

The Faerie Ring

Along the Twisting Way

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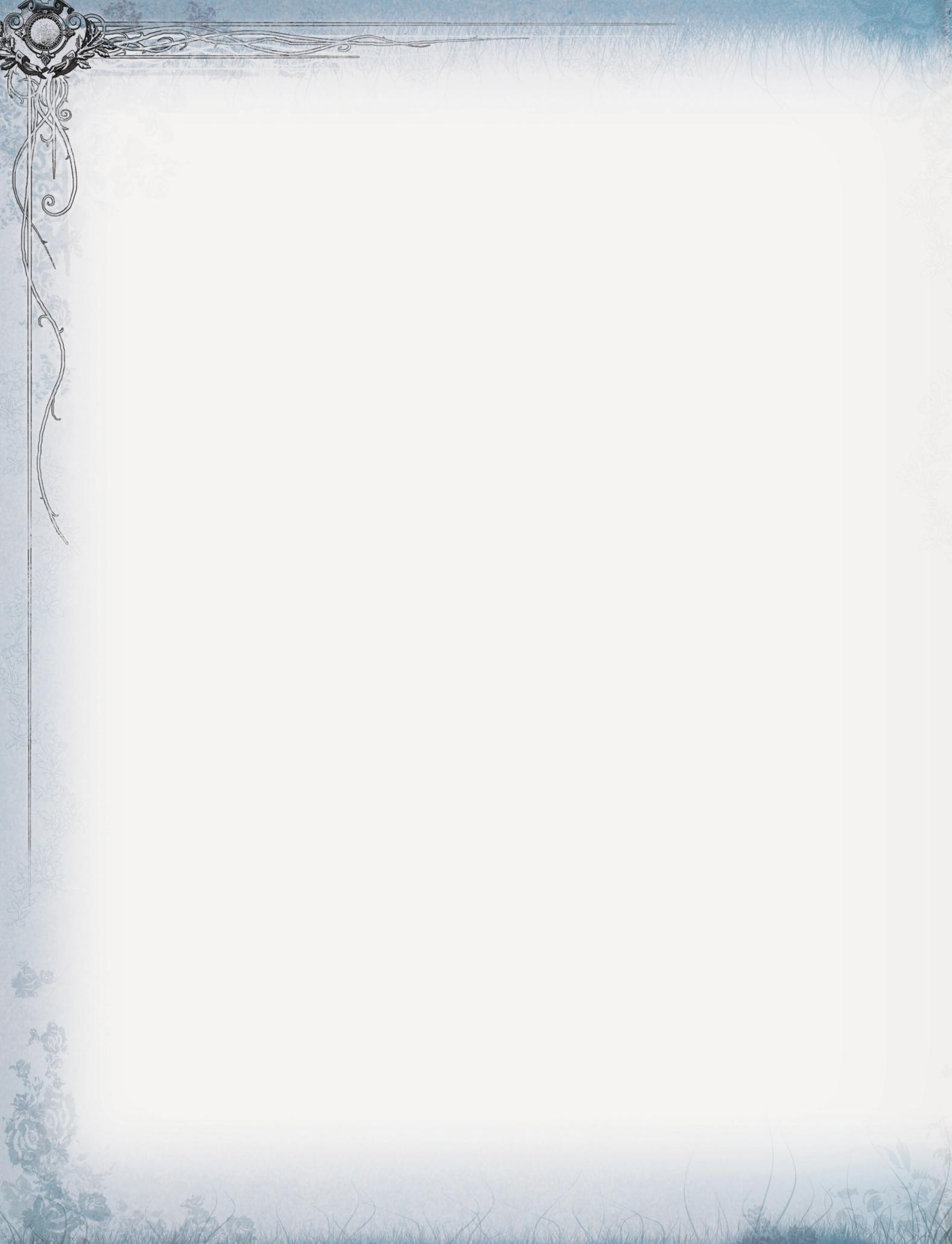
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A Brief History: The Fey, Faerie, and Fairy Tales



a foreword

*Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,
For I would ride with you upon the wind,
Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,
And dance upon the mountains like a flame.*

—William Butler Yeats,
“The Land of Heart’s Desire”

By Jeff Grubb

Let's go back to the earliest years, to before the roll of dice, before the platonic solids, and even before Plato himself. Way back to when the gods were responsible for the lightning and the thunder.

The fey were there. They were unseen, spiritual creatures—always present, always lurking at the corners of our vision. They were responsible for effects that did not seem to have causes. They haunted our buildings and dogged our steps. They were always watching . . . and waiting.

They went by a plethora of local names and had a bevy of regional habits. Some washed their hats in the blood of their victims. Some knocked the stones deep within the mines. Many would lure the unwary and unwilling to their dooms. Some of them gave their names to other, more tangible, more terrestrial creations—dwarves and elves and kobolds and goblins and gnomes. Ultimately, in those earliest of days, the fey could claim kinship with the Fates themselves, and like the Fates, they could move among mortals, working their deadly and capricious magics.

Indeed, Faerie was a place for the fey, much like a nunnery was a place for nuns and a herony was a place for herons. It was where the fey were when they weren't here. It was where the fey lived, where they plotted, and where they ruled. And if you happened to find your



way there, well, too bad for you.

We called them the Fair Folk and the Little People although their power was not little and their attitudes were often far from fair. They were not worshipped so much as they were propitiated. Bowls of milk and small cakes were left out, not in hopes of reward but as payment, so these spirits would turn their attentions elsewhere and leave those who believed in them in peace. They were little gods, masters of domains that only extended as far as they could reach and for as long as they chose to pay attention.

These ancient fey were by turns both noble and mischievous, both superior and stealthy, both wise and capricious. This dualism has remained with them

through the ages. Shakespeare presents us both with royal Oberon and Titania and with



prankish Puck. They had the wisdom of things unseen and the mercurial selfishness to get their way.

By the Victorian era, though, the fey diminished, both literally and physically. This was a time of rings of stones or mushrooms ascribed to the power of these people, and when portrayed (or even photographed), they were small and childish and winged and in no way a threat to the greater world. So they threatened to diminish into nothingness. They became cautionary figures in old folktales and creatures to entertain children. Fairy tales lost their fearsome edge, and the word itself became a hallmark for the childlike and the imaginary. The fey entered the nursery and threatened never to leave.

JRR Tolkien sheered the elves clean off from the rest of the fey, hewing more tightly to noble Oberon than to flighty Puck. They were magical and mighty and benign, and their time had come and gone. And they were disappearing themselves. Tolkien, though he hewed the elves from the rest of their fey brethren, also split them into twain as well: there were the wood elves of *The Hobbit* and the high elves of *The Lord of the Rings*, which would have repercussions further down the line.

Fired by a growing interest in fantasy in the 60s and 70s, Dungeons & Dragons arrived with the central casting of its player character races right out of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Now, elf was different from dwarf, and neither was an ethereal spirit. The dualism between high and low, between the noble elves and the more arboreal versions continued.

But the *pucks*, the *fairies*, the *little people* remained diminutive. Griggs, spriggans, nixies, pixies, leprechauns, quicklings, dryads, and all manner of other regional folktales

were now catalogued and defined—and always in their smallest and most benign forms. They filled slots and environments, but they were always more cute than dangerous, more irritating than perilous. Having already been romanticized, the little people were now in danger of being quantified and demystified entirely.

And that changes here. The dark side of the fey—including the sidhe and the courts Seelie and Unseelie—has always remained as a shadow cast by the encouraged brightness of the fey. They have always been wonderful and awful in the traditional meaning of those words—brimming with wonder and power, invoking awe in those who encounter them (and survive). With this volume of fey lords and fey lands, the old straight paths are brought back up to the surface, and the deadly nature of the fairies and their rulers is made clear.

But indeed, where do the fey rule? The old Celtic tales tell of sunken kingdoms and realms beneath the barrows, but in the catalogued world of Dungeons & Dragons, where would a truly fairy tale kingdom belong? The organization of the Great Wheel of the Outer Planes had a large number of advantages, but it also had the disadvantage that it would be difficult to add anything to it once it was in place. Yes, there was an outer plane of Arborea, but the elven gods of Arvandor were time-sharing with the Greek gods of Olympus, and besides, its placement made it more Good than Chaotic. It was a place of gods and faithful petitioners, more solemn and less deadly, perhaps, than the roads that the fey walked.

So that left the demiplanes—small chunks of unreality, bits of extraplanar real estate where a particular fey lord could manage some small kingdom. A more fitting place for their wild craziness, but again, the fey face the threat of being diminished, confined to a lesser location in the greater scheme of things.

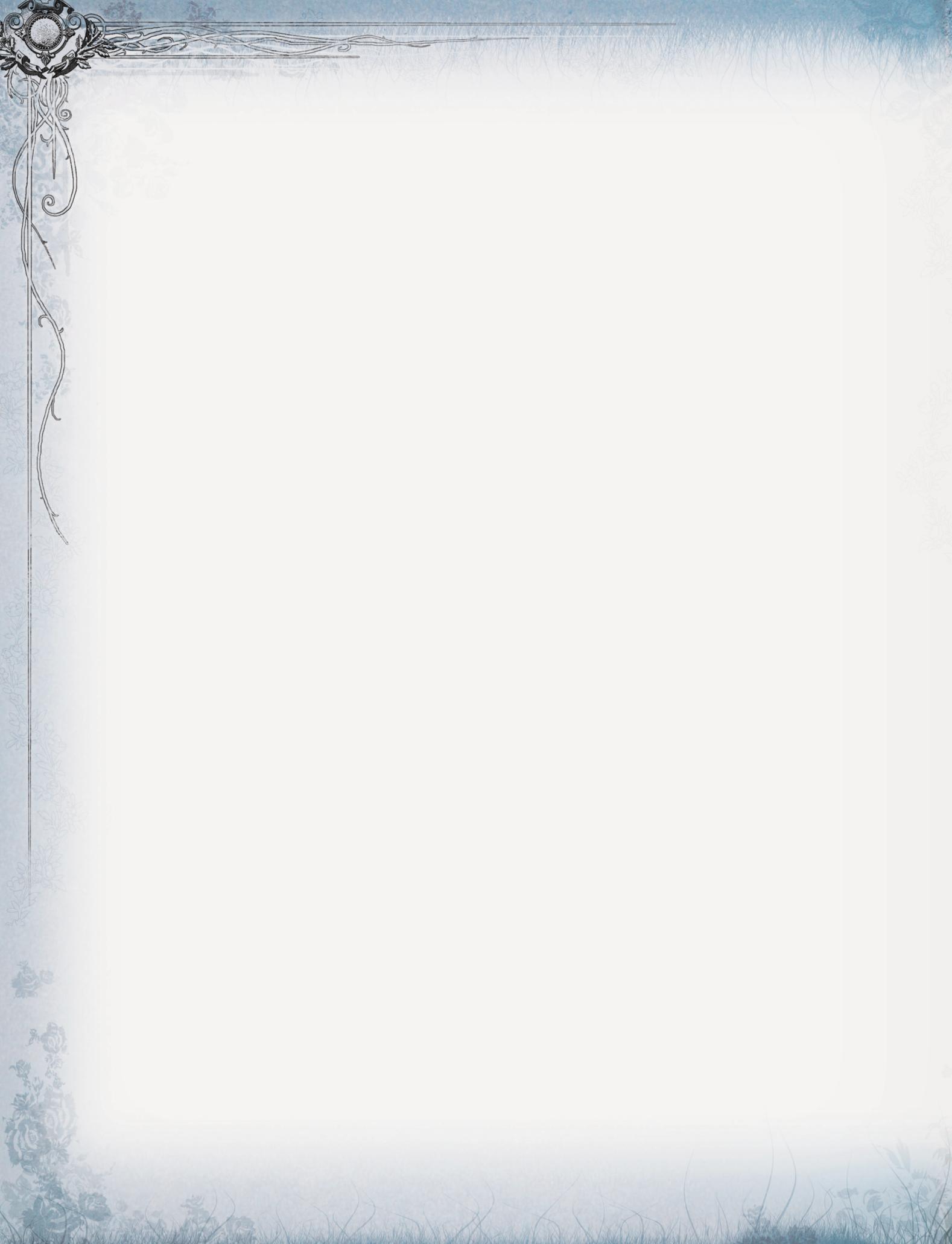
Yet in the Faerie Ring, we look at the fey and their worlds in a different fashion. Now, those old demiplanes are knitted together into a new fabric. Here are Hob, Manitou, and Red Jack, and the lands of Purgatory, the Eternal Twilight, and Shambala. Here are empires worthy of the fey lords. More than mortals but not quite gods, unfettered by mortal morals, the fey

lords rule their lands utterly and often cruelly.

And it breaks the shackles of European visions of the fey, for these spirits have been world-wide in our mythologies, and they come from all corners of their lands to seek proper respect and propitiation.

The kindly ones are back, and they are far from kindly. The wee folk have returned, and they are not as wee as centuries of propaganda would have you believe. They are as dangerous a group of lords and ladies as you would ever care to encounter, and they control their lands. Woe to any mortal who crosses them without their permission.

But of course, you have that chance. Go right in. I won't stop you.



In Defense of the Fey



a preface

[E]very time a child says, “I don’t believe in fairies,” there is a fairy somewhere that falls down dead.

—JM Barrie,
Peter Pan; or, the Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up

By Scott Gable

We’ve never really had an overabundance of gaming material for the fey. Of course, there have been a few standout pieces here and there, but they seem so few, especially when compared to the quantities available for the various humanoid races and outsiders. Why should this be the case? At my table, for instance, players and GMs alike would have eaten up more fey.

So was planted the seed for the Faerie Ring.

But how to start? So many questions arise . . .

What are the fey? In flavor and crunch, what are they? How do they fit with everything else? Where do they live? What do they do when they’re not tormenting adventurers? Why do they torment adventurers?

What is their story? The fey must have a story just as anyone else does. What is their history? Where have they been, and where are they going? Who are the important personalities of the fey? How do they relate with the rest of the multiverse?

Where are the others? Most of our fey are currently built from a very select portion of folklore and mythology—primarily European, largely Celtic and Germanic. This is great material, but what about other sources of inspiration?

Well then. Done and done. Easy peasy. Time to see what might be. Dragons are dandy, and fiends are fine; but fey are feisty, ferocious, finicky, flighty, flirtacious,

fractious, frenetic, frightful, furtive, and fussy—all at the same blessed time.

CROWING A FAERIE RING

The plan was clear: somehow, make the fey awesome. How to attempt that? What were the fey to us?

Define the Fey: In defining the fey, we actually expand our options. A presumed definition for fey might currently be “those little tricksters from folklore.” Unfortunately, there’s little room to expand beyond that. If given a more precise definition, it should actually be easier to create new paths for the fey—not excluding what came before but building upon it.

First and foremost, it’s important to acknowledge that the fey are *different*. They don’t think the same way as we do. Theirs is not always a morality that we can understand. They are more than the chaotic tricksters of legend. They are complicated. A lawful fey should be just as valid as a chaotic one. There is just as much variety in their personalities from individual to individual as there is in humans—perhaps more.

Some are utterly alien to us. Odd as it may sound, the fey share more with the cosmic horror of HP Lovecraft, in *some* ways, than the majority of evil outsiders. The outsiders of the game are defined by ideals: idealized Good and Evil, Chaos and Law. The fey are not, instead typically being viewed as completely amoral creatures. Lovecraft’s horror was always about our insignificance in the face of uncaring, alien intelligence. That sounds kind of feylike to me. Well, it’s time to unleash that overwhelming, amoral tide of fey!

Broaden the Fey: The term *fairy* may have come from Western Europe, but that doesn’t mean that other cultures don’t have equivalent notions. Call them fairies, spirits, yokai, peri; they’re all over the place.

And it only makes sense that all of these fey interact with one another. A given humanoid culture may only know of a handful of fey, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t others out there. Just because a farmer has only seen a leprechaun doesn’t mean a kitsune is any less real. You can see this in such works as Neil Gaiman’s *The Sandman*, in which all myths can be connected (whether fey or not): Bast (let’s say an outsider or god) freely interacted with Titania (a fey sovereign), for

instance. It wasn’t as if any one culture’s ideas had any more sway over another’s.

Give Them a Story: Just making the fey have more monster entries, though, isn’t going to make them more compelling. For that, you need to tell a story. You need to paint a history as if these personalities have always been there. You need to introduce conflict, give them a reason to exist. You need to tie them together, so they have a framework in which to live and breathe.

The accounts of Lafcadio Hearn, the folktales about Baba Yaga, the stories of the Brothers Grimm: this is how a mythos is built.

It’s time for the fey. This is our “Feynomicon.”

USING THE FAERIE RING

The Faerie Ring is many things, mixing and building a new, detailed world of the fey. We begin the journey here, in the *Along the Twisting Way Campaign Guide*, building initially around the strongest personalities of the faerie realms, developing a new mythology with new fey options.

Campaign Guide: At its core, this is a sourcebook or even a mini-setting. What’s a *mini-setting*? In this case, that’s a section of a larger setting. An expansive and developing “cog” that you can slide seamlessly into place in your current favorite setting, providing new, rich forays to the lands of the fey. It’s a corner of your greater world devoted to the fey that you can pull from whenever you desire: a growing world that can be tied into your own game, complete with new rules, NPCs, plot seeds, monsters, and more.

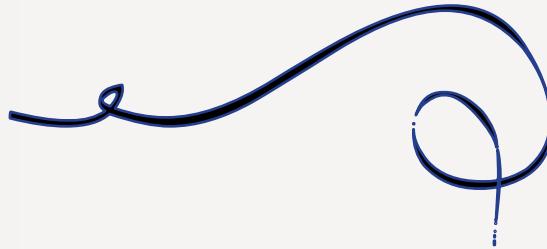
Player’s and Magic Guides: There are other books as well, such as the *Along the Twisting Way Player’s Guide* and the *Along the Twisting Way Magic Guide*, to expand with playable races and other character options—all centered on the fey.

Fiction: There is even an anthology, *By Faerie Light* (published by Broken Eye Books), of short stories inspired by the Faerie Ring.

And if you’re feeling like something truly different, as the Faerie Ring expands, you could adventure entirely within its boundaries.

Ready for the fey? They’re ready for you.

The Realms of the Fey



an introduction

*The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:
Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.*

—William Shakespeare,
A Midsummer Night's Dream (V.i)

Perhaps, the best place to start would be discussing the basics of this cosmos in which we must all share space. Let me build you a map . . .

COSMOLOGY

The Outer Planes: Looking at the typical model of the multiverse, we see the Outer Planes forming its outermost sphere. These planes are held to be the domain of the gods, of morality, and of final reward and retribution. And they are of so very little use to the fey. If they were smart, humanity would take the same lesson.

The Inner Planes: Just inside the Outer Planes are the Inner Planes. These are the very foundations of the Material Plane, the raw material from which everything else is forged. This is matter and energy churning to a cosmic tune in service of all things material—the bones and blood, if you will, of the Material Plane. In this fey's opinion, these planes are not terribly welcoming . . . or interesting, for that matter. Let us pass on.

The Material Plane: Arguably, the heart of the multiverse. The Material Plane is commonly accepted as the center of everything, and it is where *you* call home. This all seems simple enough, but it gets complicated very quickly when you consider that

there is more to the Material Plane than simply your own world. Countless stars swarm the plane, and about each twirls a multitude of worlds. Beyond that, speculation by many a reliable source says there are alternate versions of your world and all those other worlds, continuously forking their way through time and space.

Without the Material Plane, the Inner Planes would have no purpose. Without it, the high-and-mighty Outer Planes would have no future, starving from a lack of belief, a lack of souls to feed them.

But above all, the Material Plane is a terrific source of amusement, and I can think of no greater purpose for its existence. I could go on and on, telling you things of this, your own plane of existence, that would shake you to the very core and melt your mind like wax. But such is not our object just now. Later, perhaps.

Transitive and the Preternatural Planes: Finally, we come to the point of our little tale. Largely misunderstood and oft ignored, the Transitive and Preternatural Planes are the playground of the fey. In fact, they are often collectively known as the Realms of the Fey. That's not to say that the Material Plane isn't important to the fey, but really, you live there already, and you hardly need *me* to provide a map to your own backyard.

THE TRANSITIVE PLANES

The Transitive Planes are the Astral, Ethereal, and Shadow Planes. A convenient grouping of planes based entirely on the humanoid fascination with the concept of *utility*, for these planes are known—and named—for their usefulness in travel, both within the Material Plane and beyond it.

Those more interested in essence than utility would label these as part of the Preternatural Planes, viewing the Transitive Planes as simply highly specialized specimens on the spectrum that is the wide variety of Preternatural Planes. After all, many of the Preternatural Planes are just as accessible to travel as the Transitive: Dream itself comes immediately to mind. The more traditionally minded, while perhaps aware of these facts, keep the Transitive Planes

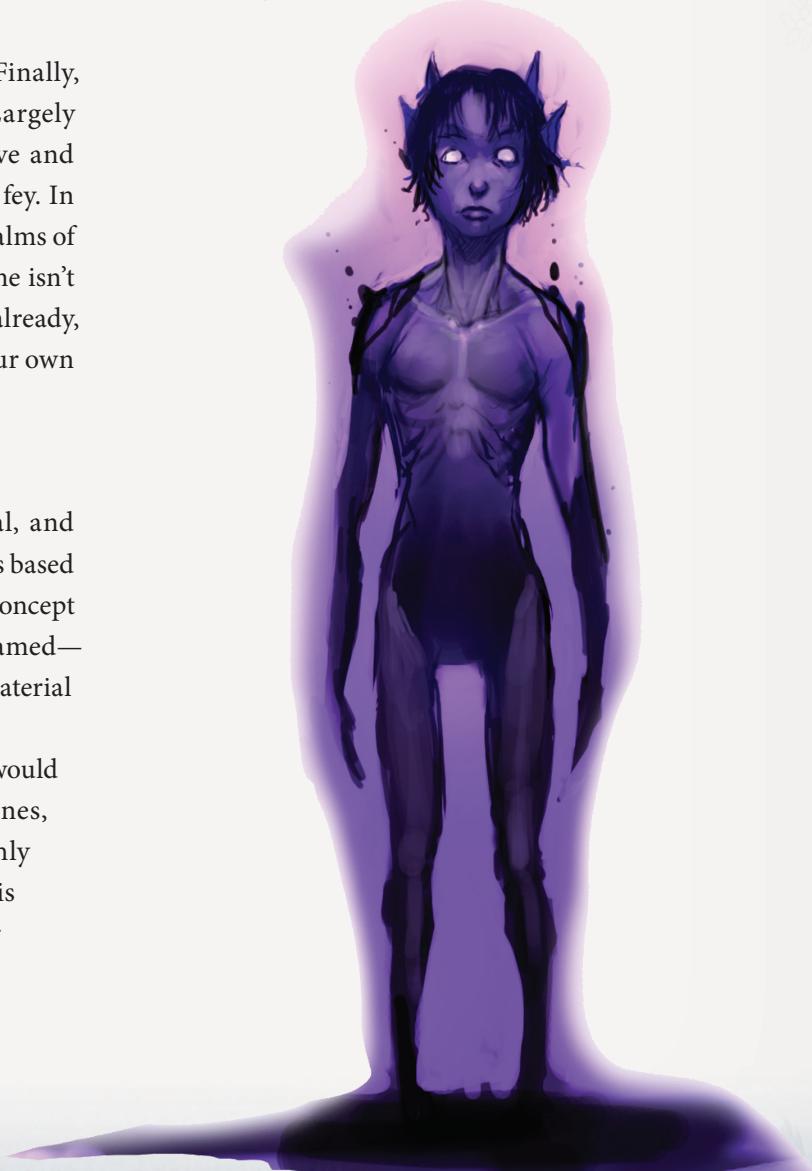
separate as their own distinct category, recognizing that these three planes have unusual characteristics that set them apart. But really, what plane doesn't?

To be clear, from here on when I refer to Preternatural Planes, that includes the Transitive Planes. Perhaps, it's the perceived lack of utility in the other Preternatural Planes that have led to their obscurity to mortals. We fey know better.

THE PRETERNATURAL PLANES

Ah, the Preternatural Planes. A vast array of planes—countless in number and constantly changing—sharing a complex relationship with the Material Plane. The Preternatural Planes are inextricably linked to the Material

Plane,



Dear Titus,

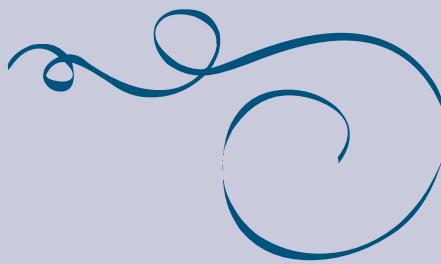
Originally, I had no intention of responding to your query, let alone honoring your request. There is certainly little love between the fey—my brethren—and humanity. And, really, what would it accomplish?

Needless to say, I've had a change of heart. I have come to appreciate that sharing my knowledge and insight with you might go far. Not in the useless notion that you harbor of bringing our peoples together, but in instilling the proper respect—and perhaps even a little fear—for us. Humanity knows so very little, after all. I believe they need a glimpse of what is out there in order to better appreciate their own insignificance.

More selfishly, I am limited by the scourge of time—though perhaps not as much as you. The fey are so scattered and diverse that even being one of their own, I could not hope to catalogue them all in one lifetime. Together, perhaps we can learn a bit more about the fey.

So where to begin? Perhaps by laying the foundations . . .

—Zheddo the Bluetongue,
Most Knowledgeable Sage-in-Exile
of the Darkling Dominance



existing on its very edges and orbiting like moons. Sheathing the Material Plane, they dance around it in complex patterns, each plane's cycle as unique as the plane itself. At one extreme is the Astral Plane, stubborn and still, content to fill its given role and never budge its course. Others go so far as to periodically overlap and coexist with the Material Plane. And just as the analogous moons, the planes are constantly waxing and waning in relation to the Material Plane, advancing and receding in their influence.

Were the Preternatural Planes around from the beginning, born from the same events that shaped the Material Plane—sibling planes, if you will? Or were

the Preternatural Planes created one by one, well after the Material Plane was spawned and in response to key triggers, spontaneously erupting from the Material Plane itself? As a whole, it's unclear. However, some number of the Preternatural Planes have arisen in recorded history, seemingly created from nothing. Others have been annihilated, every trace of their existence obliterated. A pity that our information on both processes, and what triggers them, is woefully incomplete.

Some of the more daring scholars have even suggested that the Material Plane as we know it is only *one* Material Plane of many—the current one.

According to this line of thought, eventually one of the Preternatural Planes will take the Material Plane's place as the dominant regime while the current Material Plane falls into succession as the newest Preternatural Plane—just as had befallen its predecessor—in an eternal cycle. Perhaps one of the fey's worlds will one day take over the realms currently dominated by your people. A delightful prospect, is it not?

Whatever the case, the Preternatural Planes, with the exception of the Astral Plane, are entangled so closely with the Material Plane that they often behave as a single, highly complex plane. Perhaps the Preternatural Planes are simply *layers* in a vaster Material Plane within which what we now call the Material Plane is but the dominant layer—for now, anyway.

For the most part, the Preternatural Planes (or Preternatural Realms) are reasonably similar to the Material Plane, sharing many qualities but for a

significant emphasis on some force or characteristic. The Shadow Plane, for instance, resembles a Material Plane engulfed and twisted by shadow. Planar traits can vary widely, of course, and some Preternatural Planes are so bizarrely idiosyncratic that they seem baffling and unsettling to those from more "normal" realms. Scholars busily try to make sense of it all, of course, using science and magic to seek patterns to the mysteries, plotting the vastness of unlimited realities on complex maps and in intricate orries that seek to mirror reality itself. Some secrets, however, may not be coaxed away from the selfish planes so easily, and it can be perilous to pry.

A few of the Preternatural Planes follow.

Aralu (or Gaol of Always): The endless subterranean labyrinths of Aralu serve as a terrible, secret prison for the fey. No one admits to knowing its origins although, of course, one hears rumors. I'm told the chambered

Design Notes: The Preternatural Planes

Why is there a need for the Preternatural Planes?

There's a twofold answer to this question as to why the Preternatural Planes should be deemed important enough a concept to develop. The first reason is generic in scope. It's nice to think that there's a place somewhere in the multiverse that is a suitable fit for *any* kind of story. That, no matter what kind of tale you want to tell in your games, there's a place for it within the rules system.

For instance, what about an insanely massive jungle with miles-high trees, no sight of land or sky, and cultures that rise and fall without ever leaving its branches? You could try to shoehorn such a realm in somewhere—perhaps a new continent? But then you may be concerned about how that would affect the rest of your world. Perhaps as an outer plane? But suddenly you're faced with a question of good and evil or order and chaos that you may not have wanted. Perhaps a demiplane somewhere? But that may feel tacked on. The Preternatural Planes were created to provide a place for a type of adventure that may be hard to place otherwise. Likewise, concepts for planes of dreams and mirror worlds and similarly irregular locales never seem to find a solid place to sit in the multiverse. The Preternatural Planes enable you to include these places in a way that feels more natural to your cosmology.

The second reason is more about the fey, specifically. They just never seem to have had a place to call their own. Where are the "Otherworlds" and "Underworlds" of fairy tale?

The idea of Preternatural Planes provides a place to have adventures that don't fit comfortably anywhere else, and it provides a home for the fey. This is a purely optional element that is not required to enjoy and utilize the other elements in this book.

caverns seem to extend to forever, no one knowing just how far or the number of prisoners held within. Many of the inhabitants are artifacts of forgotten ages. What secrets they must hold.

Dream (or Dreamtime, Dreamlands, Plane of Dreams): A meandering but pervasive realm of dreams and nightmares, this plane connects all those entities with the capacity for dream. A constantly changing realm, whose natives flit along, following the currents of dream.

The Eternal Twilight: When many speak of the “Faerie Realms” or some similar appellation, the Eternal Twilight is what they truly mean. Considered by most of my people to be the heart of the fey, its idyllic lands of gorgeous, untouched wilds call fey to its embrace like nothing else. As its name suggests, the plane is eternally sheathed in the spectrum of muted shades that make up dusk and dawn.

In one way or another connecting to more Preternatural Planes than any other plane, the Twilight serves as an important crossroads. Because of this, the fey deem it the center of their world. A massive continent at its center known as the Embassy serves as neutral ground where the various courts meet, whether in grievance or revelry, in accord with ancient treaties.

Those lands peripheral to the Embassy are claimed by various of the more powerful fey lords and are anything but neutral ground, being typically strongly contested.

Forever Sea (or Isles of the Blessed): A sea not of water but of sky. A vast multitude of islands, each teeming with its own rich and seemingly unique ecosystem, float in the wind. They cluster into archipelagos and drift in the complex airstreams.

Glassway: Made up entirely of seemingly living crystal and glass, this plane is among the strangest of the Preternatural Planes with truly alien vistas. And, perhaps, the most beautiful I’ve ever visited. Here, living glass trees cover crystalline mountain ranges as the refracting light permeates the whole realm in a dazzling cascade of color. An eerie and dangerous intelligence—slow, deep, and deliberate—seems to pervade the land.

Green Expanse: The greatest of all forests. Korapira

has planted her roots here, utilizing her demesne, the Heartwood, to broaden this plane’s reach and connect to all forests everywhere. Imperceptible to most, the influence of the Green Expanse is slowly driving all the remaining wild lands throughout the multiverse to reclaim those lands stolen by civilization.

Nowhere (or Plane of the Lost): Where do lost things go? Nowhere. All of the things ever lost can be found in Nowhere. And once things find their way to Nowhere, they typically stay. This junkyard realm is not an easy place to leave, for Mahu is the door, and he jealously guards what he considers his—which includes anything and everything within Nowhere. It is not just objects, though; creatures are caught within its borders as well, giving rise to odd ecologies as creatures of random races are forced to make do within the vast fields of junk.

Purgatory: A plane of lost souls, and not at all a pleasant place. To many, Purgatory is thought inseparable from Sheol (see below), the latter existing as the Shores of Purgatory. In truth, Purgatory is a kind of soul trap and exists in an almost parasitic relationship with Sheol. Those souls that enter Purgatory (or are consumed by it, as some say) are trapped there, prevented from reaching the Outer Planes to finish out their journey. While there, they continue to behave as if still alive. This has led to the development of a unique culture, a hodgepodge of all the various cultures to which those trapped souls once belonged. The plane’s most noted feature is the enormously vast necropolis of Perdition. Here, the resident lost souls are lorded over by mysterious fey, the so-called angels of death. Are they jailers—or are they prisoners, too? All the plane’s inhabitants cling to mythical claims of a path out of Perdition but continue in their unending unlife as its citizens.

Sea of Rahab: As if entrapping the darkest and most terrible depths of the sea, the Sea of Rahab is a watery nightmare created during the fall and rebirth of the Chaosbringer, Rahab. Forever, she occupies her throne within, choreographing the chaos. Of late, her twisted children stir more than usual and are beginning to cast their gaze beyond the borders to which they had grown accustomed.

Sheol: The front door of death, a brief rest for the recently deceased before they move on. Call it a staging area for the afterlife, if you will. This is death in its purest state, free of punishment or reward. Many souls stay only very briefly, some longer—waiting for another to join them, trying to complete some unfinished business, vainly hoping for resuscitation. It's unclear what decides one's readiness to move on; perhaps merely accepting the inevitable. Some never do, instead eking out a monotonous unlife in the shadowed wastes, a pale attempt at recreating a life once lived but now never to return. Such deniers risk being drawn into Purgatory every day they malinger, but without the desire to move on or the ability to reclaim the living world, there is little else. A few manage to claw their way back to the Material Plane to haunt the living.

The Wasteland: On the surface, the Wasteland is a blasted land supporting nothing. Constant giant hurricanes ravage back and forth across its cracked, parched earth, pockmarked with craters and scoured by wind. Beneath the surface, though, those who insist on surviving here have secured themselves. And these Hidden People more than survive; they flourish in vast underground cities.

THE FEY

Most cultures easily recite stories of the fey. From region to region, the tales vary greatly but always portray these creatures in the most colorful ways. On the surface, the accounts seem little more than entertainment and whimsy with perhaps a moral interjected here and there. Concrete details are scarce and, more often than not, so contradictory or ridiculous as to be easily dismissed. However, those most intent on their study eventually realize that the fey are more diverse and complicated than ever imagined. For every truth you try to pin on the fey, there is an exception—not so unlike you humanoids.

ORIGINS

The fey are tied inextricably to the Material and Preternatural Planes—one presumes, even, they emerged from the same churning vastness, the same

sea of primordial chaos and cosmic order, from which these very planes arose.

Many of the fey's own myths recount this creation as an intentional act performed by the planes. These tales paint the fey as the eyes, the fingers, and the fists of the planes. It should be noted here that their personification of the planes is typically as an amoral and uncaring juggernaut, not the vague benevolence held by many humanoid cultures.

Other myths hold that the fey are merely by-products in the incessant process of change these planes go through. In this view, sloughed-off planar debris from the earliest of times gained sentience as the first fey, who proceeded to carve out a life for themselves as free-willed entities.

It had been all too easy to discount these myths as fancy, but our recent understanding of the sovereigns forces us to reconsider every shred of these myths.

PHILOSOPHY

Frequently, the fey are mashed into just a handful of archetypes, ranging from the stalwart defender of nature to the psychotic child-thief. Certainly, these traits exist in the fey, just as they do in the humanoid races, but it's just not that easy. Nothing related with the fey is ever easy. I will repeat: we fey are much more varied and complex than such simple portraits would suggest. Hells, any given fey has likely acted out both those extreme personas at multiple points in their long life, along with a million other personas.

There are only two generalizations I will admit to regarding my people. The first is that we do not think in the same ways you humanoids generally do. By your standards, the fey are completely amoral and alien. We may follow a code of conduct within our own cultures, but any basis we have for right and wrong exists entirely outside of the frame of reference of most humanoids. Typically, we fey view you in the same ways that you view animals. Even those fey that favor humanoids likely view you as little more than favorite pets. Present company excluded, of course.

The second generalization is that the fey are very individualistic. That is not to say that we are the completely random and reclusive creatures as so often

portrayed. Quite a few of us, in fact, belong to strongly disciplined cultures and rigid social hierarchies. And, very much like your folk, we have beliefs and opinions that are not identical to others of our race. We make choices. We do not necessarily share the same philosophical and moral underpinnings. You never know what you're going to get with any given fey. That's what makes my people so very interesting . . . and so very dangerous.

The fey are never simple. I can say without pride but as simple fact that we are among the most complex entities in existence.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

The sheer variety of fey makes it impossible to effectively generalize. Fey live in countless habitats and are at home anywhere in the Material and Preternatural Planes. Of course, there are exceptions in that some fey have an incredibly strong tie to a single plane. The mogwoi, for example, share an extremely strong connection with the Material Plane. Attuned to the plane, they—and those others tied to their respective planes—possess a level of kinship with their homeland greater than most fey. Some say they are merely extensions of the plane itself, a guess that may come closer to the truth than generally believed.

Social structures of the fey, too, see incredible diversity and cover all of the possible social structures seen in the humanoid cultures. Many fey follow paths wholly different from yours and exhibit behavior that would come across as strange and even shocking in a mere humanoid . . . sorry; I mean, in a humanoid such as yourself.

ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY

Fey typically exhibit forms and features similar to those of natural creatures, whether humanoid, animal, or plant. Often, these characteristics mix in individuals in what, to you, must seem strange indeed, creating beastly or plantlike mosaics of life. Though tantalizingly similar in ways to what you know, they unsettle your sensibilities all the more for their juxtaposition to your expectations. Physiologically, most fey are very similar to the natural forms you're

used to: they eat, sleep, breathe, breed, and exhibit many other hallmark features of the natural world. Of course, again, these are merely generalizations; there exist many exceptions. For instance, most fey are what I believe you call “sexually dimorphic” and breed sexually, yet certain fey reproduce asexually. Of course, this is common in some of the simpler creatures of nature, but among humanoids, it’s unheard of—not so for the fey.

After the occasional difference in appearance, there also looms the fey’s propensity for astounding supernatural powers as a most notable difference between fey and “natural” creatures. Where do these powers come from? Prevailing theories suggest our very nature simply makes us more capable of tuning into the warp and weft of reality, the planes themselves, in order to perform miraculous feats of magic. We are nothing less than conduits for the power of the planes.

Finally, we should not overlook the odd phenomenon of fey adoption. Though normally not capable of such feats, natural creatures occasionally rise to a similar state of being, achieving wondrous ability. And, in so doing, they become fey.

VARIETY

Various subtypes, or families, of fey exist, some of which are explored further within the chapters of this volume. Others will be explored in future volumes. Just a few of those existing are listed below.

Changeling: Changelings were once something else, such as humanoid, or came from mixed parents. Twilight children are the best known of changelings.

Devata: A devata is a unique fey that has taken on the role of spirit guardian. They are typically individuals from any given race that have been chosen for—or tricked into—this esteemed role; however, some races, such as the lokapala, have given themselves entirely to this devotion.

Dream/Nightmare: The dream and nightmare fey are a unique, dichotomous family that calls the Dreamlands home. They flit through the multiverse, traveling the dreams of sentient creatures.

Fata: The fata fey each possess an uncanny ability to see through time and space—foretelling possible

futures, recounting distant pasts, viewing other worlds. Norns, furies, and twisted Decade number among them.

Geist: We fey can be a tenacious lot, and even death may not stop us. Rather than dying, some instead transform into another state, called a geist, in which they avoid—or postpone—their natural death. This can be a natural progression for certain fey races, a unique occurrence for a specific individual, or a forced, artificial process (as with Red Jack’s ghost foxes). Geists often form strong ties to certain creatures, objects, locales, or even concepts. (Technically, geists can form from any intelligent creature with a soul, but the fey seem especially attuned to the process.)

Gloom: A gloom is a fey that never should have been. These twisted horrors are remnants of tragic accidents and horrible experiments.

Gnomekin (Elemental): Elemental fey are a family that has, in addition to their ties to the Material and Preternatural Planes, a link to one or more of the Inner Planes. There are few elemental fey left, for a great war ravaged their kind in which the salamanders violently renounced their ties to the fey realms, destroying the ancient gnomes in the process. The sylphs and undines remain, but only as a pale shadow of their former glories.

Despite the tragedy of their past, with the destruction of the ancient gnomes, gnomekin—such as far darrig, black hats, redcaps, and cluracan to name a few—have become quite prolific.

Lost: The lost fey are a sad case indeed, one which we don’t like to talk about. These fey technically no longer exist, having been destroyed or in some other way lost and forgotten. But that doesn’t stop them from influencing the multiverse and, on occasion, even appearing briefly as vagrants in time. The ancient gnomes are typically the first of the lost that spring to mind.

Mogwoi: The mogwoi are an ancient family, perhaps the oldest among the fey. While many fey have a connection specifically to the Material Plane, the mogwoi’s link is more profound: they actually grow more and more dependent on the plane as they get older. Mogwoi exist on the Material Plane in remote regions, typically, away from prying eyes. The oldest

are unable to leave the Material Plane—even for the Preternatural Planes. These effects are less insistent for younger mogwoi.

Peri: The peri are a family of fey that, in addition to its ties to the Material and Preternatural Planes, has a link to one or more of the Outer Planes. This may be through heritage, such as with the nephilim, or through some other process, such as those “fallen angels” the Grigori and the Hagfish.

Sidhe: The sidhe have taken a darker path than most. Their influence, typically unwanted, has reached far.

Yokai: The yokai are fey that have an especially strong association with nature—to the plants and animals, to the elements, to their environment, to each other.

HIERARCHY

All fey exist within a natural hierarchy of power. Certainly, there is always power to be earned or taken, with kings, dictators, and tribal elders willing to step forward to take it. Some power, however, is not so easily gained. This power comes from the blood, from the land, from the vagaries of fate. And it always chooses its own vessel.

SOVEREIGN

Sovereigns are the natural lords of the fey. These entities possess incredible power that they wield at their whim. They are not promoted from lesser fey but born directly from the very fabric of the Material and Preternatural Planes. Bits of extraneous reality periodically slough off from the planes, and just as in our most ancient fey creation myths, on rare occasions some of these bits take on a sentience of their own, becoming fey sovereigns.

This process can be very violent: Korapira’s birth left behind an enormous crater, though this particular sovereign birth is thought to have been exceptionally destructive. Each sovereign is believed to come into being in a different way: whether a devastating explosion, a fire from the sky, a virgin birth, a coalescing of shadows, or any other number of ways. However they come into being, sovereigns

are fully grown from birth, or achieve that state with extraordinary rapidity. All of their great innate power is there at their fingertips (for those who *have* fingertips) right from the beginning although they are not always fully capable of controlling it at first.

Sovereign births are quite rare with Korapira's being the only one recorded with any certainty within the last 1,000 years or so—perhaps within the last 10,000 years. It is also the only one to have been observed at the time (though most of the observers perished) or to have been documented with conclusive, extant validation in non-fey races' annals, the origins of other sovereigns being largely shrouded in myth.

Most sovereigns are extremely old and many, including all the mogwoi lords, predate the advent of the humanoid races on the Material Plane. Luckily, my people have been around quite a bit longer than yours, so we have been able to obtain a good deal of information on our sovereigns that would otherwise be lost. These entities are elusive and dangerous, seemingly inscrutable and very, very powerful. It is always wise to remember that even we do not know everything about them.

Some see the sovereigns as embodiments of various principles of nature. This may be true; I really cannot say. Although it seems a bit simplistic, so it must be wrong since we fey are never simple. But even if it's true, I pity the soul that thinks this knowledge will grant them any power over a sovereign.

Demesne: Sovereigns possess a connection with their demesnes from birth. These demiplanes are an extension of themselves: sovereigns are either born in the demesne's tender grasp or immediately hear its call and seek it out. Their demesne is specifically linked to them. It is theirs. Its traits and landscape are completely controlled and alterable by the sovereign, slowly molding and remolding in tune to each sovereign's subconsciousness over the course of a lifetime or rapidly shifting in response to conscious manipulation.

Sovereigns can travel back and forth from their demesnes at will and seemingly even draw power from them when needed. Each demesne can exist either as a pocket dimension (a demiplane with attributes according solely to its sovereign's whim) or superimposed over part of another plane, again at the sovereign's whim. For most sovereigns, this latter method is typically only possible with the Material and Preternatural Planes serving as host planes although certain lords have been known to travel the multiverse, latching onto whatever plane is available. When superimposed, the host plane is pushed from the demesne's insertion point to its periphery, possibly creating an incongruous seam. Kept too long like this, the demesne risks becoming a permanent addition to the host plane: Manitou's abdicated lands, for instance, have long since "taken root."



Mogwoi sovereigns are alone in possessing no true demesnes. However, they can form permanent links with portions of the Material Plane; such a territory acts as a surrogate demesne and, indeed, is typically called their demesne. These mogwoi territories are typically remote and dangerous. Though not as malleable as the true demesnes of other sovereigns, they still respond and lend their power to their mogwoi lords in a limited capacity.

Should a sovereign be permanently destroyed, his or her demesne collapses if a demiplane. However, those demesnes that have bonded to another plane—and, of course, mogwoi territories—remain but become twisted and warped.

Servitors and emissaries and other favored creatures of a sovereign typically have free passage into and out of that sovereign's demesne. Others, however, may have more trouble.

Servitors: One of a sovereign's earliest actions is typically to create servitors, something they seem almost compelled to do. Sometimes these creations are individuals, sometimes entire races, but always fey. Each servitor begins life as an autonomous entity although it may choose or be forced into servitude soon after. No matter the circumstances, all share a spiritual link to the sovereign that created them. What this means for a particular servitor is a personal matter.

Sovereigns typically perform this spectacular act of creation only once, for it takes much time and expends much of their initial essence. Servitors tend to take on certain aspects of their sovereign. Raised and bred to serve the sovereign's needs—whether out of respect, fear, or force—ultimately (barring special circumstances), they are nonetheless free-willed and make their own decisions.

Rogue servitors are usually unwelcome—and often

Dissecting the Fey

The various fey lords are analogous to the various lords of the outer planes. Just as demons and devils and angels have their own lords, those incredibly powerful entities whose reach threatens the gods themselves, so too the fey. The fey lords play the same “ecological” role as any lord of the outer planes.

The differences are largely the same as the differences between fey and demon, or fey and angel, or fey and any other outsider. The biggest differences can be summed up by what the base creatures represent: demons represent Evil and Chaos, angels represent Good, fey do not “represent” anything but themselves.

The fey are representations of neither Good nor Evil, Chaos nor Law, though any given individual fey may be good or evil, chaotic or lawful. Not to put too fine a point on it, we fey are a great gray morass of morality and ethics. And any given individual fey may espouse different beliefs and motivations at different points in his or her life—or even at different points in the week.

The hallmark of the fey, if such a thing exists, is complexity. We are unpredictable. But this is not the same as being chaotic, as is often presumed. Some fey have strict codes of honor or lead regimented or courtly lives that favor a more lawful bent (sometimes known as the “iron silk,” those unwritten laws of courtly custom and etiquette to which all courtiers adhere). But even those lawful fey have a certain unpredictability about them—a certain *feyness*.

Simply, fey sometimes don't do what others (especially non-fey) expect. It doesn't change what they are; in truth, this *is* what they are. Fey do good things for bad reasons and bad things for good reasons. They are complicated and composed of a million, billion contradictions and motivations. In many ways, we fey are very much like the humanoids. Perhaps “more humanoid than the humanoids” would be an apt description.

enemies—in the lands of their former sovereign and their own kind. Though sovereigns may also command other creatures, they typically do not share the same connection with them as with servitors.

Emissary: Emissaries are powerful servants of the sovereigns. They can be created, like servitors; transformed from lesser creatures, like the Hagfish of Rahab; or be the sovereign's own offspring, like Puck. Most emissaries serve their sovereign of their own volition although some may have been pressed into service (details are usually unknown to all but the sovereign and emissary involved). They are a sovereign's right hand, functioning as inspiring lieutenants, trusted advisors, and wily ambassadors.

Mechanically, each emissary is a unique individual capable of channeling a portion of the sovereign's power for their own use. It is similar to the connection of a servitor to its sovereign but much stronger. It is not unknown for high-level adventurers to be granted emissary status by various sovereigns as a boon for extraordinary services rendered.

Quiddity: Sovereigns are born in a seemingly random fashion, apparently directed by the planes themselves. Sometimes, though, through incredible circumstances—powerful and ancient magics, reality-shifting cataclysms, intense emotion—similar entities known as quiddities arise (sometimes known as *artificial sovereigns* or *accidental sovereigns*).

Quiddities, unlike true sovereigns, are always created from a previous creature—which is almost always fey. Unlike sovereigns, they do not control demesnes or create servitors of their own, though they may still take lands and command armies as any normal creature. Despite this lack of some defining qualities of sovereigns, quiddities are still always extremely powerful.

The birth of a quiddity typically

entails either intense and painful emotion or tremendous violence, and the lives of quiddities usually follow similar patterns. Born of tragedy, they tend to burn ferociously bright, even brighter than sovereigns over short periods, and they heavily impact those along their trajectory. But they often flare out just as fast and bright, as one fey poet put it, “once they've said their piece.” It's thought they're impossibly focused and driven by something—greed, love, vengeance—and that this is the only thing keeping them going. Once it's gone, once their love is requited or their vengeance slaked or whatever purpose created them is served, they are finally released to oblivion. Or so the story goes.

If you remember that there has only been one sovereign born in the last millennium, it might prove enlightening to know that there have been seven known quiddities born in the last century alone. For some reason, this number seems to steadily climb through the centuries.



Well, that did not . . .

... go as well as I'd hoped."

"So what now?"

"Pfft . . . hells if I know."

The mogwoi trinity clustered around the dim candlelight. He knew this particular dimensional bolt hole well, having discovered it so so so long ago. It was ideal for recovery after a collapsed plan, to flee . . . whoever, or just to be alone in this forgotten place.

One of his selves threw his hands up in frustration.

"Hah hah!" Second laughed, falling backward and gleefully kicking his legs in the air.

Third shook his head solemnly before winking and issuing forth a soft snicker, moments before first rejoined.

Minutes, days, maybe even years passed as he bantered, quarreled, and laughed with himself, recollecting recent misadventures and those of eons past. This moment away from it all in his place—*their* place—was special.

"Pfft . . . !" All three stuck their tongues out and blew raspberries before taking turns hurling actual pieces of fruit into each others' mouths. The game was fun, but all games were fun, and really, that was the point of it all, wasn't it?

"Didn't we steal these from Mahu?" First asked, holding up one choice berry to the candle's flickering light.

The others shrugged and grinned, exposing teeth stained red with pulp.

"Mmmph . . . !" His unwilling guest angrily murmured against the gag in their mouth. Woven of silk and gold thread, gemstones

glittered amidst the embroidery. They'd stolen it from the altar of some grand high muckity-muck deity's cathedral a century earlier. Or might it have been the tablecloth of that one fat emperor that other time, or the coronation bib of that elf princess?

Flibbertigibbet—one of him—stuck out his tongue and gave another raspberry, breaking their collectively scattered train of thought on the matter.

Another of him checked the gag and the bindings, adjusted with an oddly, perversely reverent touch.

"Now, what was I doing?"

"Was I hiding from Mahu?"

"Yeah, after I'd broken his favorite scepter."

"No, that was years ago."

"Wasn't that yesterday?"

Another murmur rose from the bound party in their midst.

Flibbertigibbet's second self waved away the complaint. "Focus, Flibb, focus!"

"We have to find her. We have to!" Worry and panic welled up in all of his eyes.

"Remember, Flibb, remember!" Third held second's head as if peering into a scrying globe. "Where did I hide her?"

The question was there, and then, it was gone, subsumed below the mental waters that swam with all manner of irrational beasts, hungry for candy and clarity and rarely finding the latter.

"Hey, wasn't it funny years ago when Modo fell off that cliff?"

"When I pushed him? Yeah! That reminds me . . ."

"Mmmph . . .!" Their guest gave its loudest yet complaint, kicking out at one of third's shins. Missing, of course, but making a valiant attempt, nonetheless.

"Huh?" All three asked at once, turning to their captive in a singular moment of lucidity. They stared a moment until the candle sizzled and popped, dragging away their concentration like an angry moon upon the evening tide.

"Last one to Cockaigne has to juggle beehives!" First shouted with glee as he blinked out of existence with a loud pop.

"Material!" Shouted second as he scrambled to his feet. Laughing, he traced the outline of a door in the cavern wall and opened a very real one onto a heretofore tranquil backwater planet, dashing through and slamming it

closed behind him.

Watching his selves vanish, third opened his mouth and crammed his hands and feet in and down, noisily contorting and swallowing himself into nothingness with little more than a gurgle.

The moment was over and Flibbertigibbet was gone, vanished on another meandering, fruitless pursuit. The candle's light faded, and the cold returned. Silence descended, except for a soft sigh of proud resignation and the faint trickle of water on stone.

Alone in the gloom, once again, the Dark Mother's eyes glimmered.



flib
bertig
ibbet

Scattered and Scatterbrained

If once a man indulges himself in murder, very soon he comes to think little of robbing; and from robbing he comes next to drinking and Sabbath-breaking, and from that to incivility and procrastination. Once begun upon this downward path, you never know where you are to stop. Many a man has dated his ruin from some murder or other that perhaps he thought little of at the time.

—Thomas De Quincey,

“On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts”

Of flighty mind and ever craving attention and the thrills of new sights and new experiences, Flibbertigibbet wanders the planes, both Preternatural and Material—his mad creations most certainly tagging along, wandering wherever their lord travels.

Before he created the gremlins, of course, he wandered alone, so his mogwoi siblings were the primary targets of his devilry. Eventually, though, enraged by his practical jokes and incessant prattling, three of his mogwoi siblings grabbed hold of him and tore him apart.

Flibbertigibbet finds it challenging to be alone anymore.

Flibbertigibbet

This did not improve their fortunes.

This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet: he begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock; he gives the web and the pin, squints the eye, and makes the hare-lip; mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

—William Shakespeare,
King Lear (III.iv)

The gremlins, of which you are doubtlessly already familiar—in all of their various form and function—are a marauding, if not laughing, blight upon the planes wherever they wander, congregate, and simply amuse themselves. Ultimately, for all their potential for mayhem, they remain self-defeating. Time and again, they fall prey to their own short-sightedness, internal division, and wanton self-destructive whimsy. In this, they mirror their lord and progenitor, Flibbertigibbet.

MISPLACING MOTHER

Amongst the many stories that the fey tell, there are scattered hints of a Dark Mother. Considered apocryphal by most, these tales typically evoke her as a progenitor of the fey and, more specifically, as the mother of the mogwoi sovereigns. Strangely, for the small amount of information there is about the Dark Mother, it is all very consistent. She is said to have

birthed the Dark Ones, or the Dark Forty-Four—those mogwoi sibling sovereigns, including Hob (the oldest), Obidicut, Mahu, Modo, and Flibbertigibbet (the youngest).

The Dark Mother is, however, typically associated most closely with Flibbertigibbet, her youngest son, for it is always with him that her story stalls. As the tales tell us, from birth, Flibbertigibbet harassed his older siblings incessantly. Small and chattering, the mogwoi never ceased his practical joking and ribald play. To him, it was just great fun, a chance to laugh with family. But to the others, it was endless torment. Always, mother would step in and prevent the impending retaliation. For whatever reason, Flibbertigibbet decided one day to play a joke on the others by hiding their mother.

When the others discovered this, they were furious. They could find mother nowhere. They pressed Flibbertigibbet for information, but this scatterbrained fey had actually forgotten where he had hidden her. Without mother's staying hand, the siblings could take no more. Mahu, Modo, and Obidicut each grabbed a portion of Flibbertigibbet and pulled him apart, tearing him into three pieces. Unfortunately, this merely created three roughly identical Flibbertigibbets. The siblings held their hands from further abuse for fear of compounding their problems even further with even more obnoxious Flibbertigibbets running around.

Millennia have passed, and the Dark Mother remains hidden. On those rare occasions Flibbertigibbet remembers she's lost, he goes off looking; he still cannot remember where he put her. As the only mogwoi, along with his servitors, that can easily leave the Material Plane, he spends several decades at a time searching until inevitably forgetting what he's looking for.

MOCWOI NOT FOR SALE

It was the sundered Flibbertigibbet that visited Hob the day the matabiri were created. Flibbertigibbet had never realized that he could create life, and he left Hob's demesne with a new goal. He scoured the Material and Preternatural Planes for everything he would need: because of his being sundered and having his consciousness divided among three pieces, Flibbertigibbet, unlike the other mogwoi, can actually

travel to the Preternatural Planes as long as one of his selves stays on the Material Plane.

Having scoured the farthest reaches of the planes and having gathered everything in place, Flibbertigibbet proceeded to create. Though lacking the finesse to instill great intelligence in his creations, his skilled hands created the lively and fecund gremlins. These playful creatures rapidly multiplied and proceeded very nearly to bring the multiverse to its knees.

The gremlins expanded throughout the Material and Preternatural Planes, devouring all metal in their path. To many, they were a horrible nuisance that threatened to plunge whole societies back into an age of stone. To some, however, the gremlins proved cataclysmic.

Among the most greatly affected, the City of Gears—a massive city-plane of living, evolving gearworks and clockwork automata—was almost obliterated once it was discovered by the gremlins as they proceeded to devour the place. With the assistance of the matabiri, the Gear Keepers were able to push the gremlins out and forever seal the plane from gremlins. In the millennia since, the city has been slowly healing the damage, but it is still a shadow of its former glory. Under the pretense of goodwill toward Flibbertigibbet, during the making of the bitterclaw, the matabiri were able to limit the gremlins' fecundity, greatly curtailing their destructive potential.

BEING FLIBBERTIGIBBET

So many names a fool: Divided Sovereign, Fool King, Scattered Prince, Triune Folly, and several rather obscene ones that shouldn't be repeated here.

Flibbertigibbet cannot help but annoy others and play jokes on them. His incessant chattering alone is usually enough to drive others away. He takes great pleasure in executing his practical jokes and has a talent with complexity (which likely explains his fascination with all things mechanical) that often manifests in overly convoluted jokes, requiring several decades or more to reach their conclusions. Unfortunately, his memory is fleeting, and he often forgets about many of his ongoing jokes. As counterpoint to this love of intricate interactions and logical dependencies, his daily life is a study in buffoonery, and he is just as likely to fling feces

at anyone near him, as example.

Interactions: Driving others to distraction with his antisocial behavior seems to be his sole reason for being. Even his siblings are not above his attention, and they seldom tolerate his antics for long. It should be noted that, of all the siblings, Hob has never been the target of Flibbertigibbet's jokes and buffoonery.

Characteristics: Flibbertigibbet, or rather all three Flibbertigibbets share an identical appearance as well as a unified consciousness, despite the violence of his siblings when they tore him apart. Lean, lanky, and nearly always possessed of a leering, idiot grin, Flibbertigibbet bares minimal resemblance to his

gremlins. As opposed to their squat, fuzzy forms, he is entirely hairless, possessed of exaggeratedly long arms and spindly legs. Only his big ears and razor teeth show the family resemblance.

But sure enough, Flibbertigibbet more than makes up for his relatively mundane appearance by way of his reckless behavior and haphazard apparel. Ever in motion, he fidgets, hops about, and rambles on at a frenetic pace, made all the worse when more than one of his bodies is present. They finish one another's sentences, talk amongst themselves, and repeatedly ramble on over each other, prattling on about three completely different topics.

Flibbertigibbet's apparel is no different from his speech. Dressed in stolen clothing of clashing colors, splatters of paint, or frequently absolutely nothing at all, he continually defies any sense of conventions, taste, or decorum, even when attempting otherwise—even on his best behavior.

Strategy & Tactics:

Fighting Flibbertigibbet is an exercise in frustration. He rarely attacks directly, choosing instead to inflict embarrassing transformations or cause opponents to laugh hysterically. When he does close in melee, he often steals things from foes, switches items to odd and irritating but mostly harmless effect, or manipulates opponents' clothes to blind or entangle them. The best strategy when combatting Flibbertigibbet is to wait for him to forget why he's there in the first place and let him wander off.

The Divided Kingdom

If it had grown up . . . it would have made a dreadfully ugly child; but it makes rather a handsome pig, I think.

—Lewis Carroll,
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

A tripartite demesne for a tripartite sovereign, the Divided Kingdom contains three distinct realms, each a miniature kingdom of its own. Each realm is ruled by one of Flibbertigibbet's bodies, whomever he appoints in his absence, or whomever happens to be the unlucky sod on the throne and kept there as a royal prisoner by a dozen grinning gremlins.

As distinct from each other as Flibbertigibbet's bodies are identical, each of the realms are quite literally grown from a "seed" of another land from the Material or Preternatural planes, torn free from its moorings and transplanted into place. The resulting kingdom patterns itself after that originating location, though never quite without awkwardness as the haphazard process tends to warp them well before Flibbertigibbet or his gremlins get their claws involved. Sometimes, the seed includes living things. Other times, it's something like a bit of castle stolen and carried away, anything from a few bricks to a whole tower lifted in the night, or perhaps eaten brick by brick and later vomited up for reassembly. Understandably, the resulting harvest rarely gives a wholly faithful representation, but it amuses Flibbertigibbet and his followers to no end.

Once they grow bored, however, the other two realms declare war, and the denizens of the out-of-favor realm revolt and tear their own kingdom to pieces, burn it, eat it, or however else seems appropriate at the time.

Nibiru

*May he hold the Beginning and the Future, may they pay homage unto him,
Saying, “He who forced his way through the midst of Tiamat without resting,
Let his name be Nibiru, “the Seizer of the Midst”!
For the stars of heaven he upheld the paths,
He shepherded all the gods like sheep!*

—Enûma Eliš
(trans. LW King)

Atop a secluded, cloud-cloaked tepui in a forgotten corner of the Material Plane, sandwiched between the prosaic and the obscene, Flibbertigibbet's demesne of Nibiru is both impossibly far away and just over the next wall or through the nearest hedgerow. Described as the invisible alleyways behind reality, the Fool King's bastion of power literally frays reality at its edges, bleeding out into an unending warren of tunnels, passageways, and alleys. Each ends in a door, chimney flue, well, sewer grate, arch, or fire escape landing, perched somewhere insubstantial between Material and Preternatural, overlooking a very real place on the Material Plane.

It is by way of these invisible connections and invisible wounds in reality through which Flibbertigibbet and his gremlins occasionally appear to come tumbling out of, heralding unintentional doom to wherever they happen to emerge. These invisible pathways are also the same way by which the occasional traveler happens to find themselves lost in Flibbertigibbet's demesne. By its nature, most often such wayward travelers simply find themselves wandering a maze of oddly familiar but twisting, winding paths before being deposited back whence they came, sometimes a day earlier and sometimes a year later. Not every such traveler ever returns home, however, and the sad, doomed farmer stepping out into his own rows of corn only to vanish into thin air might end up not wandering a maze of unnatural corn but instead find himself in the place

from which they and every other pathway originates.

Every go-between, forgotten path, out-of-the-way egress, and secluded place is touched by Nibiru's paved tendrils, but its heart is where all these paths converge on the only sort of kingdom fit for a divided king.

ABANDONED KINGDOM OF WOODEN CHICKENS

Remaining now as only a frost-shrouded realm of evergreen forest, it seems to have gone awry from the start. Originally intended to model itself on the dark forests of Slavic mythology, something went wrong in the bitterclaws' understanding of the source culture, their implementation of it all, or something else entirely. Their attempts to create the occasional spooky chicken-legged hut to wander the forests only resulted in a species of gigantic and carnivorous wooden chickens, as well as the occasional animated mortal and pestle flying about to menace the peasantry. Flibbertigibbet blames the bitterclaws both for the realm's failure from the start and its continued existence.

CONFLUENCE

The meeting point between the three kingdoms at Nibiru's heart centers upon a confluence of pathways from those nations and, likewise, all outside paths from the outer mazes. Sometimes, the Confluence takes the appearance of a country road merging three main paths and a number of smaller trails; sometimes, a landing of two stairwells, a door, and a few dumbwaiters; other times, a paved courtyard with three archways and a scattering of minor side doors or bolt holes in the walls. The only constant is a trio of statues of Flibbertigibbet himself. Perpetually mirrored by a copy of one of the three in each of the three kingdoms, they stare and leer at visitors, always with a smug, mischievous smile plastered across their faces.

The Confluence is the nexus of the three current kingdoms and more.

Alpine Wonderland: This domain is dotted with flowering meadows, quaint villages, and dozens of glittering castles pulled from old Germanic myth. The latest craze of the kingdom's inhabitants is dressing as wolves and preying upon villages populated entirely

by sheep stolen from whatever kingdom originally seeded the domain. The previous gremlin obsession was crafting human villagers out of cheese or chocolate, though this passion was rapidly eclipsed by drowning one another in beer or ale, before moving on to the latest bizarre trend.

Cliffside Castles: This parched and desolate domain is built on the side of a winding cliff overlooking parched grassland and desert. Individual tribes of settled gremlins fight off the depredations of marauding nomadic gremlin tribes before switching dynamics to a reverse where the cliff tribes conjure spirits to pray upon the horse-riding lowlanders or drag them back for elaborate and bloody rituals. The precise tide of it all is dictated by Flibbertigibbet himself—or his proxy of the moment.

Pagoda Kingdom: Rising up from a comically haphazard sprawl of bamboo forests and flooded rice paddies, the third kingdom contains a fantastical city of elaborately colored pagodas decorated in polished brass and surrounding a towering central palace carved entirely from jade. Semi-domesticated foo animals run rampant, and the lacquered wooden buildings face perpetual catastrophe where the hands of gremlins and bitterclaw-crafted fireworks meet. Still, this kingdom is Flibbertigibbet's current favorite, so it remains the least devastated by his children, despite their efforts.

FIREWORKS FACTORY

This is the third fireworks factory, built by bitterclaws after the first two were utterly consumed in flame after the inadvertent setting off of all the fireworks within the building—both times. Rather than wood, like the previous two buildings, iron was used to frame the new building, and the bitterclaws are certain there is no way a fireworks mishap can bring down this newest building, even if all their lovingly crafted fireworks are destroyed yet again.

There is no thought to ever stop creating fireworks, which they use to keep pesky gremlins at bay and to sell to visitors who have never seen them before (at exorbitant prices, of course). When they have an excess of fireworks thanks to lack of sales and lack of pests, they put on grand displays over the factory.

All told, though, a fireworks factory explosion is certainly an event to behold.

CLEAMING SPIRES

The pathways take accidental travelers anywhere, and the bitterclaws are not exempt from this caprice. They do try to make as much of their random trips as possible, though, returning with seeds and knickknacks from other lands. One such journey took them to a wondrous city full of towers reaching to the heavens where all manner of magnificent machinery performed amazing tasks. The bitterclaws marveled at the snakelike beast to which sacrificial victims voluntarily offered themselves as it moved about the city. While they were unable to wrestle this amazing city back to Nibiru, they managed to take part of the metal snake as a seed. The so-called Gleaming Spires is not quite as majestic as the city they witnessed—as it is currently a mere trio of towers and standing only five feet tall. They did manage to get the metal serpent to wind its way around the towers, but it doesn't devour anyone . . . yet.

GRAND VISTA

The top of Nibiru's tallest peak, the Grand Vista, is a location that moves from kingdom to kingdom at whim. From this peak, one can reportedly see the whole of reality. It is certainly possible to see the transits of every road and river as they fade into and out of the demesne. Rumor also has it that one can fling oneself off the mountaintop and land in the reality of one's choosing with absolutely no harm. The body of anyone making the attempt disappears just before it hits the surface, so there may be some truth to this rumor.

TIMELOST ALLEYWAY

One of the oddest passageways in Nibiru is the Timelost Alleyway. When someone stumbles upon it, reaches the alley's dead end, and turns around, a mirror image of the alley greets them, seemingly leaving no exit. The mirror alley appears either much cleaner or considerably more run-down to the new arrival, and it is possible for the person trapped in the mirrored alley to take the appropriate steps to exit the alley and find themselves in the distant past or in the far future. In rare

cases, they can time a trip to the alley and meet past selves, allowing them to convey important information about personal futures or remember that forgotten.

THE VEINS

Not all passages leading to Nibiru are roads and alleyways. The Veins are a confluence of different rivers that flow through the demesne in midair. Gremlins visit frequently to capture disoriented fish breaching

the water's edge and falling to the ground. Boats stay upright when they enter Nibiru, but sailors must keep their wits about them to avoid drifting toward a riverbank and plummeting to the earth.

A group of entrepreneurial bitterclaws have claimed a portion of the Veins as an amusement park. Rather than waiting until everything is finished—and safe—everything in this park is forever a work in progress, a grand experiment in fun. (Medics get in free.)

Flibbertigibbet's Demesne

Nibiru is a chaotic realm where reality, time, and distance obey no laws but their own.

Shifting Time. Time on Nibiru speeds up and slows down relative to the rate at which time passes in other realms. Creatures who spend a month in Flibbertigibbet's demesne might return to their home plane to discover that only a minute has passed there. Other creatures that make use of Nibiru's pathways for just the briefest moment realize that, from the perspective of those they left behind, their journey has taken years. The GM determines the effects of shifting time on Nibiru.

Shifting Environs. The landscape, objects, and creatures of Nibiru shift and alter constantly—sometimes in reaction to the thoughts of sentient creatures; sometimes in response to powerful magic; and sometimes for no discernible reason at all. The degree to which the plane transforms itself and the effect that has on creatures on the plane are determined by the GM.

Wild Magic. Spells, innate spells, and other magical effects can function differently—or not at all—on Nibiru. Any creature attempting to cast a spell in Nibiru must succeed on a concentration check or the spell goes wild. The DC is $10 + \text{spell's level}$. The GM determines the final outcome of any magical effects on the plane, typically by having such magic rebound on the wielder, fail completely, affect different targets, produce the opposite of the intended effect, and so forth.

Endless Pathways. Nibiru connects to locations across the multiverse, though it is all but impossible for anyone but Flibbertigibbet or a creature bearing the *(un)Locket of Nibiru* to use the random paths of the demesne with any degree of certainty. Entry into Nibiru is completely at random, and any (un)lucky travelers might find themselves there. Exiting Nibiru is a different matter entirely.

Creatures wishing to leave Nibiru along its pathways must succeed on a DC 17 Charisma check. On a successful check, the creatures appear in a random location on a random plane, though their arrival point is usually not immediately dangerous. If any creature rolls a 20 on the check or succeeds by 5 or more, the creatures return to the exact location they entered the pathways from—or anywhere else in the multiverse they wish to go. On a failed check, the creatures cannot make the check again until having wandered Nibiru for 1 hour—which might account for any amount of time on other planes.

Seeds of Nibiru. A portion of Nibiru can take on the form, appearance, or aspects of another plane if any of the three kingdoms is ever destroyed. The resulting new realm is formed by a seed taken from some other plane and gains some of the traits of that plane as determined by the GM.

Bitterclaws & Others

Though ravening gremlins delighted Flibbertigibbet for the primal chaos they brought, after a few of his carefully laid schemes were inadvertently foiled by gremlin antics, the mogwoi sovereign relented to matabiri requests to intervene. After all, they did promise to make gremlins more intelligent.

And how could that not be a fabulous idea?

BITTERCLAWS

Oh, certainly, I'll inevitably miscalculate the elasticity of the physical world, misjudge the social connectivity of my subjects, or "screw something up," as you say. And something will explode, someplace will set itself on fire and sink into a swamp, and someone will chase me halfway across the planes—not necessarily in that order. How could I honor my creator by doing any differently? At least, I won't eat half the things I find. Hey . . . ! Stupid gremlin . . . get my sword out of your mouth!

—Sir Remolio Redondo Randostan VI
(bitterclaw engineer)

After the near destruction of the City of Gears, the matabiri suddenly viewed gremlins as a threat. In line with their own best interests, they convinced Flibbertigibbet to allow them to study the gremlins and “fix” them, making them smarter. (Flibbertigibbet has always been inexplicably trusting of the scheming matabiri, perhaps due to their tie to Hob.)

The matabiri were only too eager for the chance to experiment on these amazing creatures. With difficulty, they gathered remarkable information on gremlins’ unique physiology. Without Flibbertigibbet’s knowledge, however, the matabiri went a step further and engineered limits into the gremlin life cycle: their reproductive rate was greatly reduced, enabling existing gremlins to slowly die off until their numbers

were below a certain threshold. The matabiri pushed the threshold down to 1,000 specimens, so there should never be more than 1,000 gremlins alive at a time. Additionally, the matabiri wanted to disrupt the natural gremlin tendency to congregate and were able to limit the amount of time a gremlin could tolerate the company of another of its kind. The matabiri’s efforts took decades to come into full effect, but gremlins now appear to be much less of a threat to the “civilized lands” of the multiverse.

A gremlin’s physiology is unique and rapidly evolving, however. The limits that the matabiri engineered into the creatures were the best they could do against these rapidly evolving creatures. Their very natures are in constant conflict with these limitations (and others from the natural world), and they are evolving to compensate. It is only a matter of time until all gremlins surpass their limits and become the terror they once were—or worse.

A CHANCE SO BITTER

To appease Flibbertigibbet, the matabiri took advantage of the gremlins’ incredible metabolism and created the bitterclaws, an evolved form of gremlin. Though related to gremlins, these larger creatures are quite different. They possess a much greater intelligence than a gremlin and none of the frenetic behavior. As a race, they are calm and thoughtful, but they still display a high degree of antisocial behavior.

The decline of the gremlins has not gone unnoticed by Flibbertigibbet, but instead of placing blame with the matabiri where it belongs, he tends to blame the bitterclaws.

Environment & Society: Bitterclaws abound within the Divided Kingdom, taking leadership roles and doing their best to organize gremlins and their own kin toward whatever fancy strikes them. Most of them are solitary, however, going about their own schemes in Nibiru or beyond when tasked by Flibbertigibbet himself. More often they adventure on their own, doing what pleases them.

Most of their pursuits are self-limiting affairs with little broader consequence, unlike the examples set by Flibbertigibbet and his thousands of trailing gremlins.

However, ever resourceful and certainly retaining their creator's grandiose yet petty ambitions, there are times when a solitary bitterclaw's schemes come either to fruition or fail in such spectacular fashion as to make the matabiri pause and ponder if they didn't simply compound their original gremlin problem.

Typical Characteristics:

Bitterclaws are small, lanky creatures with large mouths and ears, often compared to larger, stretched out gremlins. While gremlins are covered in fur, bitterclaws retain this feature on an irregular basis, varying heavily from individual to individual with many trimming it to suit their own sense of style or removing it entirely to more resemble Flibbertigibbet himself. Primarily bipedal, like gremlins, they occasionally drop down on all fours when particularly irritated or curious.

Being the end result of the matabiri's experimentation, the bitterclaws lack their cousins' rabid and destructive hunger for metal. The nearly indestructible, shark-like teeth, however, have remained. As a result, the ostensibly more civilized and reserved bitterclaws tend to smile without showing their teeth, reserving that display for actual aggression or moments of extreme happiness. Given the deadly utility of their teeth, those unfamiliar with their emotions find a pleased bitterclaw to be unnerving at the very least.

Relationships: Bitterclaws are both Flibbertigibbet's pride and also the object of his blame for virtually any of his own failures or those of his other creations. The Scattered Prince views the bitterclaws, despite their comparative youth, as collective elder siblings to the gremlins and their other myriad offshoots. Bitterclaws are beloved and favored, allowed use of Nibiru's paths as they choose, granted authority within the Divided Kingdom, and frequently chosen to perform specific



tasks

by the sovereign in his unending schemes. At the same time, they are expected to be eminently competent and responsible, the latter of which at the very least isn't a trait possessed by their creator himself. Bitterclaws grudgingly accept this dichotomy of favor and burden, doing their best while also exploiting the sovereign's favor to indulge their own wanderlust and spin their own schemes in devoted mimicry.

Strategy & Tactics: Each bitterclaw is unique from its kindred, depending on how they advance in character class. Whatever path they choose, they benefit most from their size and dexterity. Given the opportunity, they try to live up to Flibbertigibbet's expectations and likewise seek to enact convoluted plans of their own.



DOLDRUMS

*Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.*

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

When the matabiri created the bitterclaws for Flibbertigibbet, they went through more than one

discarded draft and unique specimens before they succeeded. An evolved form of gremlin, the doldrums were an attempt to slow down the former's fecundity by manipulating how they interacted with time itself. The resulting creatures—blessedly few in number—live within a bubble subtly time-shifted from standard reality. Viewed from the outside, doldrums appear sluggish and slow-moving, surrounded by ephemeral, twisting tangles of warped reality. Moving inside of their bubble, however—like stepping into a sovereign's demesne—other creatures stand on doldrum turf and suddenly must play by their rules. Inside the bubble, doldrums move with a frightening alacrity while outsiders now sharing their isolated temporal bubble are equally slowed down. Thankfully, what few doldrums exist primarily dwell in isolation, wandering Nibiru's pathways and only occasionally stepping into the Material Plane.

Environment & Society: Doldrums largely exist in isolated solitude, normally lacking the numbers and interaction with their own kind to develop any social structure to speak of. Almost without exception, doldrums dwell within the myriad pathways of Nibiru, where they seem content to wander, surviving as opportunistic predators or scavengers of things stolen

during brief forays into the Material Plane. Curiously, they display a fearful animosity toward other gremlins (though not bitterclaws), only further isolating them within their native space.

Typical Characteristics: Though often heavily obscured, in part, by the twisting strands of warped reality surrounding them, doldrums resemble gremlins as if some mad anatomist had tried to assemble one from the mismatched pieces of other gremlins. Every doldrum appears to have body parts of wildly different stages of age: an infant's arm, an adolescent's gangly legs and feet, and a face gnarled and elderly with thinning, patchy fur, and missing half of its teeth. Each doldrum varies in which portions of their body have aged at different rates (and some even age in bizarre retrograde manner), though this seeming affliction poses them no difficulty whatsoever.

Relationships: Doldrums deeply respect their creator, regardless of how far they might have wandered astray, and that respect often turns to outright worship. The Scattered Prince, however, takes little notice of the doldrums except on those rare occasions he stumbles across one and receives a shower of ego-stroking praise. When this occurs, Flibbertigibbet indulges his wayward creation's desires for a time, usually tasks them with something, and promptly abandons and forgets about them. The doldrum in question, however, remains obsessively devoted to that task until finished, even years or decades later.

Strategy & Tactics: Doldrums prefer to avoid combat or any other interaction with others if they can avoid it. When sufficiently motivated by hunger or anger or in self defense, they prefer to immediately engage other creatures within the bubble of altered time that surrounds them for the advantage it provides. Only rarely do doldrums advance by character class, though when they do, they tend to gain cleric levels and operate as reclusive heralds of the Scattered Prince.

CIBBET POPPETS

Gibbet puppets are yet another branch off of the gremlin family tree, though none can precisely pin down their origins. Maybe, the tiny menaces were

one of the matabiri's stopgap attempts on their way to creating the bitterclaws. Or possibly, they were the result of errant, scattered bits of sundered Flibbertigibbet developing free will. Or perhaps, they were one of Flibbertigibbet's attempts to create another set of servitors less prone to foiling his own plans. Though, even if the latter origin holds true, they most certainly don't fit their sovereign's intent.

Gibbet puppets are swarms of tiny pseudo-gremlins, vaguely tethered together in the sense that they can never stray more than a few dozen feet apart from the bulk of their collective numbers. Possessed of a shared intelligence, the gibbet puppets lack the gremlins' appetite for metal but possess their own bizarre and, frankly, more grisly obsession: corpses. It isn't so much the dead in and of themselves that fascinate gibbet puppets as it is their empty, gruesome shells' capacity to serve as fleshy vessels within which to play and reanimate like jittery marionettes in their own comical grotesquerie.

Environment & Society: Gibbet puppets take their errant creator's delight in scheming and in convoluted plans, but they run with it in an entirely macabre direction. While relatively small in number, each gibbet puppet swarm obsesses about toying with, taking apart, reassembling, and as is most often the case, inhabiting and possessing a humanoid corpse. Each swarm acts as a single creature, though with often comical ability to maintain their farce, especially once a corpse begins to decay. Gibbet puppet swarms exist scattered about the Preternatural Planes, especially in locations where they gain easy access to their favorite playthings. Of course, the puppets aren't above grave robbing or simply jumping and killing the first creature they come across should a supply of easy corpses otherwise be found lacking.

Typical Characteristics: Individual gibbet puppets resemble tiny gremlins, but when generally encountered, they exist as a swarm, blurred around the edges and often hard to differentiate from any other portion of their collective whole. They retain the terrible teeth of gremlinkind, and what they lack of that terrible hunger for metal, they more than make up for it in their gruesome and often farcical obsession

with corpses. It is while inhabiting corpses, fresh or otherwise, that they're most often encountered, doing their best to act the role of their dead vessel but often guessing wildly as to the victim's behavior and personality in life with ever more bizarre quirks and improvised details and behaviors added over time.

Relationships: Gibbet puppets are very much their own creatures, largely ignored by both gremlins and bitterclaws and likewise left to their own morbid devices by Flibbertigibbet himself. For whatever the reason, they exist scattered across the Preternatural Planes rather than in any close association with Nibiru, lending credence to the notion that their existence predates the matabiri tinkering with gremlinkind. Perhaps, they arise spontaneously, an unconscious act on Flibbertigibbet's

part, long after he traverses a spot on those planes where the dead are found.

Strategy & Tactics: In their native state, gibbet puppets prefer to overwhelm enemies by sheer force of numbers in their capacity as a swarm, especially when given the opportunity to kill and inhabit a fresh body. When in possession of a corpse, however, they avoid combat so as to prolong their charade as long as possible, only breaking character once their true nature is discovered or once decay sets in.

CREMLINS

The first—and some would say worst—of Flibbertigibbet's creations combine both a deceptively adorable appearance with a penchant for wild



destructive whimsy. At first blush, these frenetic fey are innocent and fascinating creatures. However, metal is what gremlins truly crave. They have a burning hunger for metal and a mouth filled with rows of indestructible, shark-like teeth ready for action: the teeth are laced with adamantine and enable a gremlin to eat their way through the strongest varieties of metals. Rich enough sources of metal can actually trigger the strange transformation of a single gremlin into a frenzied swarm of gnashing teeth intent on devouring all metal in sight.

As if that wasn't enough, gremlins also have a strange effect on both other creatures and machinery. Creatures simply appear clumsier around these fey, and machinery (from the simplest hunter's bow to the grandest clockwork creation) tends to break or malfunction more readily. Cursed are the city dwellers who try to make pets of the gremlins that they stumble across in their travels.

The matabiri-engineered gremlin aversion to remain in close proximity to one another has, over time, had an unfortunate side effect. When content with their own kind, gremlins enjoy exploring Nibiru and trailing in Flibbertigibbet's wake across the planes. But they have been dispersing more readily since the matabiri intervention to the Material Plane, and that is where they are most quickly evolving beyond the matabiri's carefully tailored controls. These divergent evolutionary branches have since become their own species with their behavior and appearances often radically different from the original stock.

Environment & Society: Limited in number by the matabiri, most gremlins reside within Flibbertigibbet's demesne, matching their profound fecundity with an equally spectacular rate of attrition, often bloody,



pyrotechnic, and typically of their own doing. Within the Divided Kingdom and throughout the meandering pathways of Nibiru, they endlessly cavort in whatever whimsy strikes them. They don't have a society so much as a vague, irrational propensity to blindly listen to Flibbertigibbet or, more frequently, bitterclaws acting like elder siblings attempting to place some semblance of (often irrational) social order in place. Left to their own devices, gremlins are most often simply destructive, even as they seek to emulate Flibbertigibbet or his later, more intelligent creations.

Typical Characteristics: Gremlins appear simply to be fuzzy, little creatures with curiously large mouths and ears and a perhaps too-developed sense of curiosity. These cat-sized creatures are equally comfortable walking on two legs as on all fours as they gambol about sniffing at the air. When triggered by their own ravenous metal gluttony, they grow significantly more

fearsome in both demeanor and size, both as a result of their fur standing up and an actual degree of physical enlargement that varies to a wildly cosmetic degree between individuals. Most striking, however, are a gremlin's teeth. Virtually indestructible, they line a gremlin's maw in layered rows like those of a shark, and while most adapted at ripping apart metal, they work equally well at doing the same for anything else that gets in their way.

Relationships: Gremlins remain near and dear to their father Flibbertigibbet, even in the face of his own subsequent creation of the bitterclaws, and as such, he expects virtually nothing from them nor does he burden them with any responsibility. Intentionally or not, Flibbertigibbet always seems to attract a gaggle of gremlins when he travels beyond the bounds of his demesne. While most of them either perish in some destructive catastrophe (usually at their own hands) during his scheming forays or return to Nibiru at his side, like ravenous puppies, all too often he carelessly leaves one or two behind elsewhere, abandoned to their own devices.

Strategy & Tactics: Although greatly limited

by the matabiri, gremlins still congregate in small groups, finding bravery in large numbers or when in the presence of a mother lode of metal. They aren't physically imposing combatants, but their ability to make even the simplest mechanical items fall apart or to inflict strange mishaps on their opponents evens the playing field.

... AND THOSE NOTABLE

The fey are everywhere and each has a story all their own. While some might lend a hand, some others might lend a knife . . . blade first and between your ribs. And many might offer both.

It's dangerous to go alone. It's also dangerous not to.

THE BODIE POLITIK

Gremlins aren't the only ones prone to evolve! For a troupe of gibbet puppets, change came in the form of distributed thinking. This seemingly small boost in their mental processes was enough to drive a desire for more knowledge, for learning, and as a result, they are quite a bit more intelligent than the average swarm of gibbet puppets. And it was the siren's call of the stage that drew them in.

They would sit enthralled watching performance after performance—plays that mixed comic and tragic forms were there favorites—and they collectively chose to follow the path of those bards they so admired. They started an acting troupe, The Bodie Politik, and traveled the planes, playing for all that would watch.

Characteristics: The Bodie Politik are a gregarious bunch, portraying a wit and intelligence beyond all other gibbet puppets and even most other mogwoi. Their increasing pool of friendly connections have made it far easier to access books and instruments appropriately sized for them.

The plays they perform of others are the current favorites with their audiences, but the troupe's starting to intersperse original performances to largely positive reviews.

The (*un*)Locket of Nibiru

This curious piece of jewelry is little more than a crude tangle of silver and copper wire, misshapen in places from the impressions of gremlin teeth. At its core, the (*un*)Locket holds a piece of one of Flibbertigibbet's claws, broken and fallen to the side from when his siblings tore him apart. The locket was subsequently gifted to one of his now long-deceased bitterclaw jesters—a rank of highest distinction—but it was lost at that year's Jester's Tourney, a big deal in the community. Different planar locales vie for it each year. No one made it out alive that year.

The (*un*)Locket allows its wearer to access the hidden doors and pathways of Nibiru itself, including transit to and from the Divided Kingdoms at their leisure. The very fact that Flibbertigibbet ever created the object, much less gifted it, says something about the mogwoi sovereign's foresight.

Relationships: For sure, they had a lot of false starts as “spectators” would frequently run screaming from the “hideous zombies” on the stage or try to purge their “wicked blasphemy,” but the puppets kept at it. They practiced and toughed out the hard times, and now, they’ve established a following, small and . . . strange in their own right, the public is starting to recognize the troupe’s enthusiasm, if not yet their blooming talent.

For their part, it did a world of good when they stopped attacking people and robbing graves for their “costumes.” They have been quite successful at growing their corpse outreach programs, taking donations from overstretched communities. And a large contingent of patrons have begun to bequeath their bodies to the troupe upon their demise, a chance for celebrity in death.

Strategy & Tactics: Practically pacifists, the Bodie Politik have almost zero interest in conflict—unless it’s staged! Of course, they still have to think twice to pass up a free corpse. But they’re working on it.

GRAND BARON FIZZBERT, THE EVER-HUNGRY

The frequent proxy ruler of one of the Divided Kingdoms of Nibiru, Grand Baron Fizzbert the Ever-Hungry is perhaps Flibbertigibbet’s favorite mistake, at least among the ones he’s firmly aware of having consciously made.

The bitterclaws were actually the matabiri’s second attempt to cull the gremlins’ fecundity and provide the Scattered Prince with servitors unlikely to ruin the cosmos in their wake. Fizzbert was their first attempt and the result when Flibbertigibbet simply couldn’t resist “helping” the matabiri in their work. It didn’t work out as intended—for the matabiri at least.

Flibbertigibbet was enthusiastically happy, even though Fizzbert was a singular creature, rather than a race of them, and devoid of reproductive capacity. The one element of the gremlins that Fizzbert most retained was an insatiable hunger although, unlike their taste for metal, Fizzbert isn’t sure *what* he hungers for and spends a considerable amount of time trying to discover his craving. He has yet to discover it.

Fizzbert rarely leaves the confines of the Divided

Kingdom, where his position as one of Flibbertigibbet’s favored creations affords him a life of power, influence, and luxury. Often appointed as ruler over a portion of Nibiru, he doesn’t precisely rule so much as enjoy the benefits of that nominal rulership. It typically falls to the bitterclaws acting as his advisors to actually go about the real job that their elder brother studiously ignores day in and day out.

These same bitterclaws uniformly loathe Fizzbert for what they see as his unearned favor from their mutual creator. Not a day goes by that they don’t scheme to depose him, make his life miserable, or just try to contain the damage he can cause when afforded a level of authority. Luckily for the bitterclaws, Fizzbert has yet to discover that his unending hunger and unsettled craving is for nothing other than themselves.

Characteristics: Fizzbert looks like a cross between a particularly large, misshapen bitterclaw with some elements of gremlin to his appearance and a child’s potato doll into which various sets of clay or metal features and appendages are then attached.

Relationships: Fizzbert’s overly long and ever grandiose titles change nearly every day, usually into something just as pompous or obnoxious as the previous one. The grand baron revels in his favored status and does his best to keep his portion of Nibiru running just as dysfunctionally as when Flibbertigibbet himself sees fit to take the throne. Flibbertigibbet, of course, is perfectly happy to see Fizzbert rule in his stead as it allows him the freedom to cause trouble elsewhere without having to worry about running his own demesne, not that his rule exactly implies any sort of royal responsibility. Since his creation is gleefully happy and equally irresponsible, when given the chance, Flibbertigibbet is of no mind to disabuse him of the notion that taking the throne is anything other than a joyous reward for being such a wonderful servitor.

Strategy & Tactics: Fizzbert is a pompous coward at heart. He makes threats at the drop of a hat, but unless he has gremlins or others at hand willing to actually carry out those threats, he’s not inclined to actually stand up and do anything on his own. Despite this, when sufficiently angered or pushed into defending

himself, Fizzbert is more than capable. Staying at range if at all possible, he prefers hurling bombs, poisoned darts, or really anything else at hand. If cornered, he reverts to his base nature and quite literally attempts to eat his way out of danger, grabbing and swallowing his enemies whole.

CRETA SWEET TOOTH

Greta always knew she was different, even if her parents never told her that they found her abandoned in their fields on a cold autumn morning. The baby was there, all alone, surrounded by trampled corn stalks, tiny footprints, and bits of metal scraps that had, much to their annoyance, once been their plow head and the fittings of the harness they strung upon their workhorse. Still, they raised the girl as their own, and she grew up much as any normal child would, albeit one with a short attention span and a propensity to wander.

What Greta most certainly is aware of is her curious taste for metal. Whatever the substance, be it an iron nail, a silver serving fork, or a gold coin, each tastes oddly sweet to her tongue. Given a few moments in her

mouth, any metal at all turns soft and dissolves away like a peppermint candy.

Greta isn't entirely sure what to make of her taste for metal. Even more so, she's not sure what to make of the gremlins that occasionally show up to follow her, watch her, get her out of most any danger, but sometimes end up causing her more trouble than the tiny creatures might be worth. In her mind, she manages to get into enough mischief of her own, but since they—to some degree at least—do what she tells them to do, they're useful excuses for her own schemes. At the very least, they do leave her gifts every year on what she assumes is her birthday.

Characteristics: Greta is a young human woman just now in the prime of her life with a shock of grey hair, unreasonably yellow eyes, and ears just a touch too large to be normal.

Relationships: Greta isn't precisely Flibbertigibbet's willing servitor. More properly, she's a bit of a wayward mistake and an awkward beneficiary of the Scattered Prince's curious benevolence. To be honest, he isn't entirely sure what to do with his daughter or if indeed she is in fact his daughter at all.

Unbeknownst to Greta, whenever she finds herself in the company of enough gremlins, she acts as a living surrogate for Flibbertigibbet's requirement to retain one of his bodies on the Material Plane in order to go gallivanting into the Preternatural. Whenever this occurs, Greta has the uncanny ability to know precisely where her—*maybe!*—father happens to be. It also stands to reason that if any of the Scattered Prince's enemies were to discover this fact, killing her while he was on another plane might reasonably allow them to trap him there.

Strategy & Tactics: Greta prefers to avoid any conflict whatsoever. On the other hand, the gremlins that accompany her—and the larger numbers that often shadow her out of sight—gleefully assault and mangle anyone or anything that threatens or even causes her the slightest inconvenience. Greta stops them when able, but they have a habit of doing things behind her back and just out of view.

Gremlins of Distinction

There is countless variety of gremlinkind. The gremlins detailed here are those that Flibbertigibbet created. But since then, despite the tinkering of the matabiri, gremlins have been spreading . . . and changing.

The mutation rate, the sheer speed at which gremlins evolve, is ridiculous. They are constantly being born slightly different (or very different!) from their parents. Many individuals don't survive long, but enough keep going. New species of gremlin seem to arise almost every day.

No matter what happens to the original line of gremlins—the ur-gremlins—that Flibbertigibbet created, gremlins as a whole will do just fine. Until they destroy the universe, that is.

TURTLE

Sometimes, it's of the utmost importance to watch what you say. It would be nice to say that the Scattered One has learned that lesson, but . . . maybe some day.

There is a certain doldrum known only by the moniker Turtle. And this awkward little guy is probably Flibbertigibbet's greatest crusaders, whether he wants him or not.

You see, Turtle acts upon every word of his sovereign. Very long ago, before there was even a Kingdom of Wooden Chickens (actually leading into the latter as you'll understand momentarily), there was Chicken Wood, a portion of the Confluence where chickens were granted sanctuary. (Why? Well, I wasn't consulted, so I can't begin to guess at the rationale.) But the mogwoi prince was crazy about it! That is, until he was mobbed by the feral buggers. Cursing and tending his wounds after fleeing his chicken oppressors, he must have said something to the effect of "Die chickens!" Well, impressionable ears were about. Next thing you know, Turtle is single-handedly dispatching all the chickens. (This, of course, led to the attempt at wooden chickens.)

He'd probably still be on his chicken rampage across the 'verse had not Flibbertigibbet triggered, yet again, another inadvertent crusade by offhandedly lamenting his lack of toys. Turtle subsequently went scouring far and wide, slowly bringing all the toys he could find, stealing them as needed. Flibbertigibbet immediately moved with his concerns, not even remembering what he had said, but Turtle kept going. Not stopping until the next "royal proclamation." (To this day, there's still a mountain of toys at the center of the Confluence, literally—Mount Floppy Bear, named for its preponderance of stuffed animals.)

This has gone on and on. Turtle is always on some quest for his lord. Currently, he is very focused, heading across the Material with some specific yet inscrutable destination seemingly in mind. However, Turtle is taking extra time and going out of his way to slaughter any gnomes he comes across along the way. (The gods only know what the mogwoi sovereign might have said in passing this time...!)

Characteristics: Turtle is unintelligible. It's always a challenge to communicate with doldrums, but this

one's especially problematic with simply the occasional impassioned burst of nonsense in an otherwise endless stream of incoherent babble. But he's devoted...! Oh, is he ever devoted.

Relationships: There is only one thing that matters—apparently, that is, since no one can really make sense of Turtle. The doldrum carries out his mogwoi lord's commands (whether they were intended as such or not), and Flibbertigibbet goes on oblivious to anything amiss and without the awareness to realize what's even happening.

Strategy & Tactics: Tough to say. It really depends on Turtle's presumed mandate. His lord's proclamations are all that's important (though even Flibbertigibbet couldn't tell you what those are since they are just his random spoutings that Turtle happens to be around to hear). And how the doldrum interprets those? Well, let's just say that Turtle will do whatever it takes to honor his lord's words.

ADDING COMPLICATION

Complication is the hallmark of the fey. They would likely shrivel and die without it. The following odds and ends can be used to inspire plotlines for use in your game:

- ❖ All's been quiet from Flibbertigibbet for decades. Trusted accounts say he's been uncharacteristically focused and hard at work. He's been making oddly specific journeys to out-of-the-way Preternatural Planes of late but always alone—even without gremlins—and always in and out, never lingering. What's he up to?
- ❖ A group of gremlins "lost" Greta down a Bigmouth hole. It was a gremlin game of . . . it's complicated. The point is, in desperation, they're now capturing random people and tossing them down into Nowhere in the hope they'll rescue her.
- ❖ What if Flibbertigibbet remembers where the Dark Mother is and releases her? Will she be angry with her son? Proud? What might that mean for the mogwoi—and the rest of reality?



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