A Touch of Glamour

A game about fey creatures in a modern world

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Introduction

This is not a game about fantasy.

This is a game about the fey.

This is bound to raise questions. We get it, isn't fantasy the genre where the fey get their due? Yes…to a degree. Much fantasy portrays the fey as creatures of dark whimsy and golden nobility, sorted by extremes of light and dark, painfully patrician or common as muck. Thus, while the fey often exist in fantasy, they are not given much latitude for expression. According to fabulists, a fey creature can only be one or the other.

In truth, fey are just as complicated as their mortal victims and lovers. They are enamoured by the people they loathe; suffer the same dissonance between reality and bias; get confused by their feelings, even as they act on them.

Perhaps this is one of the greater misapprehensions about the fey: they are somehow beyond human emotion. The truth (and in some cases, the tragedy) behind the fey is that while ageless, imbued with grace and a semblance of power, they remain very much mortal. Which means they are fallible, eclectic, magnificent, and above all else, *messy*. A trait that has never been fantasy's wont.

This is a game about magic.

This is a game about the fey, and using their magic in a world that no longer believes in them, save for a few. (We'll get to them later.)

Descriptions of fey magic are as varied as the numerous human cultures that claim knowledge of faerie workings. All mostly correct. Scholars debate which aspects of their magic are true or not. Even as they agree and chart their findings with many intersections, there are still parts of the diagram that do not intersect.

We will explore as many as we can, and the nuances are endless. Yet for our base purposes, the magic of the fey can be distilled into two key actions:

Unmaking. Fashioning.

Destroying. Creating.

Fey creatures are inimical, mischievous, dangerous: wrecking havoc on the unwitting. Their magic steals what people find precious: their strength. Their wits. Their children.

Fey creatures are benevolent, compassionate, honourable: providing blessings through their mighty arts. Fortune favours those kissed by faerie love and regard.

Above all else, the fey and their workings are as contradictory as the humans who share their world. The descriptions above could all describe a single fey.

Seriously Though (A few words on how this game came to be...)

This game is Inspired by the Apocalypse, with due thanks to Meguey and Vincent Baker for their elegant and straightforward design.

I wrote (am writing) this from a hospital bed in Hong Kong SAR, bored out of my wits. Thanks to a foot injury healing wrong and due to complications with infection, I found myself facing day after day in a room without really knowing if and when I would get discharged.

While the care in Queen Mary Hospital is excellent (seriously: if you have to get sick, get sick here), I have yet to find anyone who truly enjoys being a patient in a hospital lacking that most magical of inventions: a stable Internet connection. Thankfully, I had my laptop, a little creativity, and plenty of free time.

This game emerged from that (this) hospital stint, when imagination was the only way out of dreary boredom.

Thanks go to my friends Erich, Rachel, and Pam, who kept me company through intermittent chats on Google Hangouts; all my game designer friends (BJ, Bim, and Sin, whose work inspired from afar); and the Hong Kong gaming community, notably the Glowing Fool, who entertained my work in progress.

Inspirations

This game has many inspirations, most notably:

Powered by the Apocalypse, by Vince Baker and Meguey Baker

Avery Alder's Monsterhearts 2

Amít Moshe's City of Mist

White Wolf's Changeling: The Dreaming, and Changeling: the Lost

Enid Blyton's Fairy Stories

and

The tales of my ancestors: American, Filipino, Irish, and Spanish people who, despite (or because of) their faith and reason, saw magic in the everyday.

Playing Fey

A Touch of Glamour is a tabletop roleplaying game exploring the lives of fey creatures in the modern world. These legendary creatures hid their fairy traits adapting to an environment where magic is scant, and few are aware of the fey's existence.

Those that know of the fey are eager to exploit their innate magic. Magic isn't quite dead, as the body parts of fairy creatures, most notably their blood, are catalysts for sorcery. Fey creatures find themselves surrounded, outgunned, and outclassed by wannabe sorcerers, wizards, and cabals hunting them down like exotic ingredients.

While the fey are magical, there's only so much magic can do to stop a hail of bullets.

The Principles of Being Fey

Characters in *A Touch of Glamour* are members of a diverse set of magical lifeforms all with the innate ability to wield the mysterious force known as magic. Along with the Game Master (GM), players must remember a few key principles:

- Magic creates and destroys.
- Magic is wild and limited.
- The fey are hunted, but not powerless.
- The fey are ageless, but can be slain.

Magic creates and destroys.

Fey magic operates by creating and destroying things through sheer force of imagination. Taking the stuff of dreams and nightmares and calling them forth into reality. It is this ability to make something out of nothing (and vice versa), that makes fey targets of exploitative powers who would harvest them for their own ends.

Magic is wild and limited.

Although their magic is strong, the fey are hindered by their magic being wild and limited. Being able to wield magic doesn't necessarily translate into mastery. Magic is not the most biddable of forces.

Fey creatures use magic at risk to themselves and those around them. Sometimes the magic overpowers its wielder, doing as it wills rather than obeying the commands of its caller. Fey creatures know better than to depend entirely on magic for their survival.

Though magic can accomplish much, it cannot accomplish everything. Fey magic is only as strong as the circumstances it faces.

The fey are hunted, but not powerless.

Because their bodies produce magic, fey creatures are hunted down to fuel other beings' sorceries. Humans in particular are guilty of harvesting parts like unicorn horns, dragon fangs, and pixie dust to cast their own spells and enchantments.

Modern fey are survivors, having almost been hunted to extinction. Using their powers of glamorie, fey hide in the Information Age, taking human shapes giving them access to resources, skills, and technology.

The fey are ageless, but can be slain.

A distinct advantage of the fey is that they cannot die from ageing. They are not, however, immune to death from other causes such as disease, poison, or wounds.

Particularly long-lived fey have trouble sorting through their memories, overcome by the staggering amount of information accrued by simply living. Younger fey (those born in the last two decades) wonder if they will see the end of their first century, as times are dangerous.

These differing perspectives, as well as the potential for a very long life, lead to a wide swath of fey personalities. If they live long enough, a fey can claim a vast variety of personas as part of their identity.

Storytelling

Readers familiar with conventional role-playing games know that they are often played with a group of friends. These player characters (PCs) design the fey creatures they'd like to pretend to be for a few hours. That said, who sets the scene for them?

If you're reading this document first, then congratulations! You likely will fulfil the role of Game Master (GM), creating scenes and portraying the world for your group Such is the task of they who reads first. Kidding aside, the GM facilitates rules and sets scenes between players and the world they're interacting with.

Better writers and more experienced designers than me have written about the mechanics of being a GM and a player. Sage La Torre and Adam Koebel, who wrote *Dungeon World*, are an excellent resource, as is Avery Alder who wrote *Monsterhearts*. Assuming you don't have access to these excellent books, here is some starting advice from GMs and players who've reflected after a few years of serious gaming. Take them with a grain of salt, and experiment with what works for you! Eventually, everyone finds their unique style of play.

- *Describe vividly by being specific.*
- *Don't tell characters what they feel; tell them what they perceive.*
- *It's not a competition.*
- *Aim for a good conversation.*

Describe vividly by being specific.

Much gaming is done in our heads. While props and drawings help (some friends like searching sites like Pinterest for inspiration for character pegs), at the end of the day, TRPGs are language-based games. This means we must be quite clear with how we communicate what we'd like to do, and what it is we see in the scene.

Many writing teachers tell us to "cut the fat" of adjectives and adverbs, but this is a form that benefits from ignoring that rule. Stephen Fry has lot of good things to say about language. Enjoy the game by immersing each other in words capturing as closely as possible what you see in your head. Speak to the senses, hone in on details, describe, describe, describe.

Don't tell characters what they feel; tell them what they perceive.

Telling people what they feel is, at best, a mild form of gaslighting. It's not a pleasant practice, and it's no less pleasant in an RPG. GMs and players who insist that they're affecting another player, in ways that make no sense to that player, exemplify poor narration at work.

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The temptation to tell others how they feel comes from a need to control the narrative. Try not to worry about it. The game offers everyone a chance at directing where the story goes.

Instead of telling others what they feel, try instead telling them what they perceive. Present the reality everyone is immersed in, and let them react. You'll get a far more honest game. For example, what's more effective: *"You feel nervous because you're giving a speech"* vs. *"All eyes are on you, awaiting your every word. Whatever you say at this point will be remembered and recorded in people's memories, archived, and referred to for the rest of your life."*

The first statement locks a player into a reaction not of their own choosing. The second one allows a player to choose how their reaction. For all we know, they'd relish the chance to perform and are about to declaim the best speech you've heard. Had a GM told that character how they felt, they would've locked their player from an opportunity to do something special.

It's not a competition.

TRPGs are games where everybody wins - if done right. Done wrong, the only person who feels any sense of accomplishment is the person that got what they wanted at the expense of other people's fun.

Showboating and being the centre of attention is fun (not that I know how that feels-) but remember people shouldn't feel like they need to compete for attention. Everybody needs to be engaged, but that won't happen if you're participating to beat someone in a game without points, trophies, or accomplishments outside of telling a story.

Some people think that the GM's role is to torture players by trapping them in unresolvable situations, which is silly—-if only because the GM cannot move on if everyone gets stuck. While this style of play suits some, it needs to be agreed before you even start play.

It's a collaborative game. Be there for each other. It's not a competition.

Aim for a good conversation.

It's not just a game, it's also a conversation. This means listening, ceding space to others, meandering, and pursuing the subject to its natural end. Avery Alder writes extensively on this in her book (I seem to keep referencing *Monsterhearts*, it's really amazing material), but I think it's wise when she notes: rules are there to mediate the conversation. The rules, however, can be broken (some would argue, are there to be broken, but that's another conversation), so how should the conversation work?

Think on your closest friends. How do you talk with them? Do you talk over each other, and let one person speak first while the other waits their turn? Do you control your excitement? How do you egg each other on?

A good friend told me that in conversations, I can take up a lot of "space," which gave him a hard time inserting his replies and opinions. This required adjustment on my part, though it stung to hear at the time—but I was able to really get to know him because I could actually hear what he had to say.

Games work the same way. We allow everyone the chance to be present—which, in turn, allows us to feel each other's presence. Aiming for a good conversation helps facilitate a happy gaming table.

Setting the Scene

A scene is where the action happens, frame after frame capturing what's going in a given episode of the game's life. Scenes establish character, setting, environment and set the stage for action. As scenes are where the game starts and ends, it's important to know how they're set—this information equips everyone at the gaming table to contribute to the conversation and vividly add details for everyone's enjoyment.

Scenes emerge by raising questions and the declaring of intentions. The GM might ask: what do you want to achieve? What's motivating you now? And the players' replies, indirectly or not, reveal what they intend to do, and what they would like to happen. There's no guarantee they'll get what they want, of course—-all endeavours come with the risk of failure—-but putting it out there gives a scene a sense of purpose and direction for the entire table to pursue.

An Example of Setting the Scene

Mari is the GM, and shares the table with friends Evan, Patrice, and Riley. Evan's decided to portray a mischief-making Sprite named Kirtle. Patrice's character is a rather testy and flirty Salamander named Blaze, while Riley has Gnobbles, a Brownie with a penchant for leaving pastries and cleaning messes wherever they find them.

The party had been painting the town red until Frey, an NPC, took badly to Blaze muscling in on "his" girl, and used his influence at the bar to kick the party out.

Mari: "You find yourselves unceremoniously dumped outside the bar, the bright pink neon lights glowing with what can only be called Satanic bemusement. The bar door slams shut before you, its Members Only sign clattering against the rusty steel door. The message is pretty clear: you're no longer welcome here."

Patrice: "How dare they! I was a paying customer! Who freaks out because I talked to 'his' girl?! Who even talks like that?!

Evan: "Blame the patriarchy, man."

Riley: "This won't do, this won't do at all. We're a mess."

Patrice: "I think Blaze wouldn't take this lying down. **I want to teach that Frey a lesson he'll never forget."**

Mari: Sounds pretty intense. **What do you hope to accomplish by doing that?**

Patrice: "Frey messed with the wrong person. He's about to learn that throwing your weight around comes with consequences. I'm going to melt that door and show him who's boss!"

Evan and Riley: "Awwww yeah!" / "What the heck?!"

The scene's set. We have a sense of place and conditions (outside the bar, the consequences of a previous action) and a sense of what's about to happen. Meanwhile, Patrice set Blaze's intentions —- he isn't going to take this lying down — declaring that Frey is about to learn a lesson he'll never forget. Mari is able to reinforce and confirm this intention by asking what sort of outcome Patrice hopes to achieve. At this point, all that's left is for Patrice to see if Blaze succeeds, and Mari to narrate (with good description) the outcome.

There is no hard and fast rule on how to declare intentions and ask questions. A good rule of thumb though is the rule of improv: "Yes, and?" Players can say yes to a number of possibilities laid before them, it's the GM's job to add outcomes to whatever players agree their characters do.

Making Moves

Now that we have a scene, we're ready to add some actions giving the scene some life - Moves. Players declare their Moves shortly after setting the scene.

This section only covers the four basic Moves that all characters can do. Individual fey have moves based on the kind of faerie magic they wield, and are covered later in character creation.

To make a Move, players need to choose an Attribute and declare how it applies to the Move they want to make.

Attributes

Other games call these ability scores, stats, power ratings, etc. No matter: in this game, Attributes are the facets of the fey that come into play when they wish to affect the world around them. These are:

- **Form -** governs acts of strength, agility, and physical endurance. The Attribute of Earth, the steadfastness of the mountain, the power of the land and its environs.

- **Intellect** - quick-thinking, quicksilver comprehension, seeing links and connections between theory and execution. The Attribute of Air, the speed of thought, the power of the storm and sky.

- **Heart** - empathy, charisma, and the sheer force of personality. The Attribute of Fire, the radiance of celestial orbs, the power of a will forged in flame.

- **Glamorie** - magic, fey power, the unknown. The Attribute of Water, the depth of oceans, the power of the inexorable wave.

These four Attributes are channelled into the four basic Moves to make things happen, fulfilling or making futile the intended outcomes of players in a scene. However, in each fey, not all Attributes are equal. Some fey are more aspected to their Form, while others show great Heart. These imbalances are reflected in the fey's Attribute ratings. These ratings are generated during character creation.

The Basic Moves

Characters get the strength of their power and ability from their Attributes, but these Attributes are limited in their scope and effectiveness because they can only power Moves in certain ways. The four Moves therefore, as only as adaptable as the fey who has mastery over their Attribute. A special trait known as the **Masque** refines this ability further.

This doesn't mean that a fey cannot do certain moves if they lack a rating in any given Attribute. It just means that in that sphere, the fey has little skill or talent, and will have to make do by trying their best.

Two Moves in particular need special attention: Fashion and Unmake. The Moves of creation and destruction are responsible for the developing and erasing of **tags**, which are special conditions that give the fey advantages under certain situations.

The four basic Moves are:

- *Decipher* - to gather information, to unravel the mystery of the world.

- *Overcome* - to resist and endure that would oppose or hurt you.

- *Fashion* - to create, to bring forth into reality, to make useful or active.

- *Unmake* - to destroy, to wipe from existence, to render useless or inert.

Making Rolls

Now we're ready to roll! All you need are two 6-sided dice. Roll both and combine the result with the relevant Attribute rating. You want to roll high, as in general, the outcomes of rolls are interpreted like so:

- 2 - 6: Your Move fails, and your character's intended outcome doesn't occur. This can result in narrative consequences to your character determined by the GM.

- 7 - 9: Your Move succeeds but at a cost; you get your intended outcome, but with consequences that are chosen from the list below.

- 10+ : Your Move succeeds, and your intended outcome comes to pass.

GMs and players are encouraged to work together and have that conversation: what do you think happens when you succeed? When you fail?

Attributes and Moves in Concert

Below are examples of how each Attribute can work in concert with each Move.

Decipher (To gather information)

- **Form -** feeling for wounds, tracking by scent, differentiating between heartbeats.

- **Intellect** - reading a map, learning a new language, mastering the personal library and filing system of a fallen god.

- **Heart** - anticipating a lover's needs, scanning for a gambler's tell, knowing the bullies' deepest fears.

- **Glamorie** - detecting magic, knowing the nature of a given enchantment, piercing the veil between life and death.

How the Move works: pose a question, and roll.

On a 2-6: the GM may provide details that may be inaccurate. Mark experience .

On a 7-9: the GM provides accurate detail, but choose 1 below:

Someone or something is aware that you are asking questions. You do not know who.

Your query is received in a threatened manner; the object of your inquiry becomes defensive, and might be unwilling to talk/reveal more. *Gain the Untrustworthy* tag.

On a 10+: the GM will answer the question to the best of their narrative ability.

Overcome (To endure or resist)

- **Form -** drink the bar underneath the tables, swallow toxins without harm, walk around with stab wounds to the gut.

- **Intellect** - disarm traps, guess the true name of a magical creature, engineer a bridge out of ropes and pulleys to cross a chasm.

- **Heart** - resist peer pressure, refuse a siren's charms, touch a closed-off heart.

- **Glamorie** - shake off the effects of a spell, engage in a Duel Arcane, break a magical shield.

How the Move works: identify what you are resisting, and roll.

On a 2-6: you are unable to resist the effect; the GM will narrates the consequences felt by your character. Mark experience.

On a 7-9: the effect doesn't work on you, but choose 1 below:

You are winded, and unable to move immediately.

You must focus all your effort resisting the effect; the causing your next Move to suffer a -1 penalty.

You twist the web of fate; an ally suffers the effect instead of you.

On a 10+: you are resilient; the effect doesn't work on you.

Unmake (To destroy, to break)

- **Form -** lash out physically, strike with a sword, shoot a gun.

- **Intellect** - redact a report, jam the mechanism, upload the magic equivalent of a computer virus

- **Heart** - foment distrust, spread dissent, gently end a relationship.

- **Glamorie** - break a spell, evaporate a potion, erase a glyph.

How the Move works: pick a target and how you intend to break it, and roll.

On a 2-6: your unmaking isn't strong enough ; your strength rebounds on you. Take 1 Harm to the Attribute used. Mark experience.

On a 7-9: Your target either takes 1 Harm to an Attribute of your choice if applicable, or you temporarily erase one of your target's tags; but choose 1 below:

You used too much power, take 1 Harm to the Attribute used.

Your act of destruction is not restrained enough; an ally suffers 1 Harm to the appropriate Attribute.

The GM creates a tag that may complicate your life.

On a 10+: your target either takes 1 Harm to the appropriate Attribute, or it gains a disadvantageous tag.

Fashion (To create, to generate)

- **Form -** manifest tangible items: a sword, a house, monuments, sculptures, rocks; healing physical wounds.

- **Intellect** - acts of pure performance and ingenuity: choreography, poetry, music, song, a computer program; restoring memories.

- **Heart** - relationships of purest intent: love, friendship, rivalry, community; healing psychic trauma.

- **Glamorie** - artefacts of fey power: a human form, a wall of light, a cloud of darkness; restoring fading enchantments.

How the Move works: state what needs to manifest, and roll.

On a 2-6: your act of creation isn't strong enough as power drains from you; take 1 Harm to the Attribute used. Mark experience.

On a 7-9: Your target removes 1 Harm to an Attribute of your choice if applicable, or temporarily create a tag for the duration of the scene; the creation manifests, but everything has a price. Choose 1 below:

You used too much power, take 1 Harm to the Attribute used.

Your act of creation is not restrained enough; what you made is bigger and grander than expected, attracting unwanted attention.

The GM creates a tag that may complicate your life.

On a 10+: your target either restores 1 Harm to the appropriate Attribute, or it gains an advantageous tag.

Tags and Harm

Actions have consequences, as seen above, and characters may determine these outcomes depending on how the die roll. These commonly manifest in two ways: a Tag, or Harm.

Tags, as mentioned earlier, are special conditions grant the fey advantages under certain situations of a descriptor that reflects the current scene. Examples include "*choking smoke*" applied to a burning building, or "*fabulously coiffed*" to a character fresh from the salon. Tags don't necessarily cause Harm but can be exploited making it easier to affect people whose lives are complicated by the tags.

This is often through use of the Unmake or Fashion moves. An active Tag can be tapped by anyone in the scene to for an advantage. Conversely, Tags can also be used to cause misfortune to those around them.

When a tag is activated, it gives a +1 bonus to the activator's die roll; or conversely a -1 penalty to the activator's opponents.

Tags typically last for a scene, unless carried forward through the narrative.

Harm, on the other hand, threatens the character's very existence. Sustaining enough Harm could destroy the fey, long lived as they are. Luckily, the fey have ways to restore themselves, typically using the Fashion Move.

There are different kinds of Harm, linked to each Attribute. Regardless of the Attribute's rating, every fey has 4 levels of Harm for each. When an Attribute reaches 4 levels of Harm, *the fey cannot use that Attribute to power any moves.*

If all Attributes reach 4 levels of Harm, the fey dies, and the time has come to retire them from the game.

An Example of
Moves, Tags, and Harm

Returning to the previous scene, where Patrice (Blaze) is out to give Frey a punishing lesson. Mari, the GM, is ready to narrate the outcomes of Patrice's roll, even as Evan (Kirtle) and Riley (Gnobbles) standby to join the action.

Patrice: *"All right, let's do this! I'm going* **to melt my way through that metal door."**

Mari: *"That sounds like an* **Unmake roll** *to me. Which Attribute are you using to power the move?"*

Patrice: *"Hmmm…" Patrice consults her character sheet. "I'm a Salamander, and I have the Masque,* **Heart of the Forge.** *I'm pretty pissed off at the moment. Can I use my Heart to manifest some super-hot fires?*

Mari considers it. *"Normally I'd say no, since that's usually a Form thing, but it does make sense since you're really angry—-plus fire is the element of Heart. I'll allow it!"*

Patrice picks up her dice. She has a Heart rating of 2 (her best rating), and is fairly confident she will succeed, tossing the dice onto a tray with a cocky show of force.

Maybe too much force, as she rolls a 1 and 3! Adding her Attribute ratings and her Masque (itself a **tag**) grants Patrice a total of 7. This means that she succeeds, but at a cost. Reading through the list, she would rather not sustain any Harm to herself, nor cause any to Kirtle nor Riley.

Patrice: *"Ulp. I guess this means* **I'll need to have the GM create a tag that may complicate my life.***"*

Mari grins evilly. *"Your tag is* **burning brightly.** *You're definitely going to attract notice wherever you go."*

Patrice: *"Welp… I'll make sure it's worth it!"*

Mari: *"You're burning with sullen orange fire, and it's gathered around you. How would you say the flames work?"*

Patrice: "I know! A beam of fire shoots from my hand, melting the door. The fire eats through it, giving me an opening to step through."

Riley: "Hey, not to interrupt. But can I check if anyone's noticed all this fire? Blaze is literally…blazing."

Mari: "Sure. How do you intend on doing that?"

Riley: "I'm going to **Decipher using Form**. My senses are pretty keen, I think." Riley thinks a bit. "Would it be stretching it to activate Blaze's tag? It's pretty obvious, so I guess it shouldn't be hard just to look out for the stares Blaze is getting."

Evan: "While Gnobbles does that, can I try to smother Blaze's fire? That stuff seems super attention getting if Riley's right."

Mari: "Riley IS right. Evan, you're going to have to **Unmake** it to remove the tag. Think you can handle that?"

Evan: "I'll smother it with **Glamorie.** Too bad I'm not that good at magic though. Here goes nothing!"

Mari instructs Evan and Riley to roll. Gnobbles has a Form rating of 1, while Kirtle has a Glamorie rating of 0. Gnobbles rolls at 4 and 5; normally, that would give them a 10, but activating the tag gives them a total of 11. Meanwhile, Kirtle has a terrible roll of 1 and 1, leaving him with a 2.

Evan: "WORST POSSIBLE SCORE AUGH! I get 1 Harm!" Evan marks one level of Harm to his Glamorie.

Riley: "Here's my question: Do I sense anything dangerous from any onlookers?

Mari: "Even as Kirtle tries to dampen Blaze's flames, it's just too much. The mantle of fire crackles around Kirtle's magic, singeing you despite your best efforts. To answer your question, Gnobbles: people aren't paying attention, so much as they're running for dear life. You might want to get away ASAP—-for sure the police are going to want to investigate stories of people on fire…"

Character Creation and Development

Who Am I?

Character creation in *A Touch of Glamour* is pretty straightforward. All you need to do is the followings steps:

What sort of fey am I? Choose a descriptor:

Brownie - helpful domestic sprites
Chimera - amalgams of different animals
Dragon - scaled winged beasts of legend
Dryads - spirits linked to the life of their tree
Giant - massive humanoids of great strength
Harpy - winged vectors of famine
Nereid - nymphs of running water
Ogre - brutal generals of goblin warfare
Salamander - fiery lizards
Sprites -winged elves of mischief
Sylph - fairies of the air and mist
Troll - clawed savages of tooth and horn
Unicorn - noble horses of healing

What do I look like? Choose a descriptor:

Eyes - blazing, crooked, dancing, dark, smouldering, flashing, prophetic

Hair - alluring, difficult, full, manic, shining, shrivelled, windswept

Body - enticing, gaunt, gladiatorial, reviling, tempting

Names:
Alanna, Bertrand, Carlisle, Deborah, Echo, Fianna, Gowther, Harlequin, Isidore, Jezebel, Kendrick, Lilith

Distribute the following scores between your Attributes: 2, 1, 0, -1.

Beginning Special Moves:

All fey have the following two special Moves:

- *Human Skin* - the fey's mortal identity, so real it interacts with the world as a human body would. If this is stripped, fey creatures must interact with the world in their actual forms. *There is only ever one seeming to each fey, unless otherwise specified.* To form and slide into their human skins, a fey would need to call upon their Glamorie to Fashion one.

- *Bestow Magic -* the fey can bless mortals so that they may work magic. This is what makes them so desirable to wizards and sorcerers. How it works: take 1 Harm of your choice; that mortal can use any one Move (Decipher, Overcome, Unmake, Fashion), with one of your Masques, once.

Masques

No fey has but a single face. They are the heroes and villains of many stories; sometimes serving both roles in the same narrative. Whether it be Seelie or Unseelie, Bright or Dark, the fey can don a Masque enabling them to further impose their will on the world's plot. Masques serve as an always present **tag** characters can use to their advantage; but like any tag, clever players and GMs can use the fey's own masque against them! Note that despite the names, Masques can be applied to other Attributes if used creatively.

Masques of Form.

These Masques often use Form to invoke effects manipulating physical figures.

- *Awakening of the Wild.* The fey's magic is attuned to the beasts of the land, allowing the fey to call on the strength of animals and their shapes.

- *Child of the Rose Garter.* Plants and flowers respond to the fey's magic, growing and wilting in accordance with their will.

- *Lapidary's Delight.* The fey's magic is attuned to gems and minerals; facets, the construction, and cutting of gems is instinctive to them.

- *Skin Weaving.* The fey may have more than one Human Skin. The skin, for all intents and purposes, is mortal; it is up to the fey how they balance their identity between Skins.

- *Tremors of the Earth.* The primal force of the earth is strong in the fey. Their magic is attuned to seismic activity and vibrations under our feet.

Masques of Intellect.

These Masques often use Intellect to invoke effects concerned with the powers of the air, the mind, illusion, and prophecy.

- *Airs of Superiority.* The fey's mind can catch the wind in all its glory, attuned to the forces of air and storm.

- *Born of Lightning.* Processing information is nothing to this fey, able to multi-task efficiently with lightning speed.

- *Fog of the Foolhardy.* Illusions are the fey's forte, getting things down right to the last detail.

- *Insight of the Ages.* No historical or factual detail escapes the fey's magical instincts - great at pub quiz and rooting out mysteries.

- *Prophet of the Mist.* The fey's magic is connected to divinatory forces, giving them access to powers of clairvoyance and oracular visions.

Masques of Heart.

These Masques often use Heart to invoke effects manipulating emotions, feelings, and the burning force of fire itself.

- ■ *Alluring Look.* Love, lust, and romance fall within the fey's purview; fey often use this to advance matters of the heart.

- ■ *Ashes in the Mouth*. The fey's magic is attuned to the strength of despair, lethargy, and sadness - terrifying in the hands of unscrupulous fey.

- ■ *Heart of the Forge.* The fey's power is attuned to heat, fire, and flames. Such forces roar in response to the fey's magic.

- ■ *Warm Thrill of Life.* Joy, mania, and heady feelings are tools in the fey's hands. Fey who don this Masque are often the life of any party.

- ■ *Volcanic Temper.* Anger, fury, and righteousness feed the fey's magic to potent effects.

Masques of Glamorie.

These Masques often use Glamorie to invoke effects that are concerned with the powers of water and the flow of magic.

- ■ *Aqua Sanitatem.* This fey's magic suited for tasks of healing and comfort. Fey gifted in this regard are often sought out by desperate wizards.

- ■ *Crash of the Wave.* The fey's magic is a tsunami against defences, particularly effective at dispelling and overpowering magical effects.

- ■ *Dam of Might.* The opposite of Crash of the Wave, those who don this Masque are excellent in aspects of defence, skilled at wards, shields and other magical protections.

- ■ *Infusion of Magic.* Fey who don this Masque are enchanters, skilled at adding magic onto existing objects.

- ■ *Walker of Water.* Water in all its forms come more easily to the fey's command, be it steam or ice, in spouts or streams.

Marking and Gaining Experience

Characters improve by learning from their mistakes and noting their successes. Using **experience** to improve their abilities. Growing with experience, characters also grow in skill and power. Gaining experience is a simple matter of marking whenever a character **fails rolls**, and if the characters and GM **answer "Yes" to any of the following questions**:

- Was the character able to embody the spirit of their Masques?
- Was a major story plot line thoroughly developed?
- Was a minor story plot line resolved?
- Were the characters able to defeat a significant obstacle or foe?
- Was there a sacrifice that was made for the good of all?
- Did the character experience a significant epiphany?

Spending Experience

For 4 Experience, a character may:
- Pick another Masque to don.
- Permanently bequeath a Masque one has on another to wear; losing access to that Masque until it is purchased again.

For 8 Experience, a character may:
- Raise an Attribute by 1,(maximum 3).

For 16 Experience, a character may:
- Grant a mortal permanent access to magical applications of one Basic Move.
- Remove a mortal's access to said magic - a gift, once given, is hard to reclaim.

Needless to say, granting a mortal the ability to wield magic is often a highly coveted prize for hunters of the fey. It is seldom granted, and seldom more than once. There are some mortals with the power to Decipher things beyond mortal perception, as there are champions of the fey who help their allies Overcome their existential threats.

Mortals who gain the power to either Fashion or Unmake are unheard of. Fey sensibility argues that such power should remain out of mortal hands. Yet some fey suspect these conventions have been broken before - and will be again.

Character Sheet - A Touch of Glamour

Name

Fey Type

Appearance
Eyes
Hair
Body

Attributes

Form   Intellect   Heart   Glamorie

Masques

Masque 1

Masque 2

Experience

Current Tags

Index, or
Making it Personal

Creating Lore

The act of creating lore is, for me, a fraught one.

The act of setting lore is essentially the act of anchoring a story. Grounding a story in a shared reality aims to make it possible for people from different places to convene and start from the same point of reference.

What makes it fraught—or to use that most practical of words, problematic—is that imposing those anchors grounds the story in *my* sense of reality, not necessarily that of those picking up this game. And to be frank about it, my sense of reality isn't perfect.

I've been described as a woke, liberal queer person of mixed race from people who share my economic background in my home country. If people from a different, less affluent economic background from my home country were to describe me (and they have, after years of community work with them), I've been called intimidating-until-you-get-to-know-him, unreachable-yet-kind, well-intentioned, and for those who disagree with my stance on our president—ignorant. Both identities, to some degree, are accurate; but which one of the two do you think I would prefer to own? As it rests, the reality I would choose to present, even if it's a fictional one, is still a declaration of preferred ideology where discursively, **I am trying to influence how people should feel about certain issues and/or myself.** If not done carefully, I might go beyond mere influence, and step into coercion.

This goes back to one of the earlier principles for running games: don't tell players what they feel; instead tell them what they perceive. Whether intentionally or not, the act of creating lore is laden with value-judgements. When we share details about a setting, we make a decision to say: you should know this lore because it is valuable. You should know this because it is interesting. By extension, we're also saying: **you should feel this is valuable and interesting.**

Now, this isn't to say that we shouldn't create lore in general. Many games have handled the subject of lore excellently, and many more expand existing lore into campaigns that everyone could share with joy. What I am saying on my end, however, is that my own sense of how a narrative should work does not fall into that paradigm. Rather than independently create a world for players to exist in, I am more comfortable creating that world together, particularly when there is player buy-in.

Instead, I find it useful to share my prompts, and ask what players think; and, in turn, I hope players feel safe enough to give their own prompts as well!

Using Prompts

So we're about to create a game world; we have snacks and pencils ready (one gaming group I know uses wet-erase markers on a battle matt, using the grid lines like notebook paper), and there's excitement in the air: we are about to create a world.

Personally, I enjoy doing this with a glass of Merlot, but to each their own.

Enter the conversation with the objective of making the game's premise concrete.

Sometimes, we take it for granted that we're all playing the same game. That may be true: but we may all **understand the game differently**. Now, people can have different ideas of what a narrative is about—-years of Shakespearean literary criticism has taught us that—but it doesn't follow that all these ideas can co-exist.

Game products are quite helpful in this regard, as they take often take pains to establish this for you so that you can play (buy) the game. (Pay attention to those marketing blurbs—-good products have good, blurby summaries). Still, simply asking, "**What is the game about? What are we playing here,**" are good ways to get the ball rolling towards a shared understanding of what we're doing as a group. It's also good idea to summarise this into a single sentence.

For the purposes of this example, let's assume that this game is what the title page is: **a game about fey creatures in a modern world.** Hang on to that sentence. We need it for the next step.

Identify the key terms.

Now that we have our premise, we need to define each term. For brevity's sake, let's assume our group has had a discussion, and agreed the key terms are: **fey creatures** and **modern world.** Sounds simple, right? Sometimes, it's easy as that. But there are times people disagree on what to focus on. Agreeing on the key terms basically asks and answers the question: what is important for us in a game?

This is the conversation that often reveals people's gaming (narrative) values. This isn't to say that there's always some sort of dissension—far from it. But it does reveal what kind of story people hope to tell.

Define the terms.

This, for me, is where a lot of the creativity begins. Now that we have our key terms, everyone at the table should ask: what does this (key term) mean? Then write that down. Afterwards, ask the table: **can we give any details or examples to clarify this definition?**

I can almost guarantee that the answers will be as varied as the number of people at the table. And here's where it gets more fun: **assume that all answers are correct.** By their nature, definitions house how a person understands a concept: you know a concept based on how it's defined. This method allows multiple realities at once, and gives us an idea of how big a concept is.

The bigger a concept, the more definitions that apply. Compare answers, then move on the next, then the next, until all the key terms are defined.

Collate and play.

We're done. Let's review what we've defined, and given examples of. Is this a clear picture of a world we're in? Is this the game we want to play?

Are the answers yes?

Then let's play.

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