyway. Instead, most Dukes are nothing more than serial killers who kill people that they think might be fetches, without bothering to try to find out if this is in fact true. They don't recruit people for dedication, they recruit them for bloodlust.

- Some Dukes who supposedly kidnap fetches and take them into the Hedge actually knowingly kidnapping mortals and selling them to the fae. The Duchy's full of privateers like this, probably including its Hunter-Lord, just hiding in plain sight.

- Locating fetches is actually just the Duke's cover story; they investigate mortals for some unknown reasons that has nothing to do with fetches. They lie about it even to other members of the Winter Court.

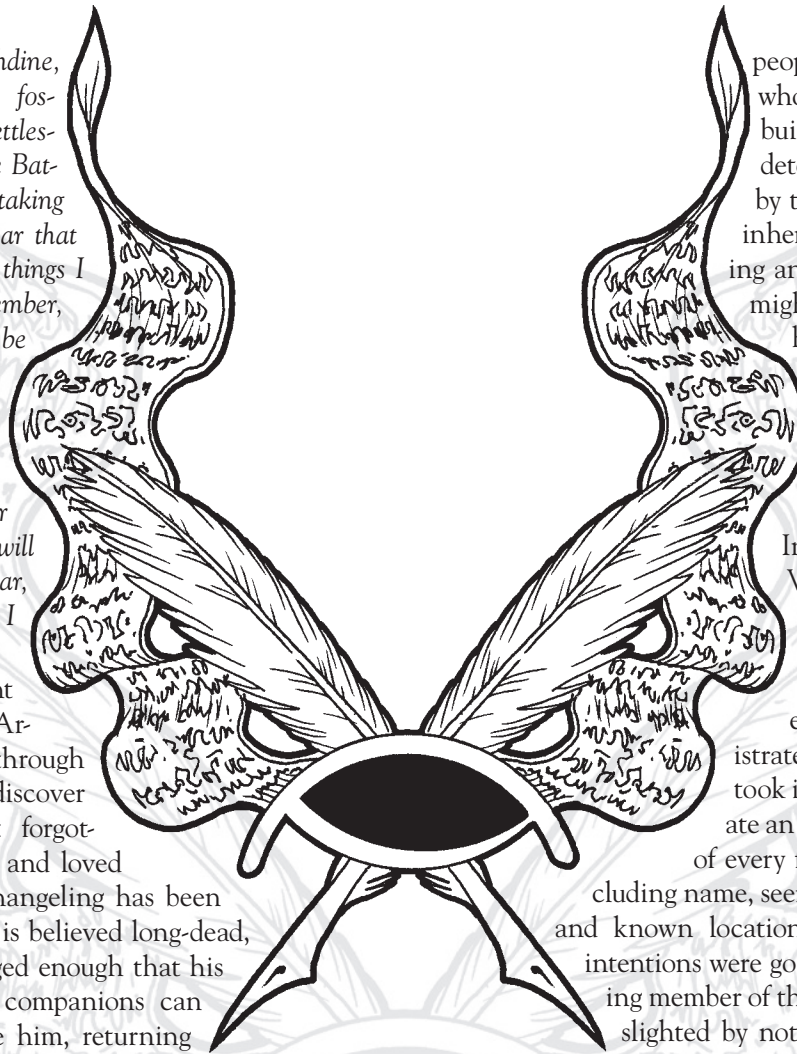
# THE ETERNAL ECHOES

*I, Shayndel Leahdine, beloved of Rainian, fosterling of Amelia Kettleworth, witness of the Battle of Boston and the taking of Mal Coleche, swear that I shall not forget the things I have seen. I will remember, so that the past may be learned from. I will remember, so that mistakes shall not be repeated. I will remember, so that our glories will live on. I will remember, this I swear, and should I fail, may I myself be forgotten.*

Many Lost fight their way out of Arcadia and struggle through the Hedge, only to discover themselves all but forgotten by their friends and loved ones. Whether a changeling has been replaced by a fetch, is believed long-dead, or simply has changed enough that his former family and companions can no longer recognize him, returning to claim a life and being treated as a stranger is a terrible plight to endure.

Once they have begun to come to some sort of terms with their new existences, however, some of the Lost set out to do what they can to ensure that they, and those like them, do not have to face such a fate again. By dedicating themselves to serving as a living memory for those around them, the Eternal Echoes hope to keep themselves and other Lost from being forgotten.

Throughout the centuries, many methods of recording important events in various cultures' histories have been used. From cave painting and illuminated books of hours to video documentaries and blogs, each means has advantages and disadvantages depending on the needs and intent of those using them. For



people such as the Lost, whose entire culture is built around avoiding detection and recapture by their Keepers, there is inherent danger in recording any information which might fall into Gentry hands and thus be used to track down not just individual members of changeling society but entire freeholds. In the early 1920s, the Valley of Gold, an Ohio River Valley freehold was utterly decimated after an enterprising Magistrate of the Wax Mage took it upon himself to create an encompassing census of every freehold member (including name, seeming and kith, Court and known locations). The Magistrate's intentions were good; after a high-ranking member of the Summer Court was slighted by not receiving an invitation to a cross-court gathering, the host hoped that the census would prevent such mishaps from happening again. Unfortunately, the census book fell into the hands of a Loyalist, who turned it over to the Others (reportedly for a hefty reward). In a single night, the entire freehold was dragged kicking and screaming back into the Hedge, leaving behind nothing but bloodstains to show that it had ever existed. The area is now known as the Valley of Nightmares, and reportedly any changeling who spends the night in the vicinity of location the former-freehold once held their gatherings will wake to find his own Keeper standing over him, ready to pull him back into Arcadia.

Because of the dangers of recording any pertinent information about their population, word of mouth

and oral tradition is generally held to be the safest way to document the lives, trials and triumphs of the Lost. Unfortunately, such stories inevitably change from telling to telling, either unintentionally due to misremembering or “creative license” on the part of the storyteller or due to intentional modifications designed to give a tale particular social or political meaning that it may not have originally had. To serve the need for an accurate history of the Lost, unlikely to fall into the Others’ hands or to be corrupted by false remembrances or political machinations, The Eternal Echoes came into being. For centuries, this entitlement has dedicated itself to bearing witness to the major and minor triumphs and tribulations of Lost society, and ensuring that a true and accurate memory of events exists for future generations to learn from.

A member of the Eternal Echoes may, by focusing his attention to it, remember any scene he witnesses first hand in complete detail. Later, each scene may be “replayed” simply by turning his attention to it, and he may glean from it any minute details to which he was witness, no matter how long ago the incident happened. These dedicated memories are multi-sensory and undiluted by time or distance; for the remembering Echo, it is as if he was once again witnessing the scene in full, complete with sights, smells, sounds and any other sensory details, undiluted by time or distance.

As well, an Eternal can pass these memories on to other members of the Echoes. Since the original witness loses all memories of the witnessed situation (including normal memories involved with the scene) such transferences are normally only completed on the Echo’s deathbed, but Echoes have been known to give up their witnessed memories to another Echo in other dire circumstances as well.

**Titles:** Lord/Lady of Echoes, The Eternals (collectively)

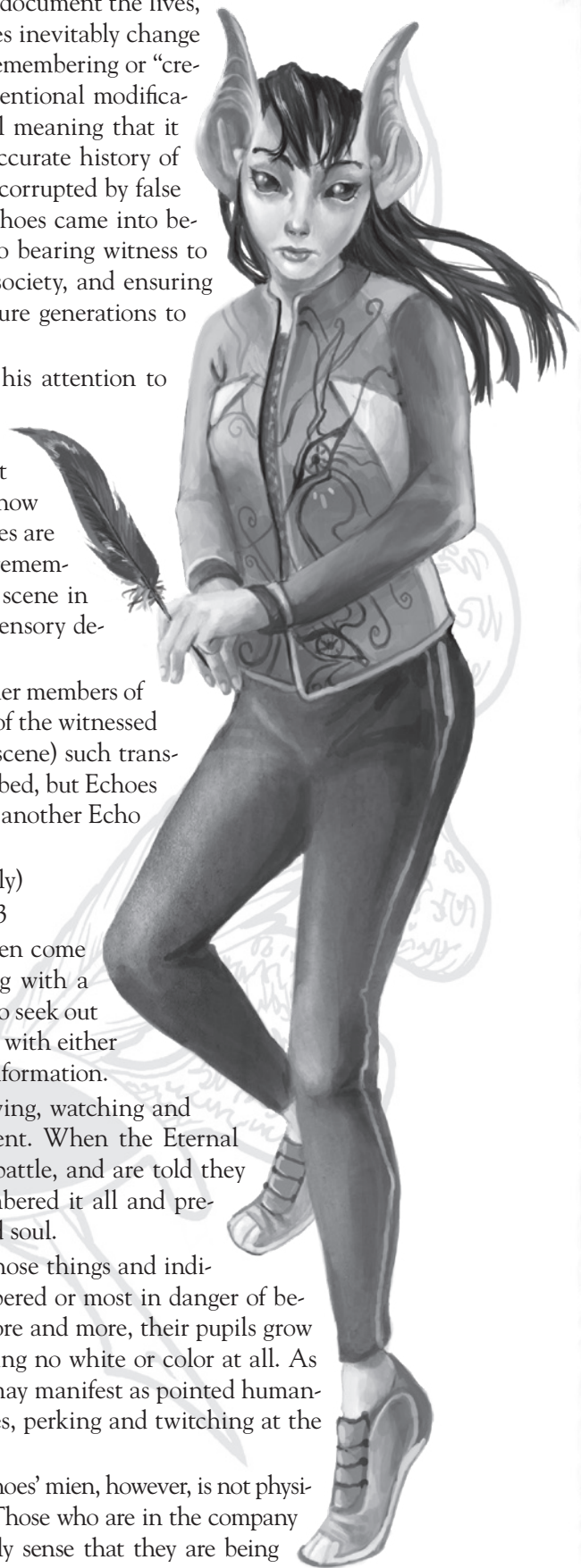
**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 3, Eidetic Memory, Intelligence 3

**Joining:** Potential recruits for the Eternal Echoes often come to the entitlement’s attention by listening. A changeling with a deep interest in the history and legends of the Lost tends to seek out people to tell her more, which may bring her into contact with either a Lord of Echoes or someone who provides a Lord with information.

Some even come to the Eternals’ attention by following, watching and remembering without any assistance from the entitlement. When the Eternal Echoes begin to gather information on a recent bloody battle, and are told they should really talk to one of the participants who remembered it all and preserves the whole story, they know they’ve found a kindred soul.

**Mien:** The Eternals are constantly on the alert for those things and individuals which are either most deserving of being remembered or most in danger of being forgotten. As an Eternal witnesses and remembers more and more, their pupils grow larger, until eventually their eyes are entirely dark, showing no white or color at all. As well, their ears become more pronounced. In some, this may manifest as pointed humanoid ears. For others, their ears may take on feral attributes, perking and twitching at the slightest sound like those of an alert beast.

Perhaps the most disturbing attribute of The Eternal Echoes’ mien, however, is not physical at all. An aura of attentiveness surrounds the Eternals. Those who are in the company of one of the Echoes frequently report that they constantly sense that they are being





watched or eavesdropped upon. As well, the susurrations of whispers just quiet enough to be unintelligible haunts the area where a Lord or Lady of Echoes is present.

**Background:** The Echoes are often those who have extremely strong positive memories of their lives before Faerie, and who have found themselves forgotten by people they remembered so strongly. Those who return from Faerie to find that their spouses have remarried and their children now call another “Mommy”, or who return after what seems to be a short Durance in Arcadia, only to find everyone they loved have died of old age, are frequently candidates for the Echoes. More importantly than past history, however, is a willingness to put oneself in danger, both in the immediate time while acting as a witness and long-term by serving as a storehouse for the culture’s memories.

Those who are selfish, self-centered, or insist on being in the spotlight themselves rarely make successful Echoes. Being always a watcher and never the watched is rarely a satisfying role for those who crave the limelight themselves. On the other hand, shy, timid or easily intimidated individuals are not well suited to the Echoes either. Echoes often “ride into battle” (proverbially or literally) alongside those who risk their lives and souls to battle the True Fae or other direct threats to Lost populations, serving as witness to the victory or loss. Other Echoes accompany those who explore the intricacies of the Hedge, gleaning whatever information they can which might prove useful about the mercurial and dangerous borderlands.

**Organization:** Publicly, the Echoes purport to be organized as less of a hierarchy and more a communication and information network. In day to day life, most Echoes set themselves to remembering those things which they feel a calling to witness, rather than being assigned duties by others. This results in several different “types” of Echoes, who may refer to themselves (or be referred to by others) in terms related to their preferred roles.

Echoes who prefer to witness court and political related events may serve a freehold (or an individual Lost of political power) as a *Court Attestant*. These individuals are held to extreme standards of truthfulness and are assumed to speak only the facts about that which they have witnessed. An Attestant who is found to have lied in the line of duty about a witnessed situation is frequently shunned and rarely recovers socially from the failure in his perceived duties.

Other Echoes continually place themselves in positions of peril, riding out with adventurers, accompa-

nying guard or sentry posts in areas known to be frequented by the Others, or serving on the “front line” of battles in the Hedge. These *Martial Correspondents* are frequently battle-ready themselves, but their primary duty is not offense or defense, but serving as witness to the glories of others. Changelings of the Sacred Band of the Golden Standard frequently hire, influence or coerce Echoes to serve as witness to their activities, thus ensuring that their prowess, bravery and victories are remembered for all time to come. Mal Coleche, a noted member of the Sacred Band, was said to have employed a full half-dozen Echo Correspondents, at least one of which accompanied him at all times. Because of this, three witnesses were present on the day that a Huntsman opened a gateway out of the Hedge and abducted the Stonebones through it. Although Mal was taken by surprise, his hired witnesses were not, and the Ogre’s last known living moments were remembered for posterity by his Echo hirelings.

Those Echoes who specialize in accompanying exploring parties in the Hedge are often referred to as *Navigators*, although this is a somewhat inaccurate term. The constantly mutable nature of the Hedge makes anything but the most firmly established trods all but impossible to map. This means that even though those Navigators who witness a particular expedition’s progress may have a completely clear memory of what path they came in on, they are not necessarily going to be helpful in aiding the party to find their way back. However many explorers still will invite an Echo to accompany them on long or treacherous journeys in the Hedge, as much for the purported luck they bring an expedition as for their perfect memories of the trip.

Other Echoes may specialize in a freehold’s important events (*Historians*), may follow the life or lineage of a particular individual, motley or kith (*Biographers*) or may travel from area to area witnessing a particular rite or ceremony as celebrated by Lost from different locations (*Sacramentists*).

**Hierarchy:** To the public, Echoes claim to be of one rank within the entitlement. In some areas, however, small hierarchies have developed within the entitlement, with one or more socially or politically powerful members organizing their fellow Echoes. In most cases this organization is, at least nominally, for the benefit of Lost society; by suggesting particular Echoes play witness to particular events, an organizer can prevent one situation from being witnessed multiple times while another goes unremembered. Information is power, however, and power corrupts. Some Echo or-

ganizers reportedly trade favors to have an Echo under their direction assigned to a certain politically important situation — or to ensure that no Echo is present there.

Rumors exist of a small group of Echoes who have turned themselves over entirely to the upper echelon of the order, serving as a repository for the memories which are too horrific, too important or too dangerous to entrust to those who are still interacting with the outside world. These few, called the Silent Echoes, reportedly enter willingly into a long, coma-like sleep wherein they spend their time in dreams constantly maintaining and re-witnessing the events which other members of the Echoes bring to them to be protected. The Silent Echoes are rumored to possess memories dating back to the earliest years of Lost history, as well as those of witnessed events of particular political import, such as the trial (and execution) of Banished Fae Jacobe LaVigne who had infiltrated a French freehold in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, or the assassination of a South American hermaphrodite King-Queen of the Spring Court in the 1990s.

**Concepts:** Armchair historian, genealogy buff, modern-day skald, blackmailer, insatiably curious wanderer, hero-worshipper, time-displaced sage.

## PRIVILEGES

All Echoes have access to the following abilities.

### PERFECTED MEMORY

A member of the Eternal Echoes may spend a point of Willpower *and* a point of Glamour during any scene in order to store the scene in memory. The remainder of that scene is etched into the Echo's mind and can be recalled at will for the rest of the Echo's life with no degeneration of detail or muddling of memory. Supernatural effects which normally erase, change or steal a memory cannot affect scenes remembered with the Perfected Memory ability. As well, the Echo receives a +5 bonus to protect against all attempts of any sort to coerce her into revealing details of scenes which she has used Perfected Memory to remember. She does not have to use this bonus, and can share the details at will if she chooses, but the bonus is available at will to use on resisted attempts to wheedle, intimidate or bribe the information out of her.

Perfected Memory is limited to those things within the scene which the Echo personally witnesses (through any one or more of her senses). She cannot use this ability to recall things which happened outside of her sensory perceptions at the time, although

supernatural enhancements to her perception at the time of the memorization allow her to access those perceptions at a later time as well. If, for example, an Echo activates the Contract of Fang and Talon Clause "Beast's Keen Senses" and takes on the eyesight of an eagle for a scene and then uses Perfected Memory to witness a vast crowded scene, she will be able to later recall every aspect of the earlier scene that was apparent to her at the time of memorizing it, even if she does not have the keen senses when she is remembering it later on.

An Echo may remember up to a 10 x Wyrd number of scenes using Perfected Memory at any given time. Thus with 2 dots of Wyrd she may remember 20 scenes, and when she gains another dot of Wyrd, she may remember an additional 10, bringing the total number to 30. However, if an Echo has remembered her maximum number of scenes at any given time and wishes to remember another, she must purge one of her previously remembered scenes in order to make room for the new one. (Players of Echo characters should note on their character sheet, on index cards, or a journal which scenes the character has committed to Perfected Memory, and scratch out any which are later purged.)

Purging a scene that has been committed to memory by use of Perfected Memory can be done one of two ways. An Echo can spend a point of Willpower to choose to instantly flush a memory from her mind, or she can use the Perfected Memory Transferal ability to give it to another willing Echo. Regardless of which method is used, the formerly Perfected Memory is gone from the Echo's mind entirely. She can no longer recall any aspect associated with that scene. It is as if she was never present during it. No amount of "filling in" by outside sources will allow her to remember being there.

### PERFECTED MEMORY TRANSFERAL

Any scene which has been memorized by an Echo through the use of Perfected Memory can be transferred to another Echo, assuming the original Echo is willing to give it and the receiving Echo is willing to take on the burden. This transfer happens by way of a ritual, where the original Echo makes skin-to-skin contact with the receiving Echo and allows him to enter her mind, where she gifts him with the Perfected Memory. No harm may come to either side in this mental-sharing scenario, and either may end it at any time. The mind-environment and representation

of the dream varies from individual to individual. An Antiquarian Echo may visualize his store of Perfected Memories as shelf after shelf of ancient leather bound tomes and may bequeath one of them (and its associated scene) to the other Echo. A Gristlegrinder, on the other hand, may inhabit a mind-cave lit only by sputtering torches, with her Perfected Memories represented by a spit of roasting meat of an indeterminable nature. She tears forth a goblet of still-bloody meat and offers it to the intended recipient, who must consume the morsel to gain the Memory it symbolizes.

The original Echo must spend a point of Willpower to purge the memory at the same time the receiving Echo spends a point of Willpower and a point of Glamour to accept his new memory. When both have been spent, the Perfected Memory transfers from the original to the receiving Echo who now can recall the scene as if he had been present. The Perfected Memory includes not only what the original Echo witnessed, but her thought processes, emotions and reactions to the things she saw and encountered, which makes this a very personal exchange. Few Echoes are willing to use the Perfected Memory Transferal other than at the end of their lives; giving others access to their unfiltered innermost thoughts and reactions is simply too intimate a gift.

For 24 hours after an Echo has died, it is possible for her to still give her memories to other Echoes. If another Echo or Echoes make physical contact with her body, she can go through the process of giving her memories to them. No Willpower expenditure is necessary by the original now-dead Echo, although receiving Echoes must still spend the Willpower and Glamour to take on her gifted memories. No other

communication between the dead Echo and the receiving ones is possible during this ritual. The scene takes place in silence, with the original Echo appearing as an emotionless automaton version of herself in the dream. Conjecture has been made as to whether it is truly the Echo herself who is giving the memories away or some automated function of the entitlement that is working to ensure that the committed memories are not lost with the Echo's death.

### *Rumors of The Eternal Echoes*

- When one of the Eternal Echoes dies, others come and harvest his stories. No one outside of the Echoes really knows how this is done, but some people believe it involves consuming the fallen Lost's brain.

- Higher ranking Echoes don't even remember their own lives anymore; they're consumed with the tales they've memorized of other people's deeds and accomplishments. Some take on the persona of one of the individuals whose stories they've memorized. Others build an amalgam of partial lives based on the significant events they've witnessed over time.

- Anything that one of the Eternal Echoes knows, they all know. Joining the Entitlement is giving up some of your sense of self-identity and attaching yourself to a hive-mind. They don't tell you that to start, though. Not until you're already locked in, and then it's too late.

# THE GUILD OF GOLDSPINNERS

My brothers, I will never mislead the Lost or mortals about the bargains I offer, though for safety's sake, I might not reveal the secret mechanisms at work. They will always know that I provide opportunities — not gifts — and that my work is no charity. I will respect my tools and trade, and never betray the Guild, lest I pay the full price of my life. My wheel is but a shadow of the Great Wheel, beautiful and merciless as Fate itself.

Even changelings need money. At first, it looks like quick cash would be no challenge to someone able to raid dreams or haggle with the elements. There's some truth to this, in that a changeling who pays no heed to the consequences can amass a great deal of wealth. He can steal, raid minds for ATM passwords, but he could lose his human qualities to fae-touched greed. The alternative is a normal job, but that's not easy; most Lost can't do 9 to 5. Whenever they leave a mark in the mortal world, enemies might follow it. Strange conspiracies could rip her from her desk or factory station. A freeholder's obligations might summon him away when he's supposed to be in a meeting. Worse still, every job is a promise made to one's boss, and in the world of the Lost, breaking even the most ordinary agreements bars changelings from the highest levels of Clarity.

Then again, Clarity demands human contact, too. The Lost need relationships that root them in a semblance of normalcy. That isn't free; normal people need to buy food, shelter and everyday comforts. To live among them, changelings need to mimic human appetites or provide for the normal folks they care about. The money problem's tricky, but there are solutions. The Goldspinnners' Guild is one of them.

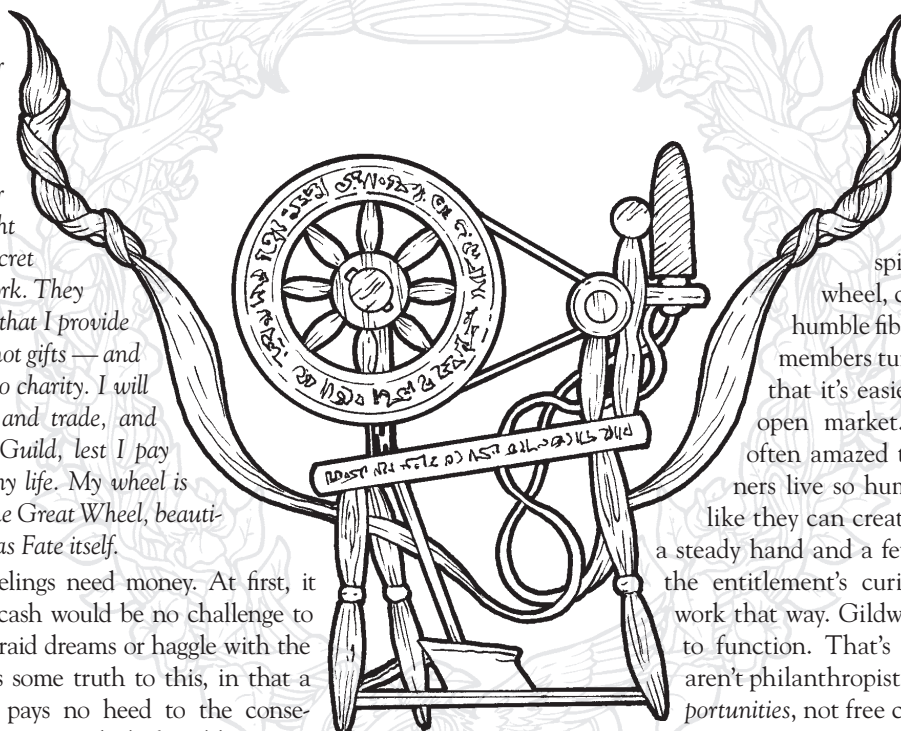
Goldspinnners are members of an ancient, storied entitlement, as well known in mortal myths as freehold courts. Human legends give "Rumpelstilzkin" a sinister reputation. The Goldspinnners give humans spectacular wealth in exchange for firstborn children, body parts or hideous rituals. To the Guild, these tales are not implausible and their outcomes are not especially alarming. What annoys the Goldspinnners is how the so-called victims never, ever, take responsibility for

the deals they make. The Guild spins gold and even gives it to mortals — but not for free.

Every Goldspinner owns a Gild-wheel, capable of spinning humble fibers into gold. Guild members turn it into jewelry so that it's easier to drop into the open market. Changelings are often amazed that the Goldspinnners live so humbly when it looks like they can create vast wealth with a steady hand and a few hours' work, but the entitlement's curious token doesn't work that way. Gildwheels need pledges to function. That's why Goldspinnners aren't philanthropists. They provide *opportunities*, not free cash.

To the Guild, offering mortals wealth is a form of social justice. The world lays riches at some doorsteps and grief at others, with no consideration for who deserves what. Goldspinnners know all the arguments about how anybody who works hard enough can succeed and how everyone gets what they truly deserve. They think these are *stupid* opinions. People can improve their lot but the fact remains that it's harder for some and the reasons are entirely out of their control. Goldspinnners level the playing field without providing raw charity. Goldspinnners don't need money; they don't care if people come from the "right" families or religions. Anybody can deal with them if they have the will to meet the price. Mortals who take the gold but ignore the cost end up living out the old stories — usually the ones with unhappy endings.

Goldspinnners have an easier time with changelings. The Lost understand the power of bargains. They use the Guild's services cautiously, rarely taking on debts they can't pay. The Guild resembles a bank, in that changelings who need raw wealth but can't get enough of it themselves can visit a Goldspinner, make a modest deal and keep in touch so that emergencies and misunderstandings don't foul things up. It's very hard to renege on payments, but it does happen; a clever changeling finds a loophole in her bargain or stubbornly weathers the consequences of not paying. In these situations the Guild uses its combined powers to punish offenders. If they don't, other cheats will take it as an invitation to abuse the Guild's kindness.



The Goldspinnners have no sympathy for people who forget or misunderstand the terms of payment. Various freeholds have different of customs governing the Guild's behavior, but they all have a common vow: to explain the terms under which they're trading gold as clearly as possible.

**Titles:** Rumpelstiltzkin, Goldspinner

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 2, Crafts 2 + Specialties: Textiles and Smithing, Mantle (Spring) 1

**Joining:** The Guild of the Goldspinnners is very cautious about potential applicants. It takes a certain amount of greed to be interested in the Guild in the first place, but too much greed and a member would be more of a detriment than a boon. Their first criterion is membership in the Spring Court, largely because a potential Goldspinner needs to have a strong understanding of the pull of desire — and preferably mastery over the same.

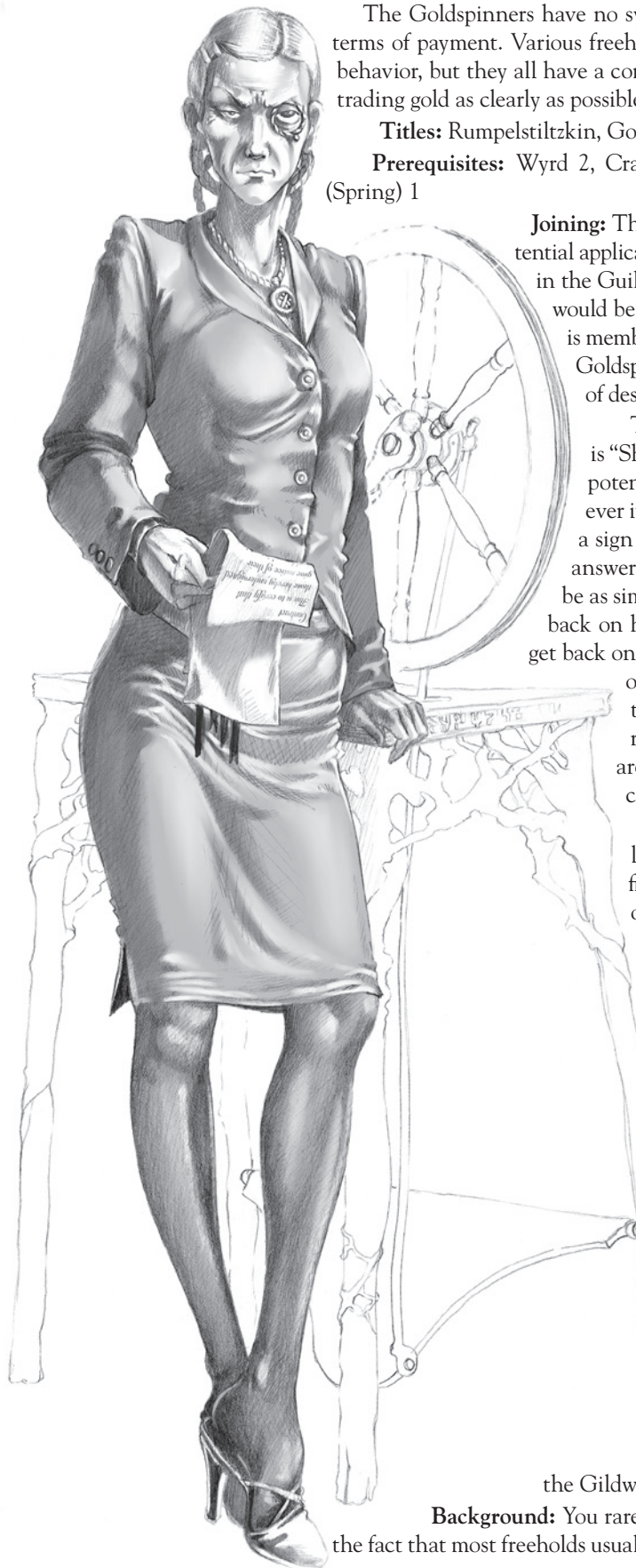
The common challenge given to a potential applicant is “Show me what riches are worth to you.” There are many potential answers to this question: some offer to do whatever it takes for riches, others destroy something valuable as a sign that wealth has no power over them. But the proper answer is to show the Goldspinnners an *investment*. It might be as simple as giving a homeless person enough money to get back on her feet; the real trick is picking the person who *will* get back on her feet given the chance and determining what sort of favor one might gain in return. To be a member of the Guild, one must demonstrate that the purpose of riches isn't to have things, not that things themselves are worthless — riches are valued by the changes they can effect on people and the favors they can buy.

**Mien:** Senior Guild members dress conservatively, but display wealth in the form of designer watches, fine suits and gold jewelry. The tradition is to accent one's appearance with tasteful accessories. Younger Goldspinnners usually dress like artisans — or whatever they think artisans look like. They wear rugged work clothes, bandannas and heavy boots. A metal briefcase with a combination lock (and when the occasion demands, a shackle securing it to the changeling's wrist) is universal, as Guild members are often called on to carry cash and valuables. Goldspinnners always wear their signature metal.

Goldspinnners have the standard mien for their seemings until you look at their hands. They're weathered, strong looking and covered in sparkling flecks. It looks like the gold they make gets into the skin, pressed by hours of work on the Gildwheel. The stereotypical Goldspinner is Wized, and it's true that a lot of them join the Guild, but there are members of all kinds, from Fairest financiers that swoop in to help with their noble words as much as money to Ogres who collect payment past due — provided that

the Gildwheel's magic doesn't do the job itself.

**Background:** You rarely find a middle class Goldspinner — an irony, given the fact that most freeholds usually treat them like bourgeois artisans. Many were fabu-



lously wealthy before the Gentry got them. The ones that didn't find a way to hang on to their fortunes after returning often joined the Guild to get rich again. Learning how to spin gold is a bit of a chore, but if they were afraid of doing a little hard work for their money they wouldn't be Guild material in the first place.

Most other Goldspinnners used to be dirt poor. They returned from Arcadia with the power to satisfy their material wants but never forgot that it all came about due to a brutal crime and harrowing escape. They give indigent people the opportunities they only found for themselves after suffering horribly.

No matter their backgrounds, Goldspinnners need to have a talent for finance, a strong sense of personal responsibility and a great deal of professional detachment when it comes to their work. If they can't stand by and watch someone pay the price for cheating the Gildwheel, they can't serve the Guild.

**Organization:** The Goldspinnners' organization is based on a traditional Guild structure. Before being accounted a full member (and gaining the entitlement's privilege), an *Apprentice* learns to use a spinning wheel, manage accounts and serve the Guild. A *Master* teaches her the necessary skills. Apprentices also take care of bothersome, day to day matters like lunch, office supplies and secretarial work. This gives the Guild a chance to gauge an *Apprentice's* ethics and competence. The process used to take years, but nowadays a changeling can graduate in a few months.

When two Masters sincerely believe an *Apprentice* is ready, a new Gildwheel appears. It's a mysterious process, born of the mythic era when the Guild was founded. One of the sponsoring Masters finds it by happenstance — in the dark corner of an antiques shop, or even abandoned on a curbside. Most Gildwheels belonged to former Goldspinnners, but a few look brand new. Each one wends its way to a Master through coincidence.

The Masters present the Gildwheel to their *Apprentice* in a brief ceremony, elevating him to a *Journeyman*. The changeling joins the entitlement at last; her hands transform when she first touches her Gildwheel. *Journeyman*s are typical Guild members. They remain so until they attain the fifth dot in their *Mantle*, when they qualify for the Master's title. The Guild holds a large, public feast for the elevation of any Master. In a departure from normal policy, they offer sumptuous gifts to all that attend — nothing on par with Gildwheel-spun wealth, but enough to give freeholders something to talk about for weeks to come. The power to approve *Apprentices* and thereby discover new Gildwheels encompasses their sole duty, though they're also expected to supervise Goldspinnners and set Guild policy. Some Masters still go about the Guild's other business but others retire, giving their Gildwheels to new *Journeyman*s.

**Concepts:** Charity worker, reformed miser, compulsive barterer, hidden crime lord, kindly aunt, favor broker.

## PRIVILEGES

The Goldspinnners' privilege comes from their unique Tokens.

### GILDWHEEL (TOKEN ●●●)

A Gildwheel is an enchanted spinning wheel. Spinning wheels have been around for over a thousand years. There are many kinds: Indian *charka* of ancient design, the *walking wheel* for wool and others born of many times and cultures, all used to turn fibers into thread or yarn. According to custom, every Goldspinner carves his initials or personal sign on his wheel. Some old Gildwheels are covered in markings, but most only have a few, as they've more recently drifted from the Hedge in accord with the old, secret pacts that founded the Guild.

Other than these markings, Gildwheels look like normal spinning wheels — tools or antiques, depending on who you are. A Goldspinner (or anyone else) claims a Gildwheel by touching it and investing a Willpower dot. Once he does so, he always knows where it is. He can take back the Willpower at any time, so the player can't spend Experience to replace the lost dot. Without this investment, the Gildwheel will not function and the Goldspinner can't locate it. If someone destroys the Gildwheel the Willpower dot is lost forever, but it can then be replaced with Experience.

When a properly bonded changeling puts fiber to the wheel he can spin gold. It comes out in unnatural looking strands that the Guild calls "Sif's Hair." Sif's Hair is real gold, but its silky, light, flexible qualities make it useless for mortal commerce because it doesn't look like normal gold at all. Fortunately, any decent smith can melt and beat it into bars, coins and jewelry. Once the Goldspinner starts to work the wheel it puts out Sif's Hair at an exponential rate, producing one Resource dot's worth per day, to a maximum number of dots equal to the changeling's Wyrd. Other users are limited by equivalent supernatural traits such as Gnosis, Blood Potency or Primal Urge. Mortals can spin one Resource dot's worth of gold. Of course, these other users need to mind the Token's catch (see below).

A Gildwheel's bonded owner can't spend Gildwheel gold. If she tries, it dissolves into thread and dust immediately.

**Action:** Standard

**Mien:** The Gildwheel takes on a golden shine, as if it's been well-polished and is just the right color to reflect rich, yellow light.

**Drawback:** Unless it's sanctified with the pledge, the gold (in the form of Sif's Hair or anything else) turns into crudely painted and glued yarn about an day after it's sold, used as collateral, or otherwise affects any economic transaction. The Wyrd has a way of drawing a swindled merchant's attention to the "gold" he just bought, so most victims of such scams find out about them quickly.

**Catch:** Anyone can use a Gildwheel by soaking the fibers to be spun in blood, freshly wrung from a human (or

changeling) heart at midnight. The fibers need a generous coating, so someone who wants to spin a lot of gold will probably need to kill a number of people.

Furthermore, anyone using a Gildwheel by way of the catch needs to know how to use a real spinning wheel. Characters with the Crafts skill can pick it up with a day's practice, but anyone else needs lessons, or else they'll churn out tangled chunks of fiber — or thread that isn't Sif's Hair, but might have unpredictable and dangerous supernatural properties.

## GILDWHEEL PLEDGES

Goldspinnners also use Gildwheels to create permanent gold, but only by way of special pledges. There are many different kinds of Gildwheel pledges, but they all have the following conditions. Once it's been negotiated, the pledge must balance out as usual.

**Type:** Corporal Oath upon the Gildwheel, a Title Emblem.

**Tasks:** Endeavor, Lesser (-1) for Gildwheel's user; creating the pledge's boon is the Goldspinner's task, so it's pretty easy. Both parties agree to transfer a set amount of spun gold, measured in Resource dots. This gold does not show false after it's used — it lasts forever unless the Goldspinner spends it, in which case it turns into the same dull muck as it normally would. (Giving the gold to the other party in the pledge doesn't count as spending it.)

The other party negotiates her own task with the Goldspinner. This task must have a value at least equal to the Resources dots' worth of gold she's getting from the deal.

**Boon:** Blessing (Resources dots in gold only — variable). This takes the form of enough Sif's Hair that, when worked into a saleable form, would bring in money equal to the negotiated Resources dots. It's up to the recipient to sell the gold to get the negotiated Resources dots. These dots are not added to the recipient's current Resources, so bargaining for less gold than one's Resources dots is usually a waste of time, unless the recipient plans to give it to someone else.

As a courtesy, the Guild customarily works the Sif's Hair into saleable form, but anybody with the requisite skill could do it.

**Sanction:** Variable. Desperate clients have been known to accept terrible sanctions to drive down the value of the task they need to perform. Goldspinnners try to minimize their risks whenever possible.

**Duration:** Variable, though the payout in gold is immediate and is not replaced if lost or stolen.

**Invocation:** 1 Willpower (both). By investing a Willpower dot in the Gildwheel, the Goldspinner avoids Willpower dot costs, should they arise.

### *Rumors about the Goldspinnners*

Consider using the following rumors if the Goldspinnners have an important role in your chronicle.

- The Guild is old ó old beyond even the memories of the most Wizeden Masters. Nobody really knows how Gildwheels shuffle into Goldspinnners' hands. Some people say that the Gentry provide them, that a secret curse awaits anyone who's used one to create wealth. The *Goldspinner's Doom* will supposedly strike all at once, heralding the True Faeris invasion of the world. More optimistic stories say that Lost craftsmen manufacture them from a workshop in the Hedge or a rebel colony in Arcadia. They send them to the mortal world to help changelings get by in the greedy mortal world.

- Are Goldspinnners meek moneylenders or international power brokers? Most of them are well-off. They travel first class, rub shoulders with the mortal elite and manufacture a commodity that everyone wants. Some changelings think the Guild uses its powers (and carefully selected proxies) to manipulate stock markets. It acquires controlling interests in huge corporations and funds political candidates who'll listen to its handpicked lobbyists. If it's true, what does the Guild use its power for? Is it an end itself, or a means to some secret initiative? It's the Guild's policy to never comment on its mortal ties, but it has let slip that it funds debt relief and small loan projects in the developing world ó efforts consistent with their belief in providing opportunities to all. That's hardly sinister, but is that all there is to it?

- Changelings say that the Guild used to be able to turn tears into diamonds, green branches into emeralds and so on, but lost the required lore and tokens over centuries. If such tokens ever existed the Guild would want a look at them, even if they were never really a part of Goldspinner history. The Guild is always looking to expand its services — and maintain its position as the Lost's premiere financiers. The Guild's also looking out for the future, because gold's getting a bit passé. A few members are trying to figure out how to magically produce authentic credit cards and bank records.

# GUILD OF THE SACRED JOURNEY

*Despite injury, threat, danger or promises of great reward, I shall endeavor to deliver anything in my charge to its appointed destination. On pain of my life and my honor I shall never break the trust that was given to me.*

While every freehold is an independent entity, commerce, negotiations and diplomacy between freeholds is an important part of changeling life. Open only to the Fairest, the Guild of the Sacred Journey is a noble order of messengers and couriers bound by strict oaths to complete their missions to the very best of their ability. While their duties usually involve carrying messages or small packages from one freehold to another, changelings also regularly ask them to deliver messages or packages to other members of the same freehold, or occasionally to mortals who may be completely unaware of anything about changelings or the fae.

Although they are under no obligation to agree to make any particular delivery, once a Sacred Courier agrees to do so, she is sworn to make the delivery to the very best of her ability. Guild members are free to refuse to accept deliveries, but should have good reason for doing so if the delivery is urgent and involves transporting something from one freehold to another. However, accepting or refusing to transport anything from one member of the same freehold to another or from a changeling to a mortal is purely at the discretion of the guild member.

Sacred Couriers are expected to carry packages and messages from one freehold to another for free, but may ask for payment when carrying goods and messages to all other destinations. In Miami's Winter Court, guild members are sometimes hired to deliver payment for and to pick up large drug shipments from the Court's mortal suppliers. Guild members who accept these assignments are well paid by the Winter Court.

Guild members may hold whatever opinions they wish about changeling politics and may discuss and act on these opinions while off duty, but once a guildswoman has accepted a delivery, her oath swears her to strict neutrality. If she has agreed to make a delivery, making that delivery takes precedence over everything less important than at-



tacks by the Others or other events that seriously endanger large numbers of changelings. A Sacred Courier must even be willing to work with the enemies of her freehold to complete a delivery, as long as these enemies are not fae, loyalists, privateers or others who are a threat to all changelings.

A guild member may refuse to complete a delivery (or reroute the delivery to someone other than its intended recipient) only if she is certain that doing otherwise would directly aid the enemies of the Lost or obviously result in a changeling being turned over to the fae. However, breaking her trust even for such a dire reason is never done lightly. The Sacred Courier must immediately report her action to the nearest guild master. Unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise, the guild member must turn over the suspect delivery to the nearest guild master. Careless or foolish guild members who fail to make a delivery for trivial or thoughtless reasons can be demoted to apprentices or thrown out of the guild.

In return for performing these duties, other changelings are forbidden from attempting to harm guild members who are on duty. Changelings who violate this prohibition are supposed to either be appropriately punished by their freehold or turned over to the Guild for punishment. The Guild refuses to work with any freehold that refuses to recognize the neutrality and immunity from harm of on-duty guild members.

Changeling attitudes about the Guild of the Sacred Journey are mixed. Although most recognize the importance of the Guild, the fact that membership is restricted to Fairest seems to have no basis in anything other than prejudice — certainly changelings of other seemings could serve just as well. However, most other changelings are intolerant of the level of pomp and ritual in the Guild, and so might not be interested in joining if they could. The Sacred Couriers, at least, tend to claim as much.

**Titles:** Sacred Courier (more formal), guild member, guildsman or guildswoman

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 2, Drive 2, Expression 2, Streetwise 2, minimum Clarity 5, Fairest only



**Joining:** This small but prestigious noble order is widely considered to be a very competitive path to prestige and renown for Fairest, so the Guild is every selective of who it allows in. Anyone meeting the minimum qualifications can petition to join the guild. However, prospective members then face extensive interviews to determine their honesty and loyalty. Guild members also question the prospective member's associates to gain a better understanding of the changeling's character and competence. Only skilled and dedicated changelings whom the Guild truly trusts to fulfill their obligations are allowed to join. The ceremony for welcoming a new member of this entitlement is as elaborate and filled with ceremony as all of the rest of the Guild's formal meetings.

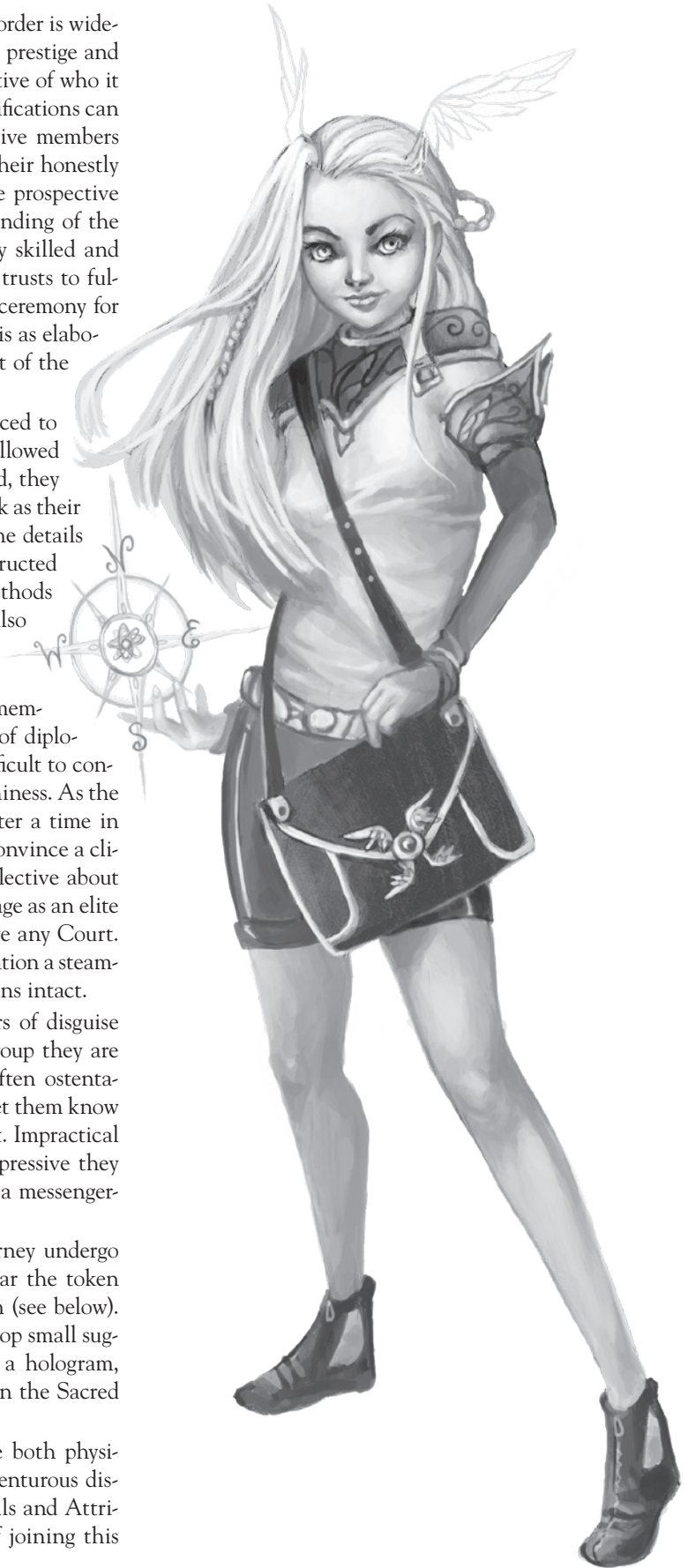
Upon joining, new members are apprenticed to an older guild member. Apprentices are not allowed to accept or make their own deliveries. Instead, they accompany their masters on deliveries and work as their master's assistant in return for being taught the details of belonging to the guild. Apprentices are instructed in proper diplomatic protocols as well as methods of rapid and unobtrusive travel. Mentors also do their best to hone both the apprentice's memory and observational skills.

The reasoning behind the Fairest-only membership is generally explained as a necessity of diplomacy. During the Guild's early days, it was difficult to convince potential clients of the order's trustworthiness. As the story goes, the Guild selected only Fairest after a time in the interest of ensuring every member could convince a client of their earnestness; in addition, being selective about seeming helped promote the Guild's public image as an elite organization while still remaining free to serve any Court. Some outsiders have openly called this explanation a steaming pile of toad shit, but the Guild's rule remains intact.

**Mien:** A few Guild members are masters of disguise who attempt to blend into whatever social group they are in. Most, though, dress in an obvious and often ostentatious manner designed to impress others and let them know that the Sacred Courier is someone important. Impractical clothing is frowned upon; no matter how impressive they may be, stiletto heels are outright foolish for a messenger-by-trade.

Couriers of the Guild of the Sacred Journey undergo minimal changes to their mien. They all wear the token that is their badge of passage, the winged sash (see below). In addition, at high levels of Wyrd many develop small suggestions of feathered wings, half-visible like a hologram, that sprout at ankles or wrists or temples when the Sacred Courier invokes Glamour.

**Background:** Guild members tend to be both physically competent and to have a somewhat adventurous disposition. However, most also favor Social Skills and Attributes. A love of travel is an essential part of joining this



entitlement. Before they were abducted, some guild members worked in transportation, with previous occupations ranging from cab driver or bicycle messenger to long haul trucker. Others were smugglers and often retain this profession. A substantial number were drifters whose wanderlust kept them from ever settling down.

Most excel at using some form of transportation. A few are wealthy and experienced jet travelers, far more are skilled long distance drivers, high speed boat pilots, or even experienced long haul truckers or motorcycle riders. However, some are simply drifters who have learned how to move swiftly and safely through the Hedge and now rarely use mortal means of transport. The guild values all of these approaches. Fairest who are skilled at piloting unusual vehicles like helicopters, small planes or high-speed boats are much in demand, but so are Lost who are confident and experienced at travel through the Hedge, especially since travel through the Hedge is now by far the easiest way to carry various suspicious cargoes from one city or country to another.

**Organization:** The Guild of the Sacred Journey has a relatively formal structure, with each guild member being allowed to vote on all major issues, including the election of the Guildmaster. Each full guild member is considered an independent agent, but guild masters are the official leaders of this noble order. Each Guildmaster is in charge of a region containing between five and ten freeholds; elections for Guildmasters are held every seven years. All Guildmasters must have been guild members for at least seven years.

Both Sacred Couriers and anyone who has made use of the Guild's services are free to appeal to the local Guildmaster to either seek redress from someone who attempted to harm a guild member or to make or deny allegations that a guild member has violated the trust implicit in their duties. Attacks on guild members and allegations of breaking trust are taken very seriously.

All nearby Sacred Couriers carefully investigate any report of their fellows being harmed or killed while on duty. If the report appears to be accurate, these guild members then request aid from the freehold where these attacks took place and seek to identify the individual involved. Freeholds that refuse to cooperate face sanction.

Guild members who break their sacred trust and deliver messages to the client's enemies or otherwise misuse their office are stripped of their membership. They are also likely to suffer various other punishments, ranging from being forced to swear all manner of dire pledges to confiscation of assets, to having a Ban placed on them, which means that any freehold that admits the individual as a member can receive no services from the Guild. Banning someone is only used for the most extreme offenses, such as using a delivery as a cover for assassination.

The Guild also collects a great deal of information. Guild members are forbidden to read or examine messages

or packages they have been enjoined not to examine, but a few clients do not include this request. In such cases, the guild member carrying the message or package is free to examine and record the contents as long as they do not share this knowledge with anyone outside the Guild. In addition, guild members have access to every freehold and regularly report on conditions there as well as any gossip or other notable events that they observed during their travels.

Each guild master maintains a formal guildhouse. Guildhouses are usually located in cities that contain large freeholds; the two largest guildhouses in the US are in Miami and Los Angeles. Guildhouses are mostly small but elaborately decorated structures like converted warehouses with elegant lofts on the top floor and modern-looking offices below. In addition to offering housing for visiting guild members, guildhouses are also repositories for the large amounts of observations, gossip and other information that guild members collect in their travels. Guildhouses are also the sites of the guild's formal seasonal meetings, which are a mixture of an elaborately catered party and a discussion of current events relating to the guild.

Although there are many stories about the Guild having vast archives of information that they use to secretly influence the fate of various freeholds, the truth is usually far more prosaic. On rare occasions, Guildmasters have used this information to put pressure on the leader of a freehold to turn over a changeling who has assaulted a guild member. However, most Guildmasters use this information only to attempt to learn about potential threats before they occur. The widespread nature of the information guild members collect allows Guildmasters to notice patterns of activity that others miss. On several occasions, Guildmasters have noticed suspicious activities that upon further investigation proved to come from privateers or fae who were plotting against the members of a freehold.

Guild masters also sometimes notice trends that indicate plots or conspiracies within or between freeholds. It is the Guildmaster's responsibility to decide what to do with this information. On a lesser level, individual guild members sometimes face the same decisions. Part of the oath all guild members take is to seek the best for the entire changeling community. Every member or Guildmaster must interpret this oath on their own and act as their conscience dictates.

Like most changelings, most guild members belong to a freehold. Because the Guild is fairly small, few Freeholds can boast more than two or three Sacred Couriers at best. A few guild members belong to no freehold. These changelings remain rootless wanderers, with the Guild effectively becoming their Freehold. These travelers usually sleep in either guildhouses or in the houses of other guild members in the towns they are visiting and serve as an important source of information and gossip about distant Freeholds and far-off events.

**Concepts:** Haughty courier, clever and observant spy, footloose wanderer, pompous messenger, fast-driving daredevil

## PRIVILEGES

The greatest privilege a Sacred Courier receives is their grant of immunity. As long as the guild member is in the process of carrying a message, no changeling is supposed to attempt to harm or actively restrain her. In addition, upon being elevated to the status of a full member of this Guild, the changeling is given a winged sash of duty, which glows faintly but vividly when the member is on duty.

### COURIER'S WINCED SASH (•••)

This token is a royal blue diagonal sash trimmed with silver and adorned with a badge consisting of four silver wings. Anytime someone asks the changeling to deliver a message or package, the changeling can choose to activate this token. Once activated, the token provides the changeling with a sense of how to go directly to the person the delivery is intended for. The guild member cannot locate the person on a map or clearly tell someone else where the target is except by pointing and giving general information such as near or far. However, this token allows the changeling to have an intuitive sense of the target's location. The guild member can then walk, drive, or travel via a trod directly to the target. If the target is dead, has been returned to Arcadia or is in some similarly inaccessible location like the Shadow Realm, this token cannot be activated. Also, the client giving the message or package to the guild member must know precisely who they wish to have it delivered to. This token cannot be used as a way to locate someone who is either unknown or who the client only briefly glimpsed. It can only be used to find someone the client has either met or communicated with sufficiently to know who they are. However, the client need not know the target's name.

**Action:** Instant

**Drawback:** Until the changeling manages to deliver the package or message or to at least communicate with the target and tell her that he has something for her, the changeling suffers a -1 penalty to all actions that are not directly related to delivering this message or package. Actions

such as bribing someone for information about the target or fighting one's way past guards preventing the guildswoman from getting to the target count as actions related to making the delivery. However, unrelated actions like picking someone's pocket or getting into a fight with someone the changeling dislikes do not count. The only other way to remove this penalty is to find the target's location and then spend 2 points of Willpower.

**Catch:** Anyone can use this token, but doing so without the requisite Glamour expenditure or Wyrd roll increases the penalty to unrelated actions to -3. In addition, the character is mentally compelled to complete the delivery and will not stop until the message or package has been delivered.

### *Rumors of the Guild of the Sacred Journey*

Even the Sacred Couriers aren't immune to the vagaries of gossip:

- For the right fee, Guildmasters are willing to sell information to curious changelings who are willing to pay their prices, including otherwise private or highly secret information that can be used to blackmail powerful changelings.
- In addition to carrying messages and packages for changelings, Sacred Couriers also regularly perform the same service for the fae, including carrying captives into the Hedge so the fae can transport them back to Arcadia. In return for these services, the fae do not interfere with guild members who are making other deliveries.
- For the right price, some Sacred Couriers can be hired as assassins. The "delivery" in question is proof of their target's death.



# KNIGHTS OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TONGUE

*My oath to this order sits before you now, unspoken but beautifully prepared. The soup is rich with pumpkin and topped with a dollop of crème fraîche and a scattering of dream-a-drupe. The plate to its left contains the bones of a scarfish brined in its own salacious juices. The plate to the right cradles a strip of sweetened fox tongue, drizzled with a grappa reduction and paired with a modified Badam Kheer almond dessert drink. Enjoy.*

In a sweltering hot kitchen, a Gristlegrinder pleads with himself to find restraint, to not reach into the boiling pot with his bare hand to fish out the squirming crustacean within (for the Gristlegrinder is hungry, you see, ever-so-hungry). In a claustrophobic dining room furnished in black oak and red maple, a worm-skinned Tunnelgrub feeds a seven-course meal to a jury of drooling like-minded fiends. In a rat-hole bathroom a Chatelaine weeps into a dirty apron, knowing that her meal failed to bring a tear of joy to the eye of her Muse lover, wondering if she can do better next time or if her only recourse is to quaff a draught of drain cleaner.

The Knights of the Knowledge of the Tongue (a term sometimes cut down to the “Knights of Gastronomy”) are not proper knights at all, at least not in the way of waving a sword and galloping a horse into the thick of battle. Though, the Knights of this noble order might be inclined to disagree: they may very well argue that what they do is battle, of a sort, and what they do is noble. They march headlong into hot kitchens and with chef knife instead of sword contend with shrieking rabbits, the still-beating hearts of briar-wolves, the poisonous (until cooked) goblin fruits

known as Gray-to-Blues (when the fruit is gray, it’s poisonous, but when it turns blue, one may eat it without concern). They bring back the dragon’s head and, by God, they’re going to brine it and eat ribbons of its facial meats *sashimi*-style.

These Knights are committed gourmards, ill-contented with the standard array of ingredients, venturing far and wide to procure and cook with reagents that only change-lings can find. Does that mean going deep into the Hedge to find the ripest, most perfect blushberries for a compote? Does that involve hunting down the fat-titted bramble boar for its sausage-destined sweetbreads? Does it demand sneaking into that Keeper’s wagon to steal the phial of sweet-smelling powder off its blood-soaked dresser? Yes, yes, a thousand times yes. The Knights *do* brave dangers outside the kitchen so that they may bring the finest, rarest meals to the table.

To them, the palate is key. Taste is everything, though texture is almost as important. The smells of goblin blood thickening on the stove, the shimmering feel of Moon’s Water on the tongue, the fire in the belly stoked by those devilheart peppers that grow in the cacti-walled deserts of the Hedge. All of it is the height of culinary hedonism, the peak of gourmet artistry. Though, like any artist, these Knights are subject to the highest highs and the deepest lows. Some call it “chasing the dragon’s tail.” Once you’ve caught the dragon — meaning, once you’ve made the best meal of your life — how can anything else compare? The only thing that *can* compare is topping what’s come before: no small feat. Every failure to astound the palate can be soul-crushing. Most keep on trying, desperate to capture perfection in a single



knife stroke, in a perfect caramelization. Some fail to go on, leaving the order in disgust of themselves or simply wandering into the Hedge, never to return.

### *Sweet Emotion*

This noble order of changeling chefs is open to Lost of any Court. In fact, individual courtiers often bring something unique to the table that the courtless do not: the governing emotion of their respective allegiance.

Think about it. How might an Autumn Court member either inspire fear with a meal or attempt to distill the very *taste* of dread in a meal? Inspiring fear isn't too difficult, and lesser gourmands might offer plates of still-crawling (and ichor-slick) centipedes or a bowl of tiny heads forever howling (even as they tumble into the stomach). Actually distilling the *essence* of fear in a flavor, that's the task of the truly great *chefs de cuisine*. Perhaps a gristly bit of meat braised in a musk broth released by a Bog Auroch as it dies? The Winter Court is renowned for making meals that force eaters to remember dead friends or ex-lovers ("This *amuse bouche* of frog's eggs is nothing like what Sunshine would've eaten, and yet the after-taste makes me think of her...") thus stirring repressed sorrows. Those chefs of the Summer Court may stir wrath by creating a meal that earns the ire of the consumer, or perhaps the meal earns its "revenge" upon the diner later that night with an acid reflux so dizzying the poor fool hallucinates. The Spring Court Knights de Cuisine have no problem creating desire: lusty desserts, decadent aperitifs, meats so lush and fatty that their consumption inspires heart palpitations and unexpected erections.

**Titles:** Knight de Cuisine (though some dismissive Lost refer to them by the rather twee name "The Gastrognomes")

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 3, Crafts 3 or Crafts 2 with a Specialty in Cooking.

**Joining:** Learn to cook. It's obvious, really, but it's amazing how many changelings try to join up with this brigade of chefs without having mastered some of the basic skills. They'll test any changeling who cares to come through the door, first with mundane ingredients

(the "make your best omelet" decree is perhaps the most common) and second with wilder ingredients often taken from the Hedge. Of course, being a chef within the Knights of the Knowledge of the Tongue is about more than just skill: it's about the refinement of the palate, about handling the pressures inside a kitchen and outside of it. But these things aren't necessary from the get-go. They can be brought out, fostered and encouraged to grow like a plump fruit from a well-groomed tree. Skill, though... if a chef doesn't have skill from the beginning? Hit the bricks, pal. This noble order is for artists and professionals. Amateurs can suck a peach pit.

**Mien:** The first and probably strangest change involves the tongue. It... becomes something else. Rarely does one find two tongues that are alike among the Knights de Cuisine. One might be forked, like a serpent. Another might taper to a sharp point. One even reported having a tongue with turgid suckers on it, as if from a squid's tentacle. A tongue might change color. It might ooze a sap-like saliva. It could be that the taste buds grow to the size of skin tags and wave subtly like a bed of anemone in ocean water.

And then, the *aroma*. Changelings of this order emit a faint smell of food, but how that aroma manifests depends on the nose of the target. If another changeling *likes* the Knight de Cuisine, she'll smell a more-than-agreeable odor, an aroma of food she loves: Thanksgiving turkey, perhaps, or butter cream icing. If she holds no opinion either way about the Knight, the scent is of a food she similarly cares little about; if she's could go either way with hot cocoa or braised beef shanks, maybe that's what she smells. And if she detests the Knight? A malodor of unpleasant food (unpleasant to that given changeling, at least) reaches the nostrils: brussel sprouts, crabmeat, heady venison.

Outside the mien, all Knights de Cuisine possess pristine Montreaux-style white chef jackets. Most wear the jackets when cooking only. Some, though, sew into the jackets steel or Kevlar plates, making them armor they can bear into the Hedge.

**Background:** Chefs and gourmands from all backgrounds end up here: those Mental-focused chefs are often social miscreants, unpleasant and stubborn, but so keenly focused on the task at hand that the rest of the world fades. The Physical-based Knights de Cuisine are bulls in the kitchen, tearing into acts of gleeful butchery and chopping up an aromatic  *mirepoix*  with eerily deft knife skills. The Social chefs make excellent sommeliers and kitchen managers, sometimes singing as they cook or cracking wildly inappropriate jokes.

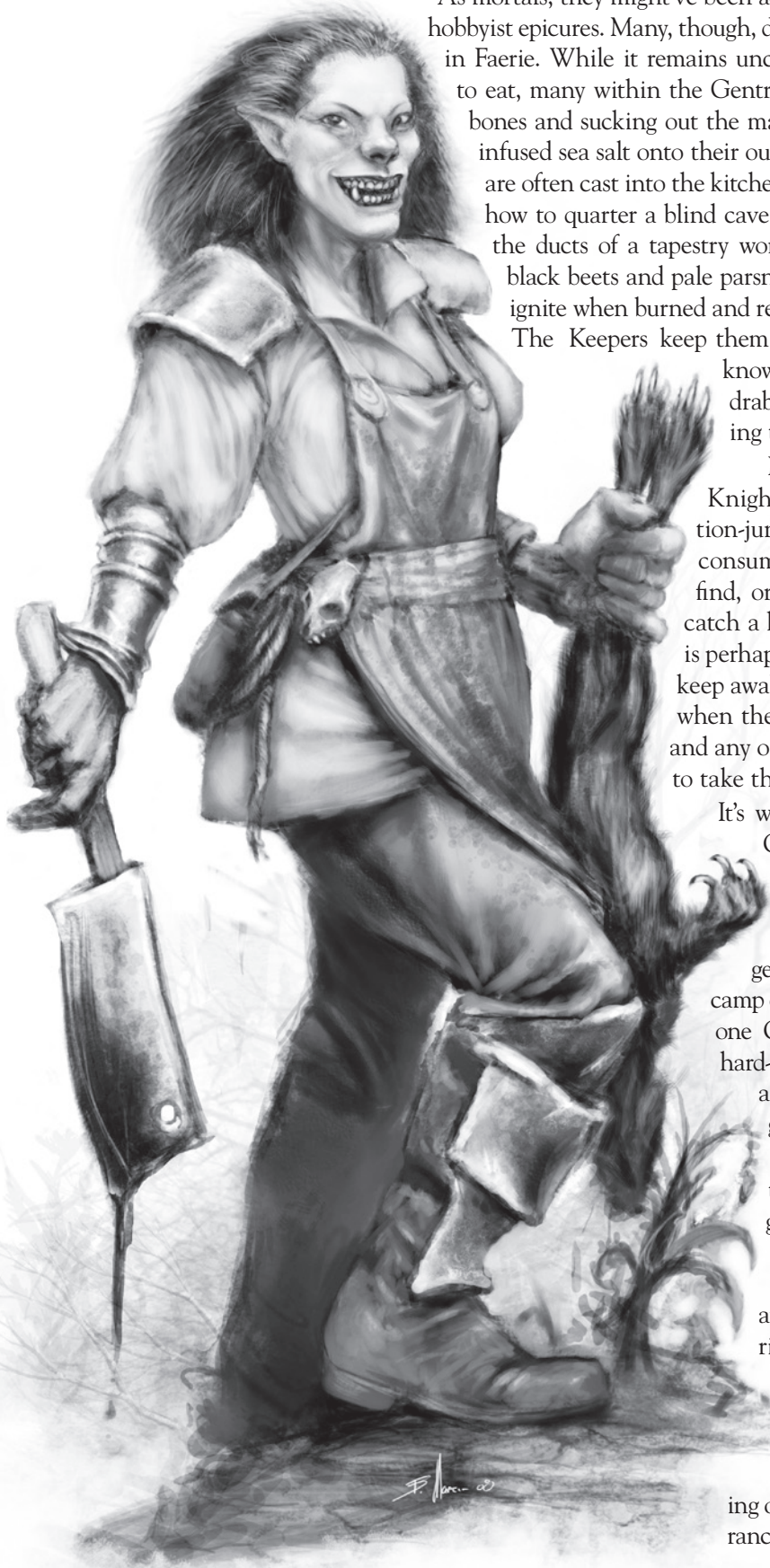
As mortals, they might've been actual chefs, line cooks, or perhaps only hobbyist epicures. Many, though, developed a taste for taste while trapped in Faerie. While it remains unclear whether or not the Keepers *need* to eat, many within the Gentry certainly enjoy it (whether cracking bones and sucking out the marrow or pinching delicate bits of fear-infused sea salt onto their outstretched tongues). Thus, changelings are often cast into the kitchens to clean and cook. There they learn how to quarter a blind cave duck, or how to extract the bile from the ducts of a tapestry worm. They learn what tastes best with black beets and pale parsnips, or how the juices of the stabapple ignite when burned and result in a fragrant psychedelic unguent. The Keepers keep them working. Their otherworldly culinary knowledge comes with them in drips and drabs when they escape the Hedge, making them perfect for this order of chefs.

Many of the changelings within the Knights are Glamour-addicts and sensation-junkies. This might mean gluttonously consuming all the Glamour foods they can find, or it might mean base jumping just to catch a high. Of course, some default to what is perhaps the simplest solution, drugs: meth to keep awake when cooking, heroin as a "reward" when the day is done and the meal is created, and any other mad combination of Hedge herbs to take the edge off or put it back on.

It's worth mentioning that the Knights de Cuisine often have a bit of martial ability, often with a blade. Marching into the Hedge to find the right ingredient can put the Knight into intense danger, whether it's cutting a swath through a camp of froth-mouthed madmen to get to that one Chimeraberry bush or hacking into a hard-shelled Orbthorn Spider (easily as big as a Rottweiler) to remove its carapace and get to the tender lump meat within.

**Organization:** The Knights of the Knowledge of the Tongue do not give themselves over to a great deal of formalized organization. Each chef works as both competitor and cooperator with one another, forming intense rivalries and alliances.

The biggest way they separate themselves is by preferred school of cooking; many changelings possess different gifts for cooking depending on their natures, their skills, or their Durances. A Manikin might be a gifted *saucier*,



using intense molecular gastronomy to create chemically enhanced sauces. A Stonebones with fists like ham hocks might pound his own flour (with those aforementioned fists), making for a hulking *pâtissier*. A Chirurgeon works as a cleaver-wielding butcher, while a Brewer whips up the strangest cocktails known to man and fae. A Muse works as a sommelier, a Draconic is renowned for his knife skills in the act of *charcuterie* (sausage-making), and a Fireheart rules the fiery barbecue pit like the king of Hell.

Above them all is the Most Eminent Chef, determined by which of the Knights de Cuisine is most in tune with the weave and weft of fate (represented by the highest Wyrd score). The Knights never speak the Most Eminent Chef's name, only calling him "Chef" or, in some freeholds, "Sir." The Most Eminent helps distribute the talents of those within his order. After all, what good is a noble order of cooks if they aren't cooking for an audience? The Most Eminent goes among the Courts and offers the services of his people to the rulers for various celebrations and ceremonies. He also throws various celebrations himself, including the Horn of Amalthea, a vast experimental food and wine festival open to all changelings. It's a wonderland of flavors both miraculous and vile, and the Most Eminent lords over it. Depending on his personality, he might act the fickle gourmand or the glutton with spit-flecked lips.

**Concepts:** executive chef, food blogger/writer, gifted hobbyist, goblin fruit horticulturist, Hedge ex-

plorer, kitchen scientist, mad baker, restaurateur, sous chef, talented huntsman

## PRIVILEGES

Below you'll find a privilege shared by all Knights of the Knowledge of the Tongue.

## TRACKING THOSE TENUOUS TASTES

The Hedge is home to a wealth of flavors that have never before graced the palate of changelings. What does milk squeezed from an oozing thorn taste like? What happens if you steam "hungry grass" and infuse a dollop of whipped cream with its essence? Can the blood of a killed Keeper be left to dry on a desert stone so that it can be flaked off (it looks almost like red pepper flakes, if you care to know) and sprinkled in a dish?

If it has to do with taste, with finding an ingredient to fulfill a particular flavor in a dish, a Knight de Cuisine gains a +3 to any roll within the Hedge made to find a goblin fruit, track a hobgoblin, or search out some other element. This +3 bonus only applies *if* it relates to a dish she hopes to prepare. That said, if the search is made without needing to apply it to an upcoming meal, the changeling is still better at sniffing out ingredients: rolls made to find goblin fruits *not* related to a dish (and only goblin fruits) gains a +1 bonus.

### *Rumors of the Knights de Cuisine*

The Knights of the Knowledge of the Tongue is a very public order. With it come very public rumors...

- Within the noble order exists a kind of... *sub-entitlement*, a secret cabal of chefs who thrill at truly grotesque feats of culinary hedonism: hunting down lycanthropes to chill and eat their brains, drinking cocktails made from the blood of captured kings, making deals with Keepers to procure ingredients that are truly *rara avis*. Some say these lustful gluttons belong to a group called the "Abbey," and it may have ensorcelled those who belong to its ranks.
- One of the group's secret goals is to find what they refer to as the Perfect Recipe. This is not an ambiguous list of ingredients, but supposedly an actual recipe that occasionally pops up in freeholds, a set of instructions that is said to have existed for hundreds of years. Some say it originated in France, others Tangiers, others still claim in Szechuan Province. Of course, nobody knows just what the recipe is. A mind-boggling dessert? A one-bite *amuse bouche*? Further rumors persist, suggesting that one bite from a meal prepared perfectly from the recipe is supernaturally sublime: some say one's Wyrd might increase upon consumption, while other less pleasant stories claim that it's a quick way for a changeling to become one of the dreaded Keepers...
- Great chefs also make great poisoners. Poorly prepare the glands of the blackjack toad, and what do you get? A throat so swollen that it closes and kills. What happens if you "accidentally" leave in one of the teensy-tiny seeds found in those tongue-numbing pilfer-fruits you can only seem to find at goblin market stalls? First a coma, and then when you wake up, *boom*, amnesia. The whispers say that the Knights de Cuisine started out as poisoners working for some king or queen, truly functioning as secret knights: destroying enemies instead of pleasing the palates of friends. Do the current Knights know this? Probably not. But some poisoners may still linger within their brigade of obsessed chefs.

# LEGACY OF THE BLACK APPLE

*The apple token pinned to my lapel tells you all you need to know, but I'll reiterate nevertheless: I've come to negotiate with nightmares, to share diplomacy with demons. The Keepers always keep. But what they keep is up for some discussion. That is our task, and it has been since time immemorial.*

The story goes a little something like this: Long ago, thousands of years or maybe more, a precious child was stolen from his brittle cradle high up in the barren mountains. The question of who absconded with the favored infant was a matter of some debate and discussion: an angel of mercy, a pack of wolves with the faces of men, or the Devil himself? But in the village was a man, a humble beggar, and this beggar knew who took the child for he witnessed it with his own eyes (or, at least, his one good one for the other had gone pale from some unkind malady). The kidnapper was a tall and shadowy man with arms like spider legs and legs like a drifting carpet of mist.

He did not bother to tell the village elders and the arguing lot, for they would not listen to him. Instead, he followed the path that the nightmare took, aiming to reclaim the child. The path of the kidnapper lead him high up into the mountain pass, into a cave whose rocky mouth was rimmed with a cold rime and coil upon coil of verdant thorns.

The beggar entered the cave and soon found himself lost in a maze of rocky walls lit by a bleach-bright sun above. He was undaunted. He moved swiftly. And soon, he caught up with the long-armed, mist-legged Keeper, who dragged the baby behind him on a crude sled of brittle twigs and leaves. The beggar did what he did best, which was to beg: he pleaded with the creature to leave the child behind, to let him return the infant to his home where he may one day grow up to be something special.

The Keeper agreed, but made a pledge: the man may take the child back to the village but in one year and one day must himself reenter the Thorns and come to that very spot with a red, red apple. Of course, apples grew nowhere near the village, rumored to cling to a dying tree deep down in a treacherous valley. The beggar agreed to this deal, and returned to the village with the child.

Almost a full year later, he was able to tread deep into that valley and emerge alive with the one apple that remained alive in that dying place. He went back into the rocky Hedge and waited for the member of the Gentry to show. The fiend did, as promised.

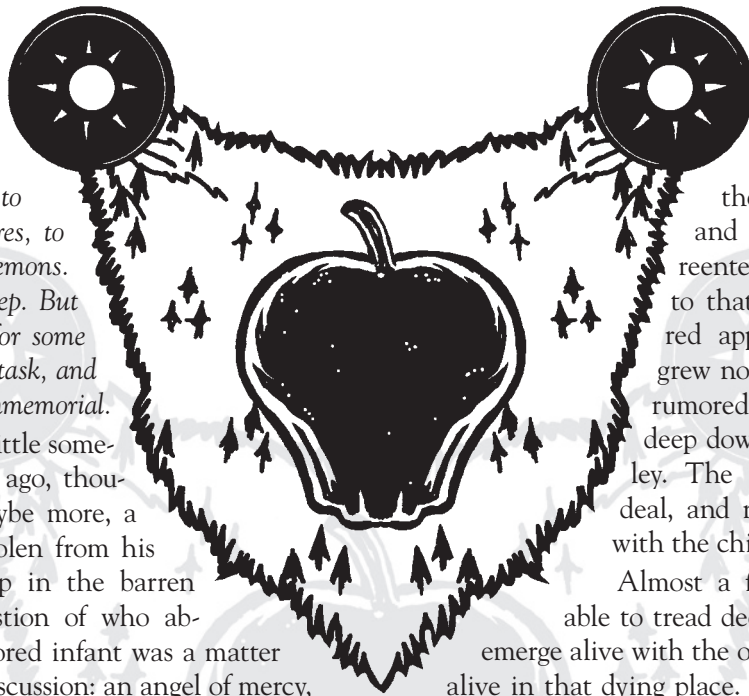
And then the beggar fulfilled his pledge: he gave himself and the apple to the Keeper. The fiend played with the apple, easing it from hand to hand. As he did so, the fruit turned blistery and black, shriveling. The creature took some delight in this.

The Keeper took the beggar back to Faerie and did the same thing to him, too — playing with him until he was a dead thing, broken and rotten.

But that broken and rotten beggar did not lose his spirit and did not lose the memory of his village (and could even sometimes stare out over the lands of Faerie and see curls of smoke from the village chimneys far off in the distance). When he saw his chance, he escaped from Faerie and back to the world. But before he did so, he stole something from the Keeper: that black apple, sitting under belled glass in the fae's chambers.

That apple served as a token reminder: it is not safe to negotiate with the Keepers, but one can negotiate with them nevertheless.

That is what the Legates of the Black Apple do. Part-beggar and part-diplomat, they interface with the most frightening of enemies, the Gentry, and they negotiate terms. The True Fae can be bound by contracts and





pledges just like the Lost. If a Legate can get a Keeper to agree to terms (which are unlikely pleasant but may be more favorable than what was originally “on the table”), then the job is done and the deal is sealed.

Make no mistake. Being one of the Black Apple Legacy is neither a safe nor sane thing to do. One’s soul is constantly on the line. Admittedly, some do it for the glory. To go up against a Keeper and to verbally dance around her until she agrees unwittingly to something she wouldn’t normally do is one for the books, my friend. Others do so because they hate themselves: some failure in their past drives them to this, to go into the mouth of the monster and convince it not to bite down and crush one’s feeble body. Some, though, do this because it is what must be done, what is most right to do. Not every Keeper can be defeated by sword or fire. Even if the Keeper can be defeated by combat, it may not find a freehold populated with the proper warriors. Besides, a promise or a lie on the tongue can be just as effective as a knife in the ribs or the swing of a skull-crushing mace. At least, that’s what the Legates are counting on. Given the depth and breadth of the noble order’s history, spanning thousands of years... well, it seems they have a point.

### *The Eldritch Order*

The Legacy of the Black Apples is considered to be an “eldritch order,” that is to say an entitlement that has existed from freehold to freehold for thousands of years. The Legates are in the history books, as few and far between as they are when it comes to the annals of the Lost. This means that the bonuses to joining this order are far meatier than what one might find when gaining the title of a different group. Of course, it also means that the requirements to enter are equally meaty. And let’s not ignore the fact that hoping to communicate civilly and rationally with the True Fae carries limitless danger...

**Titles:** Legates (though some dismissively refer to them as “Black Apples” or, worse, “Bad Apples”)

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 5, Clarity 6 or higher, one of the following Social Skills at four dots: Empathy, Persuasion, Socialize, Subterfuge

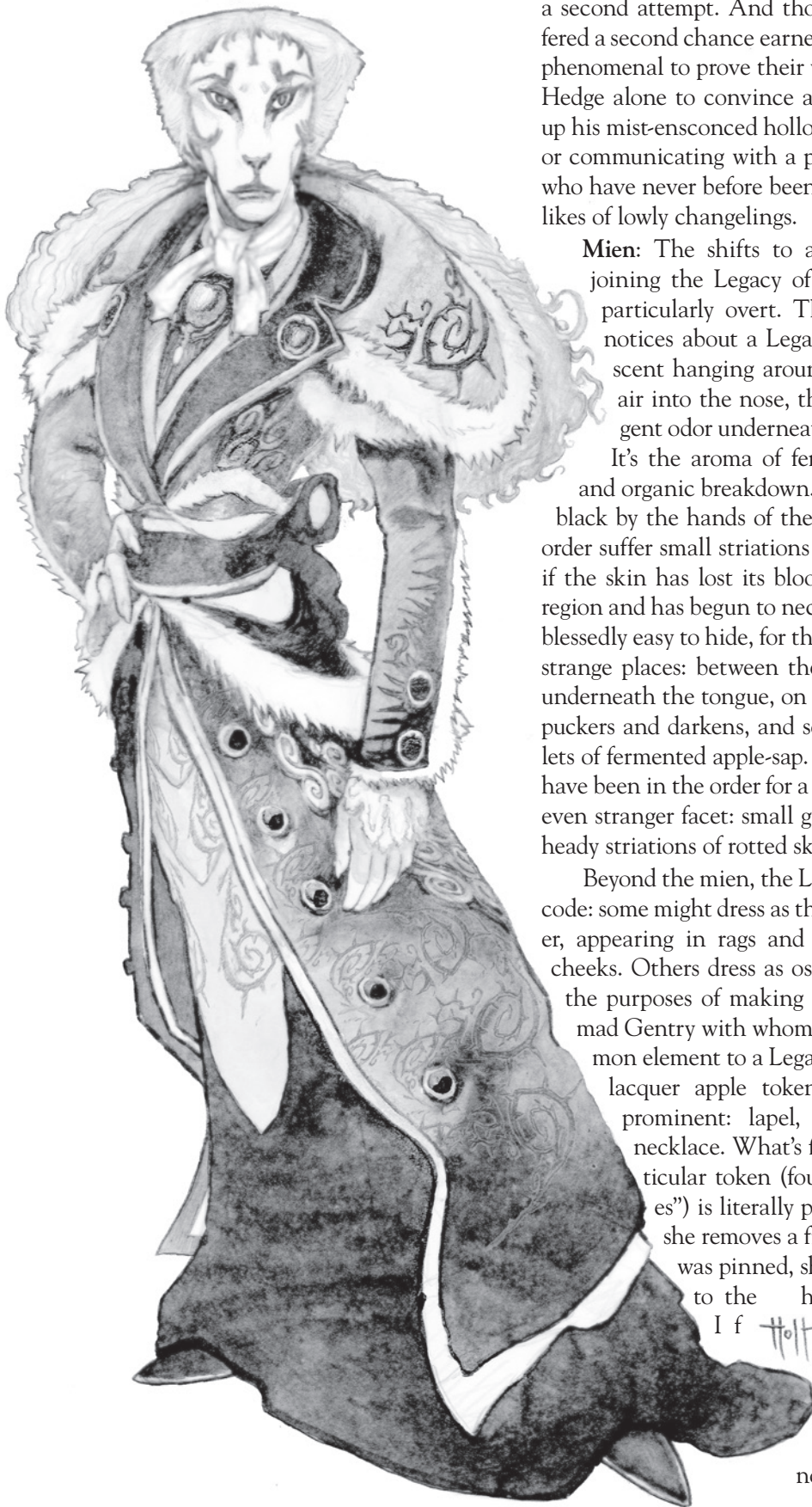
**Joining:** The Legacy of the Black Apple does not seek out changelings of that ilk to join this order; ac-

tually, they never seek *anyone* out. The tasks put forth for the Legates to complete — i.e. getting up close and personal with the frighteningly hollow Keepers — is not something they would or could ask another to do. The order is renowned enough in most freeholds that the local changelings know just who the Legates are and just what they do. They’ve surely formed opinions about this — some consider their efforts noble, others noble but *misguided*, and others still are utterly suspicious of anybody who marches up to those fiends and meets the Lords and Ladies nose-to-nose and walks away with all her fingers and toes intact.

The Legacy of the Black Apple therefore will not recruit. If a changeling wants to join, well, then she can petition a member and make the attempt. How do they test a changeling’s qualifications? One would hope that at the level the Legacy operates, they’re pretty familiar with most of the Lost in a given freehold, especially its more prominent members. If they don’t know a changeling, they’re unlikely to allow that Lost entry into the noble order. (The changeling who hasn’t connected with his brethren in the freehold is one who clearly does not have the social skills to survive among the Black Apple Legates, anyhow.)

That’s not to say they don’t test a potential Legate. The true test remains secret, and is both sudden and punishing. A handful of Legates enter the Hedge with the stated goal of interfacing with a prominent hobgoblin, a powerful market maven, or a lesser Keeper (such as one exiled from Faerie). They tell the up-and-coming Legate that he is to remain hidden and observe at a distance. Of course, it’s just a test. They don’t allow the newcomer to remain hidden and silent. They orchestrate it so that he’s face-to-face with the enemy. The Legates don’t expect miracles, of course. The novitiate isn’t to negotiate the return of all stolen children or move the Keeper in such a way so that the fae weeps with regret (besides, they only seem to manifest regret in a solipsistic, selfish manner — kind of an exhalation of *oh, woe is me...*), but they do expect him to hold his own. He can’t flee. He can’t attack the True Fae. They don’t demand results. They just demand that he show what he’s made of.

Failure has consequences, of course. The Keeper may not harm him then and there, but sensing weakness, may mark that frightened changeling for later humiliations and manipulations. The most notable consequence, though, is that the changeling isn’t accepted into the Legacy. He’s told to go back home. He’s told to “reevaluate” things. Only a rare few have been allowed



a second attempt. And those lucky enough to be offered a second chance earned it, doing something truly phenomenal to prove their worth — entering into the Hedge alone to convince a haunting Keeper to close up his mist-ensconced hollow and head back to Faerie, or communicating with a pack of lizard-faced goblins who have never before been persuaded to speak to the likes of lowly changelings.

**Mien:** The shifts to a changeling's mien upon joining the Legacy of the Black Apple are not particularly overt. The first thing one usually notices about a Legate is the *whiff* of an apple scent hanging around them. A deeper pull of air into the nose, though, reveals a sour, pungent odor underneath the more pleasant smell.

It's the aroma of fermentation, a scent of rot and organic breakdown. Also like the apple-made-black by the hands of the Keeper, those within this order suffer small striations of black skin — almost as if the skin has lost its blood supply to that localized region and has begun to necrotize. These striations are blessedly easy to hide, for they seem to appear in small, strange places: between the fingers, behind the ears, underneath the tongue, on the inner thighs. The skin puckers and darkens, and sometimes oozes faint rivulets of fermented apple-sap. Stories say that those who have been in the order for a very long time manifest an even stranger facet: small green worms playing in the heady striations of rotted skin.

Beyond the mien, the Legates offer very little dress code: some might dress as their nameless beggar founder, appearing in rags and showing off dirt-smudged cheeks. Others dress as ostentatiously as possible for the purposes of making an impression upon those mad Gentry with whom they meet. The only common element to a Legate's dress is the shiny black lacquer apple token ever-present somewhere prominent: lapel, sleeve, dangling from a necklace. What's fascinating is that this particular token (found below under "privileges") is literally part of the Legate's mien. If she removes a frock upon which the apple was pinned, she suddenly finds it pinned to the hem of her undergarments. If she removes those, suddenly the apple dangles from a thin silver thread around her neck. It cannot be removed. It cannot be destroyed.

**Background:** Those within the Legacy are not lesser changelings. The Lost Legates are powerful fae, often prominent in whatever freehold they dwell.

So, what does the order look for in a future Legate? An odd mix, frankly. Two warring principles must be at work in the heart of a potential Black Apple: humility and vanity. Why? Because those two principles seem most at the heart of dealing with the Keepers. On one hand, approaching a True Fae demands a kind of head-bowed humility, an *I'm not worthy* attitude. The Keepers respond to weakness. And yet, they also respond to strength: this may sound an odd dichotomy, but it takes a startlingly large set of balls and an overwhelming sense of self-importance to verbally spar with one of the Gentry. Most Keepers want the negotiator to be weak enough so that they still feel dominant, but not so weak that it's like a cat playing with an already dead mouse. It's a curious thing, but the Keepers want a challenge, but a challenge they know they can win. Hence, humility and vanity existing in a mad marriage.

Of course, a Legate also needs to be able to talk. Their provenance is purely social: one member can sell ice cream to an Eskimo, another might be able to beg the shoes off a stockbroker, and a different Legate might be so in tune with body language that she might as well be psychic. Before their Durance, Legates might have been car salesmen, panhandlers, hostage negotiators, or even temptresses seducing old rich men out of their family's money. Legates usually have Manipulation higher than any other Attribute, though both Presence and Composure go a long way, too — Presence to simply project those competing levels of humility and narcissism and Composure to look into the face of unflinching nightmare without letting slip a salty tear. Obviously, many of the Social Skills are key, particularly those that comprise the order prerequisites. Some aren't as useful, such as Animal Ken and Streetwise. Intimidation doesn't factor in too often, as attempting to put fear in the heart of a Keeper isn't impossible, but often unwise. (That said, one Legacy member — the Ogre Tony Grimm — had a way about him that struck a chord of trepidation in even the most stalwart Keeper. Grimm was old and powerful, and ultimately lost himself to a crass combination of pride and puiissance. He built up an impressive array of frailties and once the Gentry discovered that he could be undone by a single line of carpenter ants...well, thus was the end of that Stonebones.)

**Organization:** The Legates do not act rashly; at least, that's the hope. (Even in a batch of bad apples, one apple is worse than the others. Once in a blue

moon a Legate will run off into the Hedge, unsupported by his brethren in the order. They *usually* come back... bloody and gibbering.) No, the Legates comprise a fairly tight network that goes beyond the freehold's boundaries. As an eldritch order, the Legacy maintains contacts all around the world. While a Legate in San Diego doesn't necessarily know a Legate in Miami or Shanghai, she at least has some level of access to those other members. This connection is not word-of-mouth. While few rely on something so technical as an Excel spreadsheet, the Legacy maintains a rather deep set of books. These books (known generally as the Red Records, as they're most often bound in tomes of oxblood leather) detail a great many things about the Legacy: members with last known contact info, known tokens owned by the order, successful negotiations, failed negotiations, deaths, injuries, and other key data. But the Legacy books held in a given domain also detail quite a bit about the freehold, too, maintaining a pretty deep history of all that has gone in within the community's borders. (It's for this reason that those that discover the existence of the Red Records often aim to get a peek at them or, worse, steal them outright.) The utility of the books is clear: the Legates endeavor to study up before venturing into the Hedge for a negotiation. Have they dealt with a particular fae before? Was one Legate more adept at confrontations with Keepers who lurk beneath the surface of the water? Perhaps consulting a list of known Gentry taboos might help?

The Legacy members in a freehold vote on how best to approach a situation. They also vote on *who* is best to handle a given negotiation. And what is it, exactly, that they negotiate? The Keepers are a puzzle, but even those wild-eyed ciphers want *something*. If one fae is plaguing the freehold with a rash of child abductions, could that fae be convinced to go elsewhere or be satisfied with a different prize? In a city where the changelings are unable to make a successful incursion against that Keeper, well, the Legacy might be called on to make a tough choice. If the Keeper says that he'll stop preying on children if the Legacy provides him with a virginal bride, they'll consider it. It's an unpleasant choice, but the lives of a dozen children outweigh that of the one young woman (and moreover, the children will never return — one can at least hope the Keeper's new princess will find a means of escape). In cities where the changelings *can* mount a successful offense, the Legacy might intervene long enough to deliver the threat to the fae: "Cease your incursions or suffer the swords and arrows of the Crimson Court." Not all fae are mad with

pride. Some are painfully pragmatic and will withdraw without a single drop of shed blood.

Worth mentioning is that the Legacy will, at the behest of the Courts, negotiate with non-Keepers. If an intelligent hobgoblin blocks the trod to the moonlit Goblin Market, the Legates might be able to intercede. If a powerful vampire has claimed a city block within the freehold's boundaries for himself and his pack of bloodthirsty cronies, the Legates might attempt to broker a deal. They only do so at the request of the Court, which is in curious opposition to how they deal with Keepers. When it comes to negotiating with the True Fae, the Legacy ignores the commands of the local Court when possible. They act as independent — and yes, eldritch — agents of a larger pact.

**Concepts:** cordial diplomat, door-to-door salesman, humble vagabond, Fairest in *haute couture*, freehold outcast, Mirrorskin mimic, plainspoken diplomat, UN representative

## PRIVILEGES

Those within the Black Apple are provided with a handful of privileges.

### THE KEEPER'S REPRIEVE

Something in the relationship forged between the Black Apple's founding Legate (the beggar) and that gentleman of spiderleg arms and fog-feet formed on that troubled day and has been with the Legacy ever since. Perhaps it's the faint aroma of rotten apples? Or the apple token? Whatever it is, the Keepers will always give a Legate time to speak. They have some breathing room, so to speak, though precisely *how much* is up for debate. Once can always assume that the speaker has at least one minute of talk-time equal to her Wyr. Beyond that? No telling when an Other might decide that he's had enough. Some negotiations are simple, just a few words or a quickly-uttered promise. But the Gentry can be patient. They can be exhaustive. A Hedge-bound arbitration may take *nights* to complete, and after those initial minutes a Legate is living on borrowed time and what may amount to temporary sanity.

### WEIGHTED WORDS

For whatever reason, a Legate's word seems to *mean* more to those who hear it spoken. On any non-supernatural Manipulation-based dice rolls, the Legate gains an exceptional success on *three* successes instead of the normal five.

## BLACK APPLE PENDANT (••)

One merely needs to concentrate on the apple pinned to sleeve, lapel, or skin (or hanging around the neck or dangling from an anklet). Upon activation, the smell of fermented apples fills the nose coupled with a moment of dizziness. The mind flashes for but a second with a scene from that original story with the Legate reclaiming the stolen child for his village. For the rest of the scene, the Legate can add her Composure score to her Defense *provided* she only defends herself and makes no attacks of her own. Upon making an attack, the benefit is lost. This can only be used once per day.

**Action:** Reflexive

**Drawback:** If the changeling makes an attack in the same scene she activates the token, the scent of apple becomes too potent to handle. She feels a wave of sickly drunkenness, subtracting two from Dexterity, Intelligence, Wits and Defense for the remainder of the scene. She gains no Social bonuses, though.

**Catch:** The apple bites the skin and leeches a goodly pint of blood into it, growing red and polished as it does so. This incurs one point of lethal damage.

### *Rumors of the Black Apple Legates*

The Legacy is rife with rumors.

- They are secret loyalists. They negotiate with the Keepers not to keep the freeholds safe but to keep the *Gentry* safe.

- Maybe they do good work, but each must sacrifice something to a Keeper to earn a benefit. What that "something" is, nobody knows. Some say it's a bit of herself in the form of a dot of Willpower or from a Physical Attribute. Maybe it's a beloved memory. Worse, it could be a friend or a loved one...

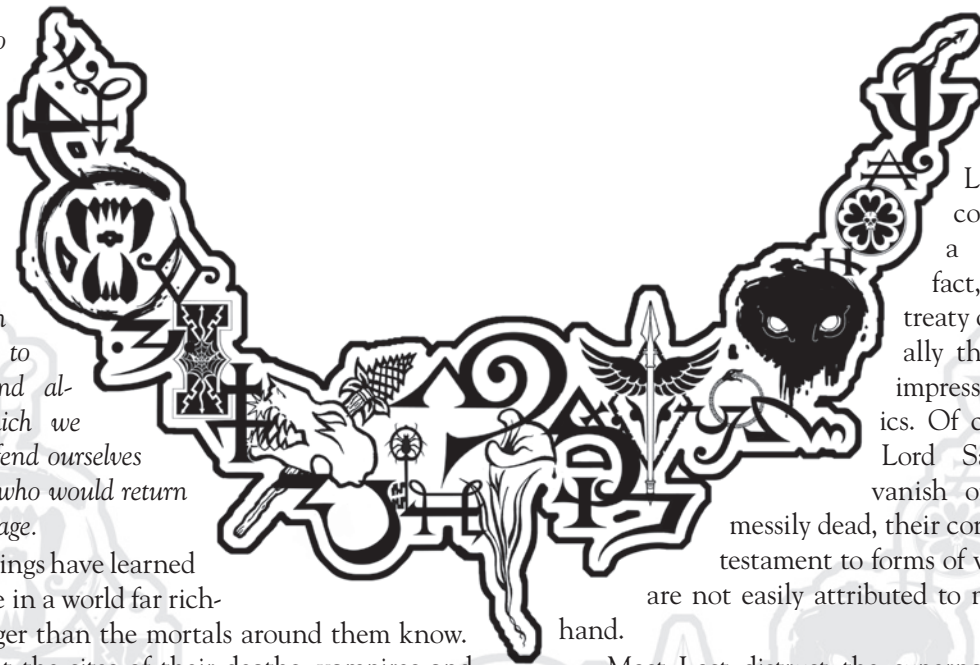
- That beggar from the original story? He's still alive, out there somewhere. Maybe in the Hedge. Maybe he goes from freehold to freehold, helping with situations that seem otherwise untenable. Some say he's become one of the Gentry, though how this is possible remains unclear. And how that's a *good* thing remains even foggier.

# THE LORD SAGES OF THE UNKNOWN REACHES

*I swear to seek beyond the bounds of the known and the safe in order to protect ourselves from unknown threats and to find tools and allies with which we can better defend ourselves against those who would return us all to bondage.*

Changelings have learned that they live in a world far richer and stranger than the mortals around them know. Ghosts haunt the sites of their deaths, vampires and werewolves stalk the night, and a few strange and deadly mortals wield fearsome magic. The Lord Sages of the Unknown Reaches are a small and eccentric noble order dedicated to learning about the other supernatural beings that live in or occasionally visit the World of Darkness. Most Lord Sages specialize in a single field of endeavor — ghosts, vampires, werewolves, mages, spirits, cryptids, necromancers — while a few attempt to become supernatural polymaths. Some are scholars and relic hunters, while others are diplomats and spies, but all Lord Sages are dedicated to protecting either their freehold or all changelings from other supernatural menaces. Along the way, though, they have a strong interest in acquiring, often by any means necessary, allies and objects that can help changelings in their battles against the fae.

Most other changelings regard the Lord Sages as somewhat eccentric. Many don't even fully believe in the order's purpose. Some changelings remain convinced that the True Fae are at the heart of all other supernatural creatures and manifestations; others feel that the Lord Sages are investigating things best left alone. To many changelings, this noble order is nothing more than a macabre and somewhat silly waste of time, and so members aren't accorded much respect by the rest of their Court or freehold just on the principle



of their order. However, occasionally a Lord Sage will come up with a useful artifact, a binding treaty or a powerful ally that awes and impresses their critics. Of course, other Lord Sages simply vanish or are found messily dead, their corpses a brutal testament to forms of violence that are not easily attributed to mortal or fae hand.

Most Lost distrust the supernatural beings the Lord Sages search out or attempt to make alliances with — the fae realm is full of potential dangers and treachery in the guise of trustworthiness. Why seek out new, lesser-known threats to add to the tally? And who's to say that the violent man-beasts who are rumored to live around the abandoned train yard aren't themselves fae or monstrous hunting hounds of the Others? Few changelings are willing to violate the safety of the freehold by inviting some new unknown factor in, and so the Lord Sages typically abide under powerful and binding oaths that they will not betray the secrets of the Lost to those that might destroy or enslave them. Membership in this order can erode some of the bonds of trust between a Lord Sage and his fellows.

And yet, their successes — rare and fleeting though they may be — are encouraging. Certainly they justify the order's continued existence, at least to themselves, if not to their sternest critics. If they find a potent supernatural artifact, it does carry a certain amount of prestige. If other changelings find themselves troubled by ghosts, spirits, or some other type of supernatural being, Lord Sages are often the only ones who both believe them and can offer useful advice or aid. And thus the Lord Sages of the Unknown Reaches continue their work — as carefully as they can.

**Titles:** Lord or Lady Sage

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 2, Occult 3, at least two Occult specialties

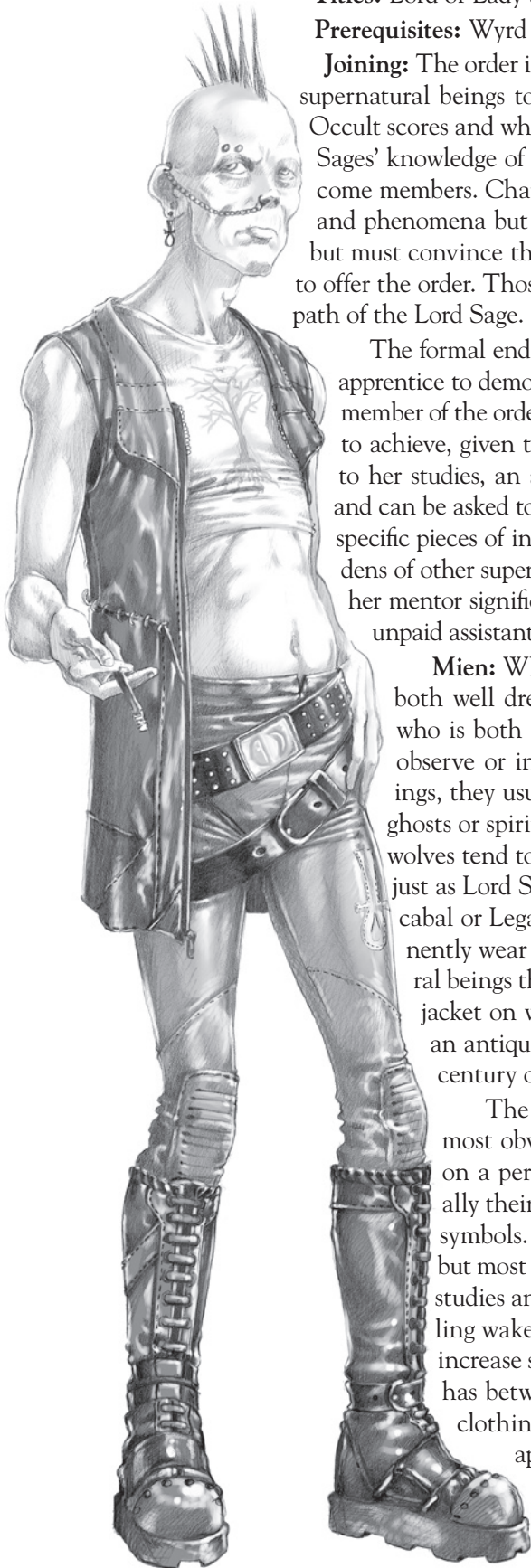
**Joining:** The order invites any changeling who has had experience with other supernatural beings to join. Changelings who possess the requisite Wyrd and Occult scores and who have had experiences that significantly add to the Lord Sages' knowledge of some other type of supernatural being are invited to become members. Changelings who are fascinated by other supernatural beings and phenomena but lack any direct experience with such may apply to join, but must convince the members of this noble order that they have something to offer the order. Those who succeed are given a mentor who teaches them the path of the Lord Sage.

The formal end of the apprenticeship occurs when the mentor allows the apprentice to demonstrate her mastery of knowledge before at least one other member of the order apart from himself (three is an ideal number, but difficult to achieve, given that this order is usually rare in any location). In addition to her studies, an apprentice also acts as a general assistant to her mentor, and can be asked to do everything from search large stacks of aging tomes for specific pieces of information to accompanying the mentor into the lairs and dens of other supernatural beings. Having an apprentice who does well gains her mentor significant praise and status, but some mentors enjoy having an unpaid assistant and can be reluctant to release their apprentice.

**Mien:** When in the company of other changelings, Lord Sages are both well dressed and appear somewhat scholarly, as befits someone who is both a scholar and a diplomat. However, when attempting to observe or interact with the werewolves, vampires or other such beings, they usually try to dress like these beings. Lord Sages who study ghosts or spirits naturally don't bother, but Lord Sages who study werewolves tend to emulate the pack or tribe they have made contact with, just as Lord Sages who work with mages dress like the members of the cabal or Legacy they work with. Also, Lord Sages proudly and prominently wear any unusual gifts they have received from the supernatural beings they might have befriended. Such gifts range from a denim jacket on which a werewolf painted the stylized image of a wolf, to an antique necklace or set of cuff links given to the lord sage by a century old vampire.

The mien of a Lord Sage changes in a number of ways. The most obvious is that their eyes seem to enlarge slightly and take on a permanent glow. In addition, their clothing, and occasionally their skin becomes decorated with various occult and esoteric symbols. These symbols come from all cultures and mythologies, but most are associated with the supernatural beings the Lord Sage studies and talks to. These symbols change every time the changeling wakes up. As a Lord Sage's Wyrd rises, the number of symbols increase somewhat or the symbols grow larger. A typical Lord Sage has between half a dozen and several dozen such symbols on his clothing. Lord Sages with Wyrd scores above four also typically appear to have one or more of these occult symbols tattooed on their skin.

**Background:** A few who join the Lord Sages either had an interest in or encounter with the occult before



they were taken by the fae. Some saw a ghost, others were fascinated by, and perhaps attempted to learn magic and a few may have had some brief and fleeting contact with a vampire, werewolf or spirit. The majority didn't have such prior contact, though; it was only when they re-emerged from the Thorns that they began to move in circles where their paths would cross... other paths. Some say it's the power of Wyrd that alters their fates so now they meet these other entities.

Some Lord Sages outright fear and distrust most other supernatural beings. Their goal is to keep watch on the outsiders lest they become a danger. When possible, these changelings also attempt to steal the secrets of these entities. But even if their attraction comes from fear and paranoia, all Lord Sages are deeply fascinated by other supernatural beings. They wouldn't take the risks they do otherwise.

The majority of members are especially proficient in either Mental or Social Skills and Attributes. Lord Sages who are most skilled in the mental arena live up their title; they're sages who amass libraries of knowledge and seek to understand their chosen area of the supernatural. Some study old tomes and ancient relics, others either sneak into the libraries, store-rooms, and temples of other inhuman beings, and a few make contact with mages, vampires or, on rare occasions, werewolves or ghosts who have similarly scholarly interests and habits and exchange knowledge. However, in all cases, gaining knowledge is the ultimate reason for their efforts.

Lord Sages who are most skilled in Social endeavors attempt diplomacy. They do their best to gain the trust and acceptance of one or more other varieties of supernatural being. Some are spies or even assassins who learn these beings' secrets and weaknesses and are always ready to eliminate any threat. Others honestly seek to make alliances with these powerful and often inhuman beings, seeking to find common enemies and looking for ways in which these beings could help the Lord Sage's freehold and in turn be aided by its members.

Because the more socially adept members have the most direct contact with other supernatural beings, they tend to enjoy greater status among the Lord Sages. However, their studies and diplomacy often take them away from the company of other changelings for extended periods of time, especially since most are well aware of the need to not give the secrets of their freehold away to strange and often inhuman beings. While they are sometimes regarded as doing less important work, the mentally inclined archivists and librarians of the Lord

Sages are largely responsible for most of the contact between this order and other changelings.

In addition to usually having some previous contact with other supernatural beings, many members of this order also tend to be outsiders in the changeling community. For many, they feel somewhat ill at ease among their own kind and no longer fully belong to the mortal world. These feelings cause them to long for and seek out contact with other supernatural beings in the often-vain hope of finding others they will feel more connected to, perhaps closer kin.

**Organization:** As an order largely administered by eccentric scholars who work with equally peculiar spies and diplomats, the degree of formal structure is less than in most noble orders. There is a loose division by field of study, with students of ghostly lore have a hierarchy separate from that of the students of magic. Like different departments within a university, there is a natural rivalry between those who study different beings. While a few Lord Sages study more than one sort of being, other Lord Sages usually regard them as dilettantes. How much can they be expected to know, given how difficult it usually is to attain just one single verifiable scrap of information?

Cutting across these disciplinary lines there are the noble order's libraries, which contain the documents and artifacts written and collected by the members of this order. Although each Lord Sage is responsible for maintaining her own library of notes and artifacts, all are also required to share their research with their nearest official Library. There are only a few dozen official libraries in the United States, usually located in the largest freeholds. Administering one of these formal libraries is a job given only to the most respected members of this order, including both retired diplomats and spies and the finest scholars. These librarians hold a great deal of political and social power among the Lord Sages. They control access to the most sensitive information and are in the best position to understand trends and potential problems caused by other supernatural beings.

Lord Sages hold regular gatherings, with the largest being on Halloween and Beltane, where they all gather at their nearest library to discuss their work and share questions and observations. While these gatherings are largely a mixture of intellectual party and informal academic discussion, those attending also have a short formal meeting to discuss matters of important to the Lord Sages as a whole. The local librarian is in charge of these discussions, as well as being the host for the entire gathering.

**Concepts:** Eccentric scholar, naïve spiritualist, occult-obsessed paranoid, would-be sorcerer seeking occult power.

## PRIVILEGES

The Lord Sages each learn the ways of a single other type of supernatural being. Each Lord Sage gains +1 to all Persuasion and Socialize rolls when interacting with a single other type of supernatural being. (This can be particularly useful given that such negotiations are often subject to situational penalties.) Lord Sages can also purchase the *Allies* or *Contacts* Merit with any other supernatural being or type of being, including both ghosts and spirits. Although any changeling can possess any of the Merits in **The Book of Spirits** that are not specifically limited to mortals, Lord Sages are particularly likely to have one or more such Merits, especially *Pleasing Aura* (p. 109-110) *Shadow Contacts* (p. 110), or *Spirit Ear* (p. 111). In addition, they can purchase any of the following Merits, *Enhanced Item* (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 82), the *Imbued Item* Merit (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 84-85), *Library* (**Mage: The Awakening**, p. 85-86), or a werewolf fetish or talen (**Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pp. 204-209) specifically designed for the changeling to use, which is known as an *Outsider Fetish*.

## OUTSIDER FETISH (• TO •••)

**Effects:** This Merit allows the character to begin play with a talen or a fetish. Any supernatural character, including characters with both major and minor supernatural templates can use this fetish, but ordinary mortals cannot. Non-werewolves cannot begin play with a fetish rated higher than ••, however. One dot of this Merit indicates that the changeling owns a talen, two dots translates to a one-dot fetish and three dots means the character owns a two-dot fetish. The werewolf must then instruct the character in using the fetish since non-werewolves cannot activate the fetish normally. The character must enact the spirit's ban in order to gain the fetish's benefits.

In order to use a fetish, the character must enact the spirit's ban, which can be as simple as sprinkling some salt on the fetish or as complex as reciting a phrase in the werewolf language. The player then rolls Resolve + Occult.

## Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The spirit wrenches itself free of the fetish, which is promptly rendered useless. The spirit is hostile to the character, but doesn't necessarily attack. The spirit might well alert other, more dangerous, beings to the character's presence, depending on how well the character has treated the spirit.

**Failure:** The character performs the ban incorrectly and the fetish doesn't work. Any subsequent attempts to activate it during the same scene incur a cumulative -1 penalty.

**Success:** The fetish works as described.

**Exceptional Success:** The spirit in the fetish looks favorably on the character. The next attempt to activate it receives a +1 bonus.

### *Rumors of the Lord Sages of the Unknown Reaches*

The unusual practices of the Lord Sages generate many a rumor:

- Some of the Lord Sages are secretly agents or possibly unwilling thralls of the vampires, spirit or other inhuman beings they make contact with. Occasionally, these beings transform Lord Sages into one of their own and convince them to reveal everything they know about changelings. When that happens, you have to move the whole freehold or it's lost.
- Many of the beings the Lord Sages make contact with are either disguised fae or secretly in league with the fae and are making contact solely to betray any changelings they encounter. Some of the Lord Sages are their dupes; others work with them willing in return for knowledge and magical trinkets.
- Many Lord Sages poorly understand the occult knowledge or magical wonders they possess, and either care more about knowledge and power than the safety of those around them or are simply careless. As a result, they occasionally unleash dire forces and ancient powers upon the world.

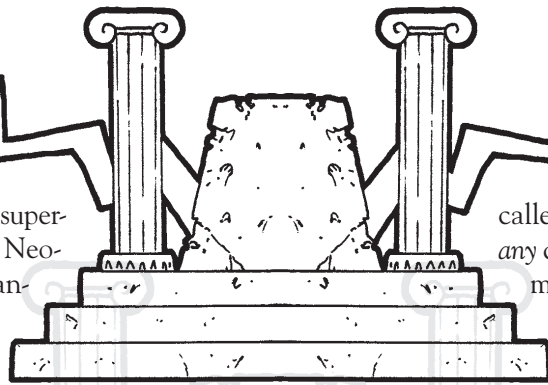


# THE LOST PANTHEON

Upon  
my oath, I  
am become  
the Old Way;  
flesh of its flesh  
and blood of its  
blood.

At the dawn of humanity, powerful spirits walked the borders between the earthly and the supernatural. The eldest artworks of Neolithic times depict beings too fanciful to be man, beast, or any other wholly terrestrial thing. Perhaps these entities were the Others, their images captured in ochre and charcoal on the innermost walls of ancient caverns, but some Lost believe that these crude drawings are, instead, images of their own kind — admired, feared, and even worshipped by primitive mortals. They think back to a more primal and mysterious age, an age during which it seems that the otherworldly walked side-by-side with the mundane, and a balance existed between gods and men. These changelings have resolved to be those very gods in a jaded modern world.

This eldritch order is an old one; older, perhaps, than the very notion of “noble title,” and aligned with powers that predate such things as agriculture, walled settlements, and the written word. While many of the outsiders that know of the Lost Pantheon doubt its claim to such extreme antiquity, few deny the primordial energies that are harnessed within each changeling who takes up its banner. Of course, the feudal, almost pseudo-medieval society of the Lost does not necessarily react well to the emergence of one or more primitive would-be gods whose beliefs are in keeping with an epoch that knew nothing of civilization, let alone kings and queens, knights and barons. Friction often exists between the status quo and the fae of the Lost Pantheon, due to mutual unfamiliarity, if nothing else, though the raw power and faded Clarity (and often somewhat skewed morality inherent to both) common to changelings sworn to this entitlement often



make their presence a matter of uncomfortable coexistence, rather than something to be actively driven out.

Beasts and Elementals are the seemings most called to the Lost Pantheon, though any changeling inclined toward a primal vision of the world and willing to draw power from that vision (and those mortals that still subscribe to it, to one degree or another) can be drawn to this entitlement. In modern times, the mortals most commonly associated with these beliefs are practitioners of the so-called Old Ways, religious systems with roots stretching back to pre-civilization archetypes that the changelings come to embody: Earth Mothers and Sun Fathers, Bear Women and Wolf Men, and other such atavistic icons. While the practices have changed, their foundations remain, echoing down from the remotest antiquity, from the very first humans to recognize and acknowledge the existence of the supernatural world. Indeed, the so-called Ancients of the Lost Pantheon reflect an age when the distinction between the natural and the supernatural was a line so thin as to be invisible to all save the most cunning and discerning of holy men and wise women.

Of course, these ideals descended down, through the ages, with rough-hewn divinities taking on sharper edges in the crucible of civilization. However, the fundamental aspects of their origins as the unfathomable gods of hunter-gatherers remained. And, so it is that some Ancients embody newer (though still quite ancient) concepts, drawn from such inspirations as Zeus, Gnowee, Thor, Agni, Punga, Coyolxauhqui, Nemain, Anubis, Coyote, kuninushi, or other such deities, some of whom are venerated even in modern times. Always, these Ancients are conscious of the primordial origins of the god-forms that they represent. Even more contemporary conceptions of such figures include Bloody

Mary (a spirit of death), the Jersey Devil (a chimera), the phantom hitchhiker (who may be a guide to lead people back to the proper path, or a trickster to lead them astray), the chupacabra (a feral vampire), and the black dog (a re-imagining of dogs' traditional association with the Underworld). All of these sorts of divinities can eke out a place within the order, if they are but willing to accept their great station and to celebrate their godliness.

### *Fitting In*

Finding a way to blend back into mortal society is a fundamental part of the story of **Changeling: The Lost**. How, then, do the Ancients of the Lost Pantheon embody this theme? After all, they seem to spend most of their time actively seeking out and embracing the supernatural aspects of the world, while blatantly denying their former mortality, and they don't — on the surface — appear to have any interest in rebuilding their connections to humanity. But that's just the thing; the goals and motivations of the Lost Pantheon are in many crucial ways the same as those of any changeling, just realized in a significantly different way.

The Ancients *do* work to build a tie to mortals — a distorted and disturbing sort of tie, but a tie, nonetheless. The fact of the matter is that, like *all* fae, those of the Lost Pantheon are damaged in spirit, with scars that mar their souls and make them unlike the people all around them. Forced to exist a half-step apart from the life that they once possessed, the Ancients strive to be something that hurts less, something that doesn't remind them so much of what has been taken from them, and they do so by becoming important to the mortals who venerate them. Like the good cop who returns from Arcadia and becomes a violent vigilante, or the psychiatrist whose Durance transforms her into a skilled oneiromancer, the changelings who turn to the Lost Pantheon cobble together a new self out of what they can recall from before the Thorns, the hurts that were done to them by the Gentry, and the shreds of a life that they can pick up after stumbling out of the Hedge.

**Title:** Ancient (also Daemon, Totem, or other such titles, as appropriate to the culture of the individual changeling)

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 6, Mantle (Any) 4, Clarity no higher than 6

**Joining:** As informal as this eldritch order is, it should be no surprise that there is no one single initiation into the Lost Pantheon. In fact, it's rare that one Ancient initiates another. Most feel the call in their dreams, guided by the power of their own Wyrd onto a path that was first trod long ago.

**Mien:** Ancients of the Lost Pantheon often eschew modern trappings, though this tendency is not universal and some few strike a balance between primordial practices and contemporary existence. Far more common, however, are those that deal almost exclusively with the mortals of their cults, and otherwise keep to the company of the Lost and other beings that dwell beyond the purview of the mundane world. Hedge-spun garments are common to the Ancients, as are clothes made from traditional materials, such as pelts and skins, plant fibers, and the like. Simple jewelry, tattoos and even scarification may adorn a given Ancient's body, and many of them have great difficulty passing among modern mortals.

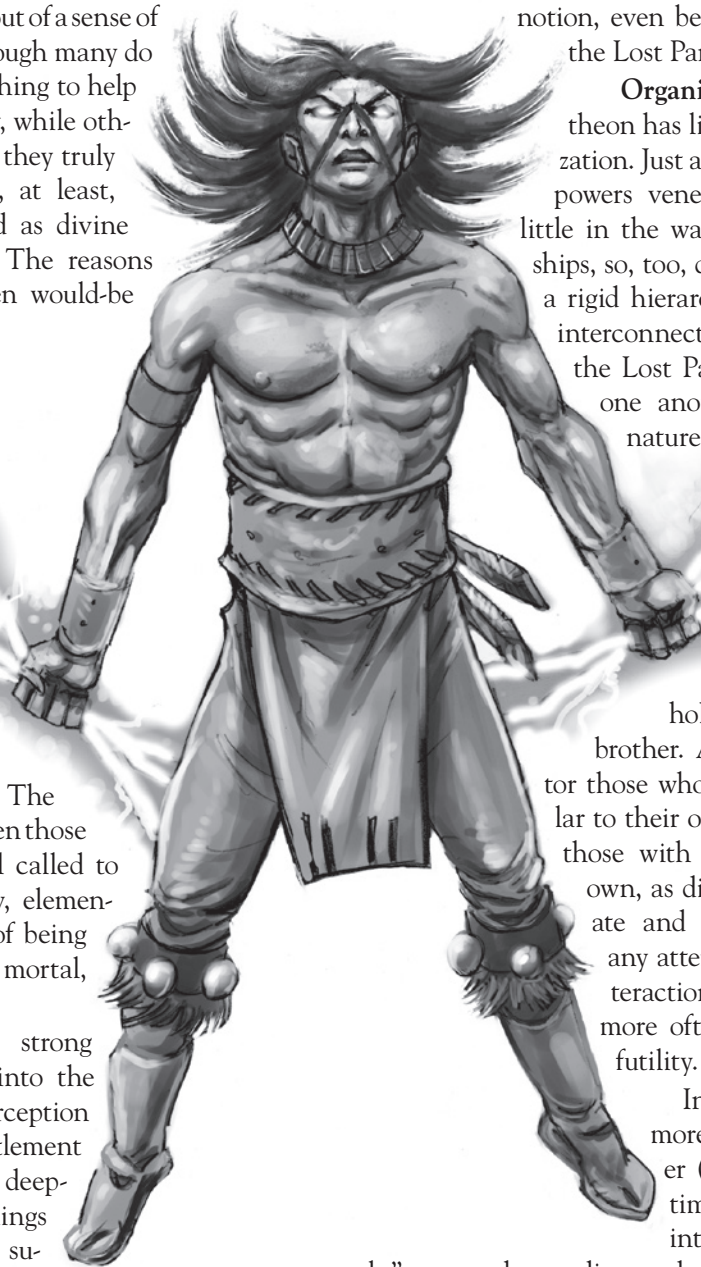
No single specific change develops in the mien of a member of the Lost Pantheon. Rather, such fae tend simply to become *more* of what they are, forsaking human appearance for that of their faerie selves: an Elemental of flame transforms into a living conflagration, while a pallid and vaguely necrotic Gravewight comes to look the part of a mummified lich-lord, and a vaguely equine Beast takes on hooves and a windswept mane and seems forever in motion, even when standing still. As Wyrd increases, these changes become increasingly pronounced; particularly potent Ancients actually appear, in many ways, to outside observers like the earthly gods that they believe themselves to be. At the greatest heights of Wyrd, such changelings begin to bend the manifestations of their Mantles, compelling even the blessings of the seasons to conform to their "godly attributes." Thus, a Winter Darkling whose divine aspect is one of hidden places might find a frozen fog envelops her at all times, or a Summer Ogre embodying primal hunger might manifest licking flames within his mouth that occasionally drop embers to consume random small flammable objects, such as papers, dry leaves, and the like.

**Background:** Pinning down a "type" of changeling drawn to the Lost Pantheon is difficult, at best. Some

come to the entitlement out of a sense of arrogance, to be sure, though many do not. Some grasp for anything to help them with fading Clarity, while others feel, deep down, that they truly *are* divine creatures; or, at least, those things worshipped as divine by primitive humanity. The reasons are many, and any given would-be mentor might have

wildly different standards regarding a prospective student than any other Ancient. The only commonality between those entitled is that they feel called to the Lost Pantheon's raw, elemental power — the sense of being something far more than mortal, both for good and for ill.

Potent Wyrd and strong Mantles certainly play into the transformations of perception necessary to accept entitlement as an Ancient, but it goes deeper than that. Changelings from more traditional, superstitious, or mystical backgrounds tend to be likelier to embrace the way of the Lost Pantheon, as do those whose human memories and ideals were almost completely scoured away by especial cruel Durances. Perhaps most important to note is the fact that prospective Ancients are not *fleeing* from their scarred and mutilated humanity; they sincerely believe that they *are not human* anymore — that Arcadia has already destroyed anything in them that was mortal and replaced it with a wonderful, terrible power of godly origin. Even the most humble Ancient (and they are few) sincerely cleaves to the notion that she is a god clothed in flesh and most implicitly believe so, whether or not they could adequately articulate the



notion, even before being accepted into the Lost Pantheon.

**Organization:** The Lost Pantheon has little in the way of organization. Just as the most ancient divine powers venerated by humanity had little in the way of formalized relationships, so, too, do most Ancients forsake a rigid hierarchy or other such linear interconnection. Instead, members of the Lost Pantheon often deal with one another as their respective natures demand: an ocean father may forever rage at an earth mother, but feel a kinship toward a moon goddess, or hold a storm god to be a brother. Ancients need not mentor those who embody godforms similar to their own and may even entitle those with aspects hostile to their own, as divinity is often intemperate and requires conflict. Thus, any attempt to categorize the interactions between Ancients is more often than not doomed to futility.

In places in which two or more Ancients come together (rare, indeed, in modern times), they tend to organize into a sort of “divine family,” arranged according to their godly archetypes. This may involve friendship, alliance, mutual respect, polite avoidance, simmering dislike, outright enmity, or any combination of the above. Individual personalities do not figure into their relationships quite so much as the requirements of their more primal attributes. A primal hunter and an aspect of a prey animal, for example, may, as people and as changelings, have compatible personalities and be thoroughly capable of coexisting as friends but, as Ancient of the Lost Pantheon, they are opposites in the same cycle of life and death, and their divine characteristics demand distance between them. There need not be antagonism between them — as the hunter and the hunted belong to a single

natural process — but close friendship cannot grow between them, as they are divided from one another by their appointed roles.

**Concepts:** Cult leader, reincarnated god, mystical transhumanist, incarnated dream, mad prophet, borderline solipsist, would-be True Fae.

## PRIVILEGES

Below is a privilege common to all of the changelings of the Lost Pantheon.

### PRIMORDIAL INCARNATION

The powers of the Lost Pantheon reveal the path of its members' supposed "divine transformation" into the entities venerated by humanity in remotest antiquity. Forsaking mortal perspective, these changelings find that the perception-based penalties that they would normally suffer for low Clarity are reversed, becoming *bonuses* to such rolls (+1 at Clarity 6–5, +2 at Clarity 4–3, and +3 at Clarity 2–1) as their godly eyes open to vistas incomprehensible to human sight. These bonuses are also added to a character's effective

Wyrd for the purposes of determining her additional longevity. Every effective dot of Wyrd above 10 adds another 30 years to the changeling's life.

Further, an Ancient may distill Glamour out of the worship of mortals, though doing so necessitates the revelation of one's true form to the unensorcelled. Believers in the Old Ways (or even those who practice new variations on the Old Ways, such as leaving offerings at the rusted scrap metal shrine of the Lady of Drowning Waters along the banks of a polluted river) sustain Ancients toward whom their prayers are directed, though the changeling must be physically present to reap this benefit. Such Glamour is harvested as though it were an emotion appropriate to the changeling's court (even if she is courtless).

Lastly, Ancients of the Lost Pantheon stand firm against the Others in time of conflict and receive a +2 bonus to all rolls to attack, defy, or otherwise engage in either aggression or resistance against the Gentry, their powers, or their minions (such as loyalists, many hobgoblins, some fetches, and the like.)

### *Rumors of the Ancients*

The Lost Pantheon is an object of awe and dread to many of the changelings that know of its existence. Given the potent Wyrd and Mantles with which its members must be favored, it is easy to see the Ancients as the demigods that they believe themselves to be, and the rumors that surround the entitlement thus tend to reflect the raw power with which the Lost Pantheon is blessed. Conversely, fae can be jealous of the mystic might of the Lost Pantheon and terrified of its inhuman nature, and so fearful gossip also circulates with regard to this eldritch order and its membership.

- The Ancients of the Lost Pantheon eventually *become* True Fae, themselves, when all of their Clarity is — inevitably — at long last, gone. Whether the process is gradual or abrupt, however, none can truly say. Some claim that Ancients wander off into the Thorns, only to later emerge as Gentry, while others believe that they suddenly slough off their human masks entirely and embrace the power and madness of Arcadia all at once.

- The Lost Pantheon keeps gateways into realms of spirit that have *nothing* to do with the Thorns or distant Arcadia, which may be the otherworlds believed in by ancient mortal societies. Gods and monsters utterly alien to Arcadia wander in those forgotten places, and the Ancients may be enslaved to them. Or, perhaps, *they* are the masters, and those inhuman entities are their servants.

- Ancients gather once a century to hunt the Others who stalk (or are trapped in) either the Hedge or the mortal world, having long ago learned rituals used to extract the power, and perhaps even the immortality, of the Gentry. For a staggeringly steep price, they might be willing to teach these grim rites to those not sworn into their order, though the prize would almost certainly not be worth the cost. Some rumors say that accepting such a boon from an Ancient binds a changeling's soul to that Ancient's will, while others believe that even attempting the process is fatal to one not numbered among the Lost Pantheon.

# THE ORDER OF THE ONEIROPHYSICS

*I walk the ethereal path to heal those who are wounded by ghostly barbs. I swim the darkest river, brave the bottomless channel and dive into the depths of night-time's passage. I go where each man holds his deepest fears and his secret passions, and I do so for the good of all.*

All Oneiromancers can enhance dreams to help someone heal better or learn faster. Oneirophysics take this a step further, however. Depending on their rank, a talented Dreamhealer can create miraculous effects through dream-wielding. From simple patch-up jobs to healing what would otherwise be fatal injuries and curing otherwise incurable diseases, they can work miracles in the slumbering world.

The Oneirophysics don't refer to themselves as a noble order. They see themselves as more of a trade union, a guild of healers. Even so, the gifts of the entitlement aren't to be given out lightly. A cruel hand could wield a dream-scalpel in ways that would rival even the most twisted of Gentry. This caution drives them to keep as rigorous an eye on potential recruits as any more aristocratic-minded entitlement might.

**Titles:** Oneirophysic, Dreamhealer (male or female), Dream Doc (slang), Leech/Nightmare/Quack (insulting)

**Prerequisites:** Wyrd 2, Medicine 2, Empathy 1 (additional for higher ranks, see below)

**Joining:** Oneirophysics are most often those who have exhibited a marked interest and acuity for oneiromancy, and who have been approached by current members of the entitlement for additional training and possible indoctrination into the organization. Sometimes, however, a changeling's innate ability and knack for oneiromancy will allow them to spontaneously manifest the entitlement's mien and privileges, without formal mentoring. These cases often come to the attention of the more traditionally indoctrinated members of the entitlement who will investigate them and (assuming the individual is abiding by or willing to conform to the Oneirophysic Oath) will encourage them to formalize their membership in the entitlement. Those who spurn the invitation to formalize their connection to the group as a

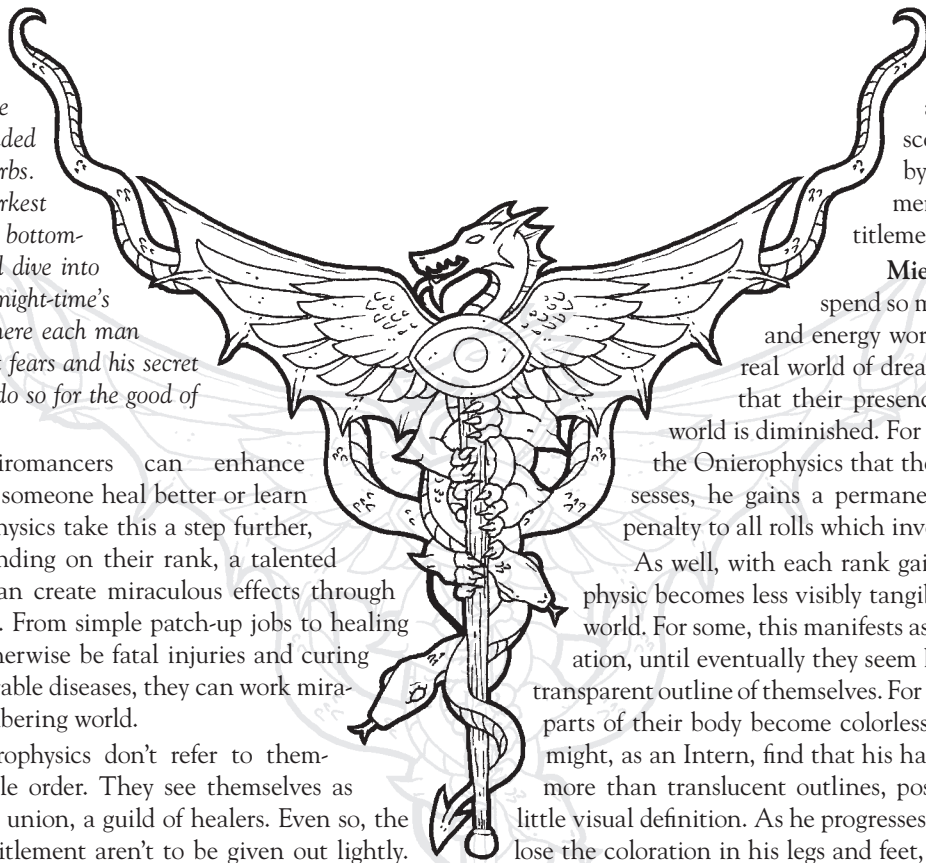
whole are often seen as "rogues" and treated with scorn and distrust by more traditional members of the entitlement.

**Mien:** Oneirophysics spend so much of their time and energy working in the ethereal world of dreams that they find that their presence in the waking world is diminished. For each rank within the Oneirophysics that the changeling possesses, he gains a permanent cumulative -1 penalty to all rolls which involve Presence.

As well, with each rank gained, the Oneirophysic becomes less visibly tangible in the waking world. For some, this manifests as a fading of coloration, until eventually they seem little more than a transparent outline of themselves. For others, individual parts of their body become colorless. A Dreamhealer might, as an Intern, find that his hands become little more than translucent outlines, possessing mass but little visual definition. As he progresses, he may similarly lose the coloration in his legs and feet, trunk, arms, and eventually his head, until he appears (like his companion whose whole body gradually faded out) as a near-clear form. This lack of color does not leave an Oneirophysic invisible or grant him bonuses to Stealth rolls. There is still obviously a changeling present; he just appears to be a gradually more and more translucent version of himself.

**Background:** The Order of the Oneirophysics contains all kinds. Some are deeply entrenched in mortal concerns; others ply their trade mostly among other Lost. Most are strong of mind and will, all the better to be able to deal with the nightmares that plague their patients. Darklings and Wizedened tend to be most common among the entitlement, though all seemings are represented.

**Organization:** Oneirophysics hold themselves to strict ranks based on skill, ability and demonstrated adherence to the Oneirophysic Oath. Those who show talent and skill but are believed to be less than ethical in their wielding of said abilities are often placed under close scrutiny and investigation by higher ranking members of the entitlement and if found guilty of misusing their abilities, are "dealt with" in a myriad of manners beginning with having their own sleep tormented until they see the error of their ways.



**Note:** Characters enter the entitlement as Interns, but players may choose to advance their character to higher ranks at any point that they have met the prerequisites for that rank (with the Storyteller's permission).

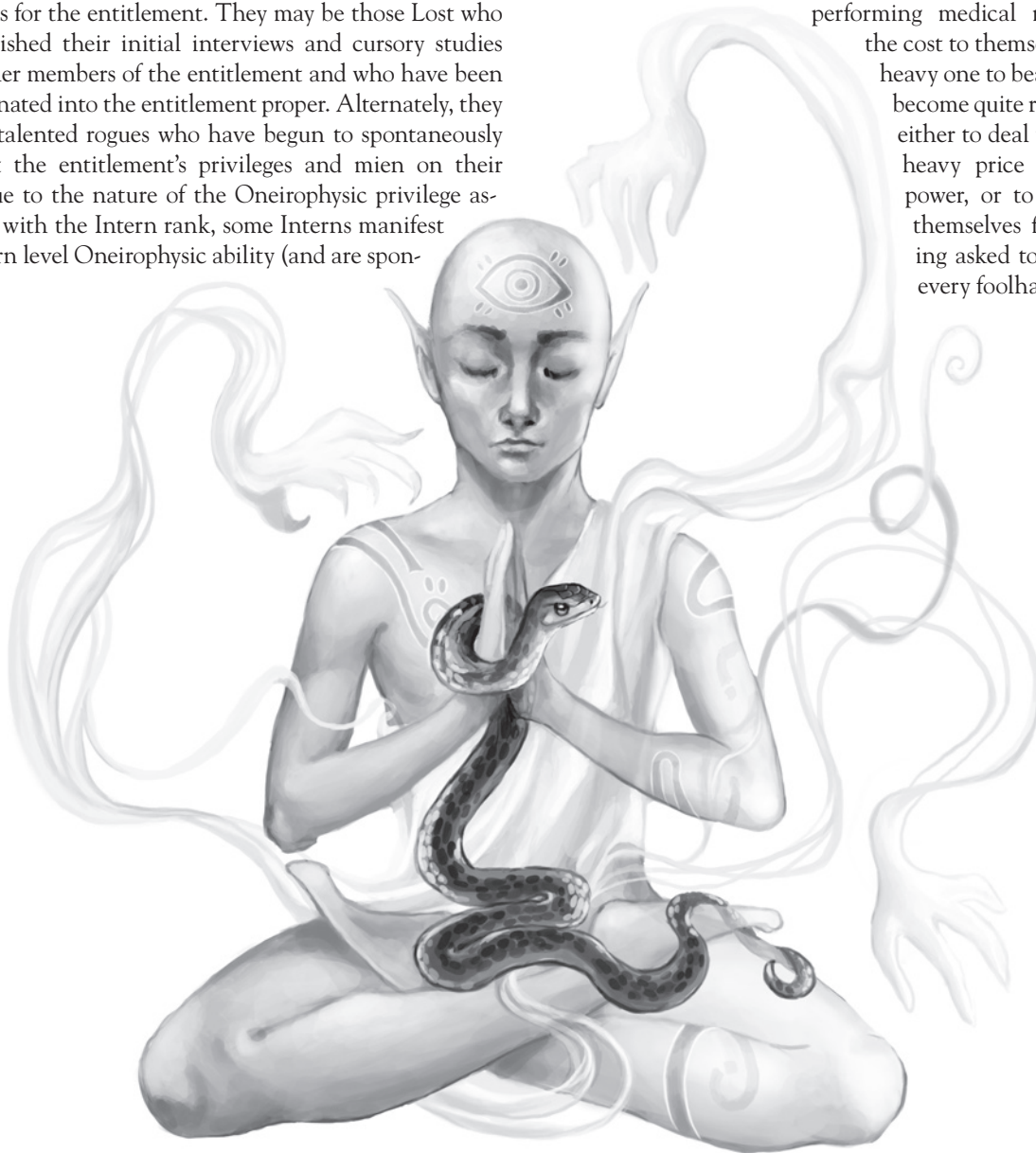
**No Rank: Initiates** — Initiates are those who are being considered or groomed for membership in the Order, but who have not yet been accepted (or spontaneously manifested any of the Order's privileges). They may be students of official members of the entitlement or associates who aid members in their studies, maintain contact between Entitlement members in different freeholds or who act as an information network to locate those who could benefit from the Entitlement's attention. Initiates have neither the entitlement's privileges nor mien and are not officially part of the entitlement, although they are associated with it.

**Rank One: Intern** — Interns must meet the basic prerequisites for the entitlement. They may be those Lost who have finished their initial interviews and cursory studies with other members of the entitlement and who have been indoctrinated into the entitlement proper. Alternately, they may be talented rogues who have begun to spontaneously manifest the entitlement's privileges and mien on their own. Due to the nature of the Oneirophysic privilege associated with the Intern rank, some Interns manifest the Intern level Oneirophysic ability (and are spon-

aneously indoctrinated into the entitlement) in emergency situations, such as when a motley-mate has sustained a life-threatening injury and no other medical aid is available.

**Rank Two: Resident** — Resident Oneirophysics have usually undertaken in-depth studies of the healing potential inherent in dreams, and quite often have developed a specialty — battle wounds, mundane disease, age-related debilitation, mental illness or the like. Some act predominantly as healers for their own motley, while others may serve a freehold or even travel as an itinerant healer, trusting that their paths will take them to those who are most in need of their services. (Prerequisites: Wyrđ 3, Medicine 3 + Specialty, Empathy 2)

**Rank Three: Physic** — Full-fledged Physics have wholly come into a sense of oneness with the nature of their entitlement. While they are capable of performing medical miracles, the cost to themselves is a heavy one to bear. Some become quite reclusive, either to deal with the heavy price of their power, or to prevent themselves from being asked to tend to every foolhardy Lost



who rushes into dangerous situations without thinking. (Prerequisites: Wyrd 4, Medicine 4, Empathy 3)

**Concepts:** Pediatrician, pop psychologist, spiritual guru, scarred dreamwalker, eccentric psychonaut, subconscious detective.

## PRIVILEGES

Depending on their rank within the entitlement, Oneirophysics can achieve various effects which would be impossible for non-Dreamhealers.

### THE PLUNGE

All Oneirophysics have the ability to take the Plunge, essentially slipping into a deep dream state at will. By spending a point of Glamour, the Dreamhealer can drop into a state of lucid dreaming that allows him to connect to the dreamstuff of the Wyrd, even if he is outside of the Hedge or a Hollow (see p. 193 of **Changeling: The Lost** for the normal rolls and restrictions on entering this state). A Oneirophysic who has entered into the Plunge can use this state to enter into the dreams of any individual who is, herself, currently sleeping or unconscious, so long as he is making physical skin-to-skin contact with her at the time of taking the Plunge. If this contact is broken after the connection has been made, the Oneirophysic can attempt to maintain contact and continue his work by making a successful reflexive Resolve + Composure + Wyrd roll at the beginning of each turn. Success means he may continue the contact for that turn. Exceptional Success means he may continue the contact for the rest of the scene (or until the target wakes up, whichever comes first) without further rolls. If the Oneirophysic fails his roll to remain connected to his patient, the bond is forcibly broken, and he suffers a -2 penalty to all actions for the rest of the scene, due to disorientation.

The Plunge may be used only to enter the dreams of an individual who the Oneirophysic is making physical contact with at the time, at which time it can be used for any of the normal dreamriding, dreamscaping or dreamweaving uses. It is, however, most often used for dreamhealing, the Oneirophysic specific rank-related Privilege.

### RANK-RELATED PRIVILEGE: DREAMHEALING

Dreamhealing is a privilege which goes above and beyond the normal oneiromancer's abilities to accelerate healing or reduce stress by promoting a restful or affirming dream. Rank-related Privileges are available only to those of appropriate rank for the privilege. Thus a Physic has access to all three rank related privileges, while an intern can only use Dream Triage.

An Oneirophysic can use dreamhealing on individuals whose dreams he has connected to through normal oneiromancy methods (rather than through the Plunge). He must, however, meet all the requirements of those methods (in-

cluding being in the Hedge or a Hollow and taking the time to enter the meditative state, etc.) Dreamhealing cannot be used on one's self, nor can it be used on a conscious patient, making Aetherwine (see sidebar) a commonly used draught by the Dreamdoctors.

### *Aetherwine — Dangerous Brews*

Aetherfruit generally take the form of small grape-like bunches, although they are also sometimes found in larger soft-fleshed forms with a single central stone. When consumed raw they intensify dreams, and are sometimes used by those seeking prophetic visions. When properly processed, however, they produce Aetherwine, a powerful general anesthetic highly coveted by Chirurgeons and Oneirophysics, as well as those with less-wholesome intentions for the substance.

Aetherwine must be processed in very small batches, a lengthy process which requires several weeks of careful attention as the Aetherfruit are first fermented and then distilled into a foul-tasting fortified liqueur. (Creating Aetherwine is an extended Wits + Crafts + Wyrd challenge with 20 successes necessary and each roll representing a day of wine-making. Anyone other than Wizened Brewers makes all rolls to create Aetherwine at a -2 penalty, and failure on any individual roll results in the batch being ruined.)

A successful batch of Aetherwine produces only 10 doses. Each one-ounce dose has the potential to render its consumer unconscious almost immediately. (Roll the consumer's Stamina + Resolve at a -4 penalty. Success or Exceptional Success means the wine does not work. Failure or Dramatic Failure and the consumer falls into a deep dream-state and remains unconscious for 11 turns minus his Stamina + Resolve if the roll was a contested one. The consumer can elect not to resist the Aetherwine's effect.) This property is lost if the substance is diluted, and as Aetherwine has a bitter taste and numbs the tongue when tasted, it is difficult (but not impossible) to consume it unknowingly. Tasting the wine without consuming a full dose does not activate its anesthetic property.

**Rank One: Dream Triage** — Changelings (and humans) are often fragile creatures compared to some of the threats that exist in the World of Darkness. While any oneiromancer can hurry along healing by using dreamscaping Healing Sleep (see p. 196 of **Changeling: The Lost**), sometimes a gentle nudge is simply not enough to keep someone from dying. Oneirophysicists can produce more immediate and drastic results, which sometimes can mean the difference between life and death for their companions.

To use Dream Triage, the Oneirophysicist exerts his own will over the target's physiological systems through the dreamscape. He can force his patient's body to begin knitting severed muscles and tendons, slow or speed blood flow to injured areas and generally reduce the impact of life-threatening injuries, illnesses or toxins. Dream Triage is an instant action requiring the expenditure of a point of Willpower on the part of the Oneirophysicist which clears any damage from the character's rightmost health box. Only one use of Dream Triage can be applied to any individual within any 24 hour period. This has the added affect of stabilizing a target that is bleeding to death or in a coma. (The loss of Health points to aggravated damage each minute is stopped (see Incapacitation, p. 173, **World of Darkness Rulebook**.)

**Rank Two: Psychic Healing** — Through the use of Psychic Healing, the Oneirophysicist can apply normal medical treatments (physical or mental) while in a shared dream with their patient. All rolls to heal or provide therapy once within a shared dream are made as if they were happening in the waking world, regardless of whether the patient is nearby (as with The Plunge) or across the world.

As well, upon attaining the rank of Resident, the dream-healer must choose one of the following specializations (or create a similarly powered one with the approval of his player's Storyteller): Battle Injuries, Communicable Disease, Mental Illness, Geriatrics, Pediatrics, Supernatural Illnesses, Reproductive Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Exotic Disease.

The Oneirophysicist can use the shared dream state to not only speed normal healing, but can diagnose and treat injuries and illnesses within it. Furthermore, he can apply a +4 bonus to all rolls to diagnose or treat within a shared dream, as long as the injury or illness pertains to his particular Psychic Healing specialization.

**Rank Three: Intensive Care** — While round-the-clock intensive medical treatment can speed a character's healing process drastically, this kind of medical care is frequently not available to the Lost who are unlikely to have the identification, funding or insurance to facilitate a hospital stay. An Oneirophysicist can, through intense effort, duplicate (or exceed) some of the healing offered in modern medical facilities, although at a severe cost to themselves.

Using the Intensive Care privilege, an Oneirophysicist can sacrifice his own health for that of their patient. The results are astounding; each turn, the Oneirophysicist spends a point

of Willpower and a single point of the patient's aggravated damage is reduced to lethal, lethal damage is reduced to bashing, or bashing damage is healed entirely (which damage is healed is at the Oneirophysicist's discretion). The cost, however, is equally great; for every level of damage reduction, the Oneirophysicist takes a point of lethal damage himself. This inflicted damage cannot be avoided through defense, armor or any other means. Attempts to negate the damage transferal also negate the healing process, leaving the patient as severely injured as he was at the beginning of the treatment.

Damage incurred through the use of Intensive Care is just as painful to the healer as it was to the patient, and must be healed by the Oneirophysicist naturally over time; supernatural healing, dreamhealing to speed the healing process, mundane medical treatments or the use of goblin fruit such as amaranthine have no effect. It is entirely possible for an Oneirophysicist to kill himself by injudicious use of this privilege.

### *Rumors of the Order of the Oneirophysicists*

- There is a branch of the Oneirophysicists that they don't talk about. One that uses the entitlement's knowledge of dream-healing to harm, rather than heal. Those Nightmares can cause injury, disease or insanity in those the Order finds fault with. They do their work so well that no one can prove the results weren't natural flaws in their victim's body or psyche.

- The Order trades in dreams, harvesting those that seem likely to reap the highest return in Goblin Markets. One Autumn Court Darkling bought a vial that was supposed to contain a really horrifying dream; turns out it was the memory of herself being mind-raped by one of the Nightmares. The bastard fucked with her dream, then ripped it out and sold it to the highest bidder. She couldn't remember until she re-lived it. Then she couldn't forget.

- Oneirophysicists can turn humans or changelings into sleepwalking slaves. Sometimes they make you into zombies; you can't remember who you are or what you were before and you exist only to serve them. Other times, and this is the really scary stuff, they'll just plant a seed in there that ripens until the time is right and then the next thing you know you're pulling a gun on the president or running naked in Times Square. You let someone into your mind, and you never know what is going to happen from there on out. It's just not worth the risk.



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