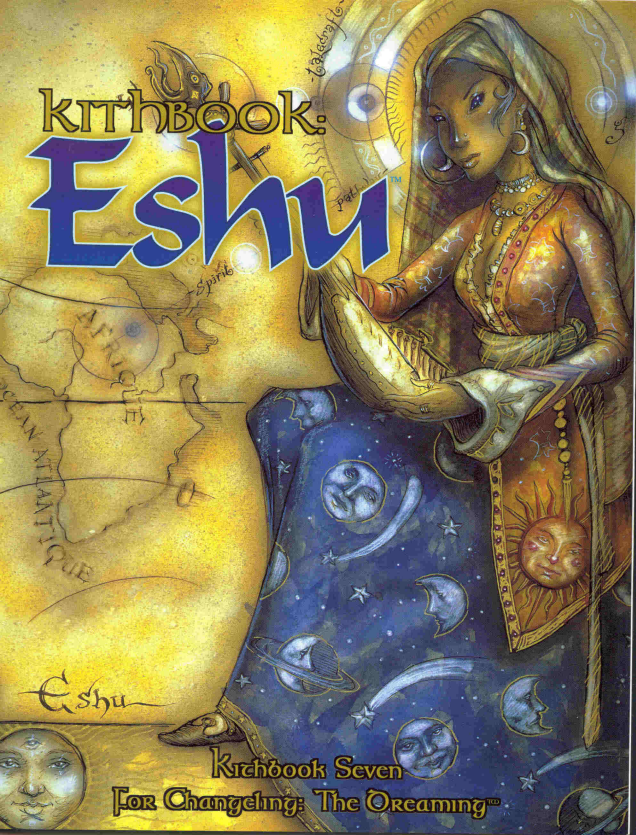


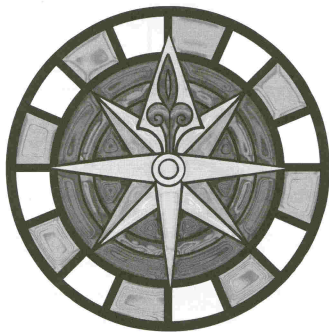
KITHBOOK: Eshu



Kithbook Seven

For Changeling: The Dreaming™

KITHBOOK: Eshu™



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Author's Dedication:

For Granny and Aunt Pat, who taught me how to tell stories right and live the eshu life in the first place; for Andy, who took every step ahead of me and made sure it was safe; for Us (you know who you are), because you put up with the same stories over and over again and, most of all, you know how much you mean to me; and for Aly, the shining light that I've been walking toward all my life.



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HOW ESHV GOT THE WORLD TURNING

So it came to pass in the early days that late one night a motley of changelings was sitting around the fire, trading stories. Troll told a story of bravery and honor, and the others were impressed. Sluagh spoke of a time when dark things crawled across the earth, and the others shivered. Satyr's words wove a tale of great passion, of love fulfilled at last, and the others smiled and cheered. Not to be outdone, pooka rose and solemnly related a fable of great nonsense and hilarity, and the others roared with laughter. Even redcap

told a story, and the others thought it worthy indeed, though none of them touched his food for some time after.

When at last all the kith had finished their tales, sidhe rose and stared imperiously down at the lone Elegbara, child of Eshu, who had sat silently at the outside of the circle the entire time. "So, wanderer," sidhe said haughtily, raising his shining golden goblet in a mock toast, "it seems that your customary place has been taken already, for we have heard all manner of fantastic tales tonight, and you have yet to speak at all. What say you to that?"

The Elegbara said nothing.

"What's the matter, strange one?" asked sidhe, trying to goad him to action. "Are you offended that we have usurped your role?" Still the Elegbara remained silent, and now sidhe began to become angry, for there was something in the Elegbara's small smile that made sidhe feel foolish, and if there's one thing that fills a sidhe with fury, it is appearing in any way undignified. "I'll wager it's because you know you don't have a story to top the ones we have heard tonight."

Of course, the Elegbara could not let a challenge like that go unanswered, as sidhe well knew, and while he had been content to listen before, he now rose to his feet and strode to the edge of the circle, where the heat from the fire was strongest. The other kith gathered before him to listen,

for all loved the Elegbara's tales of adventure and far off lands and were eager to hear his words. This made *sidhe* jealous, as it always did, but that itself is a tale for another time.

The Elegbara began, "One day, in the long ago times when the orishas walked alongside men and the great paradise of *Ilesha* was no farther than a two-day walk from anywhere in the world, *Eshu* was relaxing in the shade of a fig tree. All of a sudden his rest was interrupted by the sounds of many feet approaching. *Eshu* looked up and saw all the kings of the world coming toward him, their faces streaked with tears and their eyes wide with fright.

"Coming to him, they threw themselves at his feet and wailed as one: 'Oh, *Eshu*, most favored of the orishas, save us, save us! We beg you, take these sacrifices to *Olorun* and beg him to set the world right again.' And they laid many treasures of gold, silver and ivory at his feet, for *Eshu* was the messenger of *Olorun*, the greatest of the orishas, and would carry prayers and sacrifices to him from all corners of the mortal world. Seeing these great treasures, *Eshu* began to get an idea, but first he put on his most serious face and scowled down at them.

"What do you require of mighty *Olorun* that I should trouble him with your worthless trinkets?" he asked. And the kings of the world trembled and said to him, 'Ojo, the bringer of dawn, and *Iku*, keeper of the darkness of death, are quarreling over a maiden. Each wants her for himself, and

until the matter is settled they refuse to turn the world. Already half our kingdoms are as ice, and our people freeze in the darkness, and the other half burn in the ceaseless day, and the people shrivel and die of thirst. Oh, please, Eshu, tell Olorun to set all things right again!

"So Eshu promised them that all would be made right and sent them away, but he did not take the sacrifices to Olorun, for he was intrigued by the tale they told and decided to settle the matter himself. This was also his way, for Eshu was orisha of accident and chance as well and could never be predicted by mortals or even the other orishas. Instead, he filled his pouches with treasure and set off to find Ojo and Iku himself.

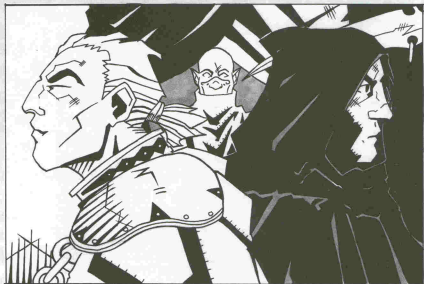
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"After much wandering and many adventures in the frozen wastes and the burning deserts, at last Eshu came upon the place where Ojo and Iku were warring, a palace constructed half of rays of brilliant sunlight and half of frozen pools of shadow. When he came into the main chamber, he saw the two quarreling orishas standing on either side of the room. Ojo stood in his bright raiment, with his great tome of enlightenment tucked under one arm, and

Iku crouched on the other side, dressed as a simple peasant farmer, but with a handsome face and bearing his fearsome scythe, which he used to reap the souls of the dead. Seeing these two with their most powerful treasures in hand made Eshu's idea grow bigger still, but he concealed his glee with a cough and announced himself.

"I am Elegba Eshu, guardian of the highways, messenger of the mighty Olorun, greatest of orishas," he proclaimed, and the two fell back a step, for Eshu was a powerful orisha himself, and they knew what he must have come to do. 'Your feud is laying waste to the many kingdoms of the world and must end this very day. Bring forward the cause of the dispute so that I may see what has caused two powerful orishas to forget their duties and act so much like squabbling children.'

"At this, the veils at the back of the chamber parted, and the most stunning young woman Eshu had ever seen stepped forward. To describe her radiance would be to do an injustice to her, for the words truly needed to do so belong only to the highest of gods and cannot be captured in this low tongue, no matter how skillfully spoken. One look passed between them, and instantly they were smitten with love for each other, and the plan that had been growing in Eshu's mind at last reached fruition. He rubbed his chin as one does in serious contemplation, hiding his smile, and said in his most solemn voice, 'Now, tell me of your dispute, that it might be settled fairly.'



"‘I was walking my paths across the world one morning, O great Eshu,’ began Ojo, ‘when I came across this graceful creature drinking from an oasis. I was struck by her beauty and so hid myself behind a cloud and watched her in secret. She is a wise woman, a fortune-teller, and brims with wisdom. I claim her as mine by right of affinity, for she too seeks to spread wisdom in darkness like the rays of the sun at dawn.’ Satisfied, Ojo glowed with radiance, proud that his lore had served him.

"‘This one may think he was first to spy her, O powerful Eshu,’ countered Iku, ‘but she has been mine from birth. When she was very young, I gifted her with the ability to see into my kingdom, to speak with the spirits of the dead, with the intention

of taking her to me when she came of age. I assert my claim by right of kinship.' At this, Iku displayed his great scythe, confident his instincts had won him the day once more.

"Eshu sat for a long time as if in deliberation, then rose and spoke to the impatient orishas. 'Both of you have an excellent claim to this maiden, and as messenger of Olorun I cannot deny one right in favor of the other, or sacred tradition is broken. Nor can you fight a duel, for to lose either of you would destroy the world for all time. And so there is but one solution left: the maiden herself must choose.' At this the two orishas both turned to face the girl, who cowered beneath the weight of their flashing eyes. But Eshu was clever and knew just what to do.

"Stop at once!" Eshu commanded, and they looked to him, puzzled. 'Can't you see the poor girl is overwhelmed by the presence of two such great beings as yourselves? How can she decide if her will is pitched back and forth between you like waves on the sea? She cannot.' Eshu let this knowledge settle on them for a moment then spoke once more, his eyes alight with mischief. 'There is an easy way to settle this,' he said, 'but I will need your treasures to do it properly.' When the two orishas protested, Eshu held up a hand, saying, 'They are what most represents you, are they not? Then give them to me, and I will take her out to the courtyard and let her examine them to see which she prefers. I myself will watch her closely to ensure that she judges them fairly and correctly. Should she

choose the book, I will entrust her to Ojo; should she choose the scythe, Iku shall have her for himself. Agreed?"

"Ojo and Iku were delighted by such a fair solution to such a difficult problem and gladly handed their treasures to Eshu. They then settled in to await the maiden's decision. An hour passed, then another, then yet another, but neither moved for fear of incurring Eshu's wrath. When a day had passed and there was still no word, however, Iku at last sprang to his feet, too impatient to care any longer, and strode out into the courtyard, Ojo following timidly behind. What else did they find but that Eshu and the maiden were long gone, leaving nothing but tracks in the shifting desert sands, having taken their treasures with them! For in their haste to have the maiden and their pride in their own strengths, they had forgotten that Eshu is the orisha of chance, who walks outside the rules and needs respect no traditions.

"With a great howl of outrage, Iku leapt from the castle and gave chase, followed shortly thereafter by furious Ojo. As they circled the world searching for Eshu, it began to turn once more, until day and night were restored to their proper place and the kingdoms of mankind were saved. Thus did Eshu start the world turning once more.

* * *

"Of course, that is not quite the end of the tale," the Elegbara said, his eyes alight with a mysterious radiance, his audience spellbound at his feet. "Because Ojo and Iku are still following him to this day, searching for their treasures. Over time Eshu took pieces of their treasures and planted them in the hearts of his children. So no matter how hard the two orishas searched, some of their treasures would always be out of their sight. That is why true children of Eshu have aspects of both day and night within them but strive to favor neither one or the other, as Eshu taught them. For to succumb too much to one is to ignore half of your very heart, and who can live like that?"

"It is also why it is our custom to hide from Ojo at midday, when his gaze is most watchful, and to stay silent for a time every night —" the Elegbara glanced at the Sidhe, whose cheeks burned with embarrassment — "so that Iku will pass us by. Since the kings of the world eventually discovered that Eshu had taken their treasures as well rather than giving them to Olorun, they forgot what he had done to save their kingdoms and set out to find him. That is why to this day we never stay long in any land, to honor Eshu's cleverness in escaping them."

"What about the maiden? What happened to her?" asked sluagh.

The Elegbara smiled. "She and Eshu had many children, and she herself had many wonderful adventures . . . but that is a tale for another night." So saying, the Elegbara bowed to his

audience, who laughed and cheered and applauded him louder than they had any of the others. This made sidhe more upset than ever, and he rapped his fingers on the arm of his wooden throne and thought dark thoughts of jealousy.

When the cheering and laughing finally lulled to near silence, sidhe put on his most gracious face, determined not to let a simple wanderer get the best of him. "Well spoken, friend of the trails, well spoken, but I believe that I actually once heard a much better telling of that particular legend, which featured —." Sidhe broke off as troll began tugging urgently on his cape to the sound of soft laughter from the others around the fire. At first annoyed, sidhe opened his mouth to admonish the commoners for interrupting him, then he slowly looked around, shock spreading across his face like ripples across a pond.

The Eleggbara was gone, as was the sidhe's golden goblet. Eshu had won another wager.





CHAPTER ONE: TALES FROM THE DAWN OF ALL THINGS

Standing Outside the Fire

*O great one, I pay obeisance,
A young child does not confront
The powerful;
I pay obeisance
To Elegba Eshu, who is on the road . . .
Eshu the awesome,
O powerful knife!
The awesome one, on the road.
—Traditional Yoruba song of praise*

Come closer to the fire, if you please. No, closer than that. Closer still . . . Have no fear — we mean you no harm. I can see in your eyes you're looking for introductions. You're also wondering how we knew just where to find you in this place you believed your very own, but soon that shall become clear. Suffice it to say that we are others of your kind, and we're here

to help you understand the new life you've only recently come into at last.

Please! Don't panic! When I said not to be afraid, I was sincere. We only wish to help. You have not only become part of a strange and wonderful world, but you have also inherited an ancient and powerful legacy as well, a noble line that stretches back to the dawn of time itself. It is our duty to teach you of your true heritage, that you might know it and walk taller for it in the days to come. Intrigued? Excellent! Trust me, the tale only gets better from here.

So please, settle down, warm your hands over the fire and allow me to begin. My name is Yves; it was I who first noticed your true heritage shining through, and I told these others to come welcome you with me. That's right, I call the Philadelphia area home as well, though that does not matter tonight. I will begin by telling you about the earliest times, when our kind strode the lands at the dawn of the world and breathed deep of the primal magic of creation. Listen, and be enlightened.

The Mythic Age

We were the first, as we shall be the last. Never let anyone tell you differently, child.

The *sidhe* would like everyone to believe that they were there in the very beginning, but it is simply not so. How do we know? Simple, young one: because *we* were there, and we looked all over the world, and they were nowhere in sight. You're laughing, but it's true. It was many years before we had any company at all, let alone before the *sidhe* crawled out from underneath their mounds of dirt and decided they wished to rule the world. But that is not the point of this story — at least, not yet.

No, back at the beginning of time came Olorun, whose name means *Owner of the Sky*. He looked down from his palace in the sky upon the emptiness of the world, which then was nothing more than sky and void and long stretches of dark water far below. So Olorun bid his younger son, Obatala, the maker, to fashion a world for him and fill it with people. He told his elder son, Orunmila, the diviner, to make for it a design so that it might run smoothly and that those who practiced *ifa*, the magic of the future, would be able to glimpse this design for themselves. Once the world had been fashioned and all manner of creatures, including humans, had spread across its surface, Olorun told Eshu, his linguist and messenger, to go down to the world and begin collecting sacrifices for him in return for having made all things possible.

Now, Eshu was only too glad to do so, for he held authority over roads and gateways and loved to cause mischief for those who did not give him the proper respect as they traveled. Understand, though, that then as now, Eshu was neither good nor evil, but simply himself. He pulled tricks because that was his way. The good learned, the wicked suffered, but neither mattered much to Eshu, for he was the servant of Olorun, and that was all he needed. Does that sound cruel? Perhaps. But it is the way of the *orishas*, and who are we to question that?

During the course of his travels, Eshu had many children, as was also his way — these children were only partly divine, of course, but they shared their father's laughter and his way of looking at the world, as well as some of his power. Restless with magic and unable to live in the villages they were born to, these children took to

the roads in search of their father, bringing chance and adventure with them as they went. Some sought to emulate Eshu and so traveled the land, teaching those they encountered, punishing the wicked and exploring places never before seen. They were the first of the *Ojo*, or followers of life, daylight and destiny. Others were angry at their father for leaving them, so they stole, told lies and played spiteful tricks on those who crossed their paths. These would become the *Iku*, or followers of death, darkness and randomness. In time there were so many of Eshu's children that the humans they encountered came to think these wanderers actually *were* Eshu, in his many disguises, and started worshipping them instead of offering sacrifices to the real Eshu.

Naturally, Eshu soon heard of this. Full of wrath for having his name stolen, he came down to the world to investigate. But when he saw what his children were doing and how the humans feared and worshipped them, Eshu only laughed, his anger forgotten. He saw that both groups of his children had learned his lessons only too well, and if the humans had tricked themselves, well, what fault of his children was that? Yet, even so, he could not overlook the fact that they had stolen his name, wickedly or not, and that demanded punishment, or else all the names of creation might be stolen, returning the world to emptiness.

Eshu thought for days and nights until he had the punishment just right, then he called all his children to him, from the noblest *Ojo* to the lowliest *Iku*. One group of his children, afraid he would punish them, fled from him instead, hiding in the wilds far away and preying on the weak to keep themselves alive. These cowardly beings became the first *aithu*, our ancient enemies, and to this day they still lurk at the edges of our tales, fighting over scraps of our glory. I will tell you more about them later, but for now all you need to know is that they alone refused Eshu's call and so did not hear his words.

For what else did Eshu tell his children but a great and powerful secret, the first hidden lore that the Tribe was entrusted to keep. From that day forward, they would be *Elegbara*, chosen children of *Elegba* Eshu the Powerful Knife, keepers of his sacred places and his messengers to the world. With solemn words, he commanded them to teach their children to follow in his footsteps as well, to

wander the roads, learn the world's secrets and test those they came across. So saying, he blessed them and kissed each of them on the forehead, sealing his magic within them forever, and then flew back into the sky, laughing all the while.

Although some of the new Elegbara stayed together, speaking of matters that concerned them all, most scattered to the winds once more. There was simply too much of the world that was still new, still unseen, for them to rest and think about things. Brimming with their new powers and backed by the blessing of an orisha, the Elegbara went ten times across the horizon, looking for the edge of the world. Soon fantastic tales began following wherever they went, for they feared nothing and took any risk that was offered to them, and so the legend of Eshu and his wild deeds grew even bigger. Those few who

had stayed behind became rulers of their lands and bonded with them, learning their secrets and tending their sacred places. These guardians remain there still, watching over the rest of our Tribe and keeping our hearth fires burning. They alone remain true to the pure bloodline of Eshu and have sacrificed the freedom of the trails to preserve our heritage and give us guidance when we threaten to wander too far apart. We know them as the oba, the chieftains of our kind. If you are lucky enough to travel their lands and catch their eye, someday you may meet one yourself. Be polite, child: the blood of our father flows through their veins, undiluted by time or chance or distance as it is in ours, and they have little patience for fools. You can gain much wisdom from them.

That is the beginning of how we became what we are today. Eshu's children gained their own name of power, Elegbara, and the magic to carry out the sacred duties of



their father in whatever way they saw fit — be it righteous Ojo justice or vicious lku vengeance. So, what did Eshu get out of it, you ask? Heh. You can never cheat fate, child, or, if you prefer to think of it another way, you can never master random chance. Eshu always comes out ahead in the end, and he did with us, too, his own children.

He got us to do his job for him, and be glad of it in the bargain. See? I told you he was clever.

The Sundering

Of course, nothing can stay perfect forever. While the Elegbara traveled far and saw much, the humans were learning a thing or two as well, and not the least of these lessons was to fear our kind. Their fear, combined with envy of our gifts and a desire to gain power for themselves, slowly turned the mortal world against us. They began developing greater weapons of destruction and ever more ingenious tools that would allow them to do things their fragile bodies were incapable of doing on their own. We marveled as the cities we visited became ever more fantastic, the customs more intricate and the works more impressive, but we failed to realize the motives behind these new innovations. We were so busy trying to teach that we forgot to learn, so when the realms of dream and flesh began to separate, we were caught completely off guard. It was actually worse for us, in some ways, because many of the trails we were accustomed to using became increasingly difficult to travel, and the distance between worlds frightened us, who had never had any trouble going where we pleased before. If only we had trusted our ifa and seen the signs, but we were too distracted.

Actually, it is not quite true to blame it on our nearsightedness, for along with traveling to these new lands and new cultures, we had just begun talking to the faerie folk who dwelled among the mortals that lived there. And we were fascinated. Many of us had wondered whether we were the only favored of the orishas, whether Eshu had been the only one to bestow his children with powers like we had, and so it was something of a mixed blessing to meet the other tribes. It was good to meet others who could understand something about the existence we knew. Some of them even seemed to understand life as we saw it. On the other hand, others could not

shake the prejudices of their mortal neighbors and took an instant dislike to us. I cannot claim that we did not return some of this hatred — you cannot wave a sword in a man's face and expect him to thank you for it. But even in those days we had already seen enough of the world to realize just how small and petty such feuds were. We tried to stay above them as best we could. Some of the tribes thought us arrogant or aloof for this, saying that we were convinced of our own superiority, but we didn't care. We knew better, and we kept telling our stories and trying to teach them our ways, that they might come to understand us.

It was an uphill battle, for many of them were barbarians, and while they had rich histories and legends of their own, they knew little of civilization. Do not bridle so; that is a modern reaction and does not suit this tale of ancient times. Indeed, thanks to our gifts as linguists, we had been able to absorb the teachings of the great empires that we encountered. From the mathematics and sciences of the Muslims to the astronomy and mysticism of the Egyptians to the seafaring and metal-working of our own kingdoms on the coast, we were often years — if not decades — ahead of the humans around us. This is not a statement of prejudice, but simply the truth. Oh, certainly, they taught us much as well, but in the end was it not the barbarians of the north who imitated the cities of our countrymen? There was much give-and-take on both sides. In time, we even came to enjoy the strange ways of the ile-titu, the pale folk, for we made them part of our own.

Eventually we were able to get along with most of them, until we finally braved the icy winds and tossing seas that brought us to the shores of the sidhe homeland. It was a meeting that would decide the course of our polities for more than a millennium, as well as mark us as forever different from the other tribes.

At Last We Meet: The Sidhe

Our first meetings with the sidhe did not go as well as we had hoped. They allowed us into their halls and listened to our words of friendship and diplomacy, which we respected. Yet it was evident in their very manner that they did not consider us their equals, but merely another

tribe that would soon bend knee to them. We had long heard whispered stories about them from the others, tales of rulers whose every gesture exuded majesty and whose beauty was so great their slightest word could break hearts — or stop them entirely. The sidhe had cowed the other tribes, often without even so much as lifting a single sword against them, simply by virtue of their beauty and the aura of power that radiated from them.

Perhaps they thought that upon meeting them we would be impressed as well and rush to fall in line behind them. But we were used to the majesty of the oba, and so while still dangerous in their intensity, the graceful looks of the sidhe were not sufficient to sway us. Nor were the pretty words they had used on the others, for we have glib tongues and see the true meaning behind flowery speeches. Not even their warriors frightened us, for we fight capably alone, and the group that went to greet the sidhe was composed of the finest, bravest Elegbara of that generation, a match for a force a hundred times their size. The talks quickly faltered as the sidhe realized that neither their charms nor their threats had their usual effect. They struggled to come up with some other way to control us. For our part, we tried to fight the dislike we initially developed for them. We searched for a diplomatic way of convincing them to recognize the titles of our own lands. More than a few of our scholars still argue over whether there might yet have been some way it could have worked out, if only they hadn't tried so hard to dominate us, or if only our honor was not so easily offended. I've known many sidhe in my lifetime — some good, some bad and some indifferent — and I must say, as sad as it sounds, I doubt our tribes could ever truly have met amicably. We're simply too alike in all the wrong places and too different in all the others. We can eventually become friends, with some understanding, but only after a long time spent testing and questioning each other.

Unfortunately for all concerned, things escalated from a deadlock into violence. The sidhe commanded us to recognize their sovereignty before they would consider acknowledging our own, a demand we immediately refused. Blades were drawn, blood was shed, and the Elegbara left the castle of their sidhe hosts resolved to never submit to the authority of this strange new tribe.

Naturally, word spread quickly among the other tribes. A group had dared stand up to the almighty sidhe? In their own homeland? And survived? Some looked at us with more suspicion than ever before, considering us omens of anarchy and ill fortune. Others applauded our defiance behind closed doors rather than out in the open. Suddenly the balance had shifted, another path opened in the darkness, and the so-called Shining Host did not like it one bit. They wanted to be the only leaders the others felt they could turn to, and so they denied the truth that all are children of the orishas and have the power to grasp their own destinies.

A response was inevitable. The sidhe sent messengers far and wide, bearing stories of how we were wicked tricksters, honorless bandits and shiftless foreigners, outsiders who were not to be trusted. Never underestimate the cunning of the sidhe, child. Rather than take the field against us, as we expected them to do, they instead turned our own means against us, spreading tales that twisted our strengths into flaws in the eyes of those we traveled among, using their command over the other tribes to make these slanders carry weight. So now, instead of seeing us for what we were, the other tribes saw us fulfilling another one of the sidhe's wicked lies. No matter how hard we tried to persuade them otherwise, most of them sided with the sidhe, either out of loyalty to their masters or fear of reprisal.

What could we do against that? We could not go to war with them, or it would play into their tales of "wicked heathen conquerors." Besides, we knew they would only bully the other tribes into fighting on their behalf, and that would only make the others hate us even more. Indeed, even when we stood beside our families during the Crusades, doing little but help protect our kin, they still managed to paint us as barbarians and cannibals standing in the path of their God. (Us! Barbarians! To even think of it!) Yet neither could we be silent in the face of such charges, and so while we could not raise our fists against our enemies, we did our best, by stories and by example, to let the others know that we were not the cowardly bandits their leaders warned them about. It was a long and difficult road, but that is the only kind we truly enjoy, and we had made some progress along it when the world shifted once again.

The Shattering

We saw the Shattering coming before the rest of the tribes, but thanks to the stigma attached to our words by the sidhe, the others refused to listen to us, to everyone's eventual regret. For our part, we had learned from the lesson of the Sundering and now trusted the ifa to show us a glimpse of the will of the orishas. What we saw horrified us, for while we watched and even encouraged the enlightenment of our mortal cousins, we never suspected the darkness in their hearts to have attained such power as to completely sever this world from the Dreaming. I suppose that seems the obvious next step to modern eyes, child, but you must remember first that these changes took places over decades or centuries, not just in the span of one terrible night. That made it easy for the others to deny it was happening, you see, for a slow slide is seldom obvious except to those who are willing to listen to the most unpleasant truths. The other tribes firmly believed that the damage of the Sundering was temporary, that it would heal in time. When we brought word of the devastation to come, they closed their ears to us. The Elegbara wandered and watched, tricked and told tales as always, but did so with the bittersweet knowledge that what we saw before us was soon to fall to pieces.

We did enjoy one moment of triumph when the Shattering finally hit. We watched as the sidhe, so strong and brave, ran like terrified children at the first sign of true danger. A few stayed behind, outcasts to their own kind. These showed the only touch of true nobility we've ever seen in that tribe. They alone retain our respect, to this very day. Even this victory had a sour taste, however, for in their haste to return to Ilesha, the sidhe slew any commoners who got in their way. And once they had made their way into the kingdom, they closed the gates, locking out even those tribes loyal to them. We do not regret that the others saw the illusions of their glorious rulers shattered. But the loss of life surrounding the ignominious retreat of the sidhe was most terrible, the greatest suffering fae had ever inflicted on fae. For that we wept, for it could have been avoided if the others had only been free to hear our words.

The Changeling Way

Wait a moment, you say, were not the Elegbara already half-mortal, the children Eshu made with mortal women? Didn't they already have mortal disguises? The answer is both yes and no. Yes, Eshu did have children by mortal women, and the Elegbara could use their heritage to appear human when they desired. At the same time, they were not in the least bit human, at least not before the Changeling Way ritual was adopted to hide from Banality. They were what Western scholars would call demigods, more than human but not truly divine. We know them as orishas. Those Elegbara who lived before the Shattering were to us what ordinary humans are to ants, or what the Tuatha de Danaan are to the sidhe. We are but shadows of their power and greatness.

The fact that they had sometimes taken a semblance of human form did make it easier to accept the ritual, in some ways. Most Elegbara spent at least some time living among mortals. What's more, their command of mortal history and traditions meant they understood something of how humans lived. This helped ease some of the trauma of transition. Oh, make no mistake, child, the taking on of mortal disguises was no less long and painful for us. We were simply better prepared for it.

The Interregnum

Having been prepared by reading our own ifa, the Eleghara were hit less hard by the change than were the rest of the tribes, though the cold grip of raw Banality was still brutal. Indeed, while most of Europe fell into panic and despair alongside their faerie cousins as the old ways faltered and the Black Death stalked the streets, our homelands were cleaner, and we actually enjoyed a modest period of enlightenment during the chaos in the north. True, no longer could our oba rule mortals directly, but humans had learned much from us in the meantime. Oba became myths instead, models for future caliphs and chieftains to emulate, rather than actual rulers to be heeded. Likewise, stories of Eleghara wanderers became folktales and proverbs, teaching others the folly of their ways but no longer bearing testimony to our existence. Such is one price of our disguises, I suppose.

In time, the other tribes began to seek us out, and we struck up talks with them once again. Only a few apologies were offered, but we did not mind, for they had suffered much at the hands of their treacherous leaders. We did not wish to stir up further ill will in a time already overflowing with it. The first motleys formed, offering protection and companionship

across tribal boundaries. Freeholds lit their Balefires for warmth against the chill outside, creating places of solace and hope. Wise agemo gathered circles of those who knew our ways, and supported us. Faerie society endured. Little by little, hope returned as well.

And that, child, is the final lesson to be learned from the Sundering, the Shattering, the Interregnum, even the modern era — hope. It doesn't matter what kind of challenge is set before us. We will triumph and even flourish. With this in mind, what came next isn't nearly so surprising.

The Age of Exploration

In the wake of the great plagues and our own adoption of the Changeling Way ritual, the mortals began the most interesting time we had ever seen, the days of exploration, when mortals turned their sights to the horizon in search of adventure, discovery and prosperity. Historians have spit on this time since then, and not without some cause. After all, many of these explorers

were craven pirates interested in little more than their own personal gain.

The fact remains that it was a thrilling time for us to be alive, child! We were still reeling from the Shattering, and these voyages provided us with a much-needed way to regain something of our former glory. Here we could be in our element once more: tossing seas,



mysterious shores, strange cultures, forbidding odds. Even better for us, most captains didn't care what color their sailors happened to be or what "superstitions" they held as long as they could keep the ship afloat and moving. This allowed us to overcome some of the traditional prejudices of the times and mix freely with the other tribes. It was a time of new ideas and new beginnings, and mortals and fae alike were in dire need of both, not to mention the strange new world only just being discovered.

Indeed, no one quite knew what to make of the paradise that was promised as waiting just an ocean away. I believe everyone saw in it precisely what she needed to see. Some of our kind sought the land beyond the sea because they believed it would be free of Banality. Others simply wanted peace, homes where they could raise their children away from the ancient feuds and warring kingdoms of their homelands. Still others thrilled to the song of conquest and exploration in the name of some higher power, or even simply for their own glory. Regardless of the source, the mortals dreamed of it feverishly as well, and on the long voyages we would soak ourselves in their vibrant, hopeful Glamour until we were nearly drunk with the sheer joy of it!

More than a few ships of the age were crewed entirely by Kithain and sailed the seas of the Dreaming as well as the oceans of the mortal world. They form the basis for many of the legends of "ghost ships" that would be sighted in one place, only to appear somewhere else far distant the next day. Some of these carried settlers, just as their mortal counterparts did, but more than a few of them were used for exploration alone. As often as not, Elegbara could be found as either captain or crew for such vessels.

Of course, not all of our ancestors chose professions that were quite as honorable. As soon as they took to the seas, many Elegbara became feared for their skill as pirates and privateers. It must be admitted that it was their style and flair for the dramatic as often as their actual victories that accounted for many of these legends. Carousing in alehouses with rowdy satyrs (while a trusty troll first mate watched the ship, of course) and crossing

swords while trading quips with vile redcaps and vicious nockers were the order of the day. So were trading tall tales of travels past with pooka in a smoky tavern or thumbing your nose at a mortal navy while you set sail into the Dreaming. Those were truly days of greatness, child.

Even now, in the Fiefs of Bright Paradise, there are still pirates real and chimerical, and it's a safe bet to say that more than half are Elegbara. Indeed, the self-proclaimed Pirate Queen of the region, Hanna "Dark Tide" Alawe, is one of our own, and her skill with cutlass, sails and ifa keep her one step and one move ahead of all who attempt to catch her.

The Triangle Trade

I can see in your eyes you were wondering when this topic would come up. There is little I can say about it, for even we become speechless when struck with too much horror. The practice of taking and trading slaves is possibly the oldest and most shameful invention of humanity. I cannot deny that sometimes the most wicked fae would steal mortals to use as virtual slaves in their illego, discarding them when they were of no further use. But those facts do nothing to offset the actual experience of the Triangle Trade — the brutal raids, the humiliating auctions, the terrifying voyages upon ships packed tightly below deck, and the horror of surviving only to die in a faraway land after a life of backbreaking labor. Many of our kind were lost alongside their kin. If the iron manacles most traders favored did not kill us outright, the denial of our freedom made us as good as dead, in mind if not in body.

If there is one thing you can be sure of, it is this. No Elegbara were involved in any part of the slave trade, not ever. That may sound very pat and convenient to you, but I swear it is the truth, as Olorun rules above. It is simply antithetical to our nature in the most fundamental way. To trade in slaves would destroy one of us in days, as this is perhaps the most severe violation of Uhuru there is.

So, why did it continue in our lands, you ask, if we were so opposed to it? There were simply too few of us and too many mortals possessed by greed. A worldwide net-

work of our kind known as the Freedom Swords was established to try to unseat the vile practice. They fought their battles in secrecy, and legends of their cunning ruses, daring rescues and midnight raids have since become the Elegbara equivalent of your "Robin Hood" tales. Even they were only a handful of heroes thrown against a tenacious and monumental evil. Never underestimate the hold that money creates. There is no assessment of blame, only a legacy of guilt, suffering and sorrow that persists to this very day.

The Industrial Revolution

We had little interest in the new movements mortals were making with factories and assembly lines, save to avoid them. Instead, we kept our energy focused on the ongoing exploration occurring in various colonies and territories around the world, continuing to push ourselves always just beyond the fringes of mortal habitation. We wept for the nunehi, who endured hardships much like our own kin had at the hands of the settlers, and did our best to bring word of impending attacks to them before it was too late. Sadly, they were already deeply scarred by the loss of their homelands, and most bid us to depart without hearing our words.

The atmosphere of the westward movement was different as well. Unlike the boisterous excitement of the open sea, these journeys filled mortals with a grim, humorless disposition that puzzled us. Was this how they viewed their new promised land? We sensed something deeper to this but could never quite place it.

The only thing that truly captured our interest was the growing field of transportation — steam engines, locomotives, automobiles, even the early attempts at heavier-than-air flight. As a Tribe, we were divided. The Ojo preferred to walk, as is our ancient custom, or at most use a mount if the need was pressing. The Iku loved the new devices and quickly set to mastering them, in the process creating a friendship with the nocker kith that lasts to this day. The possibilities these new machines opened up, and the Glamour we harvested from mortals who dreamt of their potential, was a welcome surge of strength in a world becoming increasingly unrecognizable.

The Twentieth Century

When the twentieth century began, it was as if some unseen switch had been pulled, turning the world ever faster. Ifa became muddled and confused, ever harder to understand, as the future swirled uncertainly in the hands of the orishas. It quickly became obvious what some of the grim quiet of the past century meant. Humanity was close to reaching a boiling point with their science, their technology and their numbers, and it was bubbling over at last. We thrilled to the wildness of the '20s, battled terrible evil worldwide in World War II, went on the road with the free spirit of the beatnik '50s and hippie '60s, and celebrated the explosion of freedom and democracy at the end of the '80s. Humanity made it clear that it was capable of greater evil than it had ever known, true, but also that it was setting its sights to greater achievement than ever before. In 1969, still flush with the Glamour of the music and expression of the times, we watched with the same awe as the rest of the world as the first humans took their steps on the moon. We cheered and thought to ourselves that maybe everything would turn out all right after all. Little did we know that the same act of human glory would also bring back the ancient rivals we had believed gone forever, the sidhe.

The Resurgence

When the Shining Host came flooding back through the gates of Ilesha, we stood transfixed at the sight. While the other tribes were mute with fear and wonder, we were stilled by a great sense of anger and sadness, for we knew what must surely come of their return. In the centuries since the sidhe fled, we had joined with the other tribes to keep faerie society from falling apart. We'd endured terrible hardships together and even taken great steps toward reclaiming some of our past glory, if not in front of mortal eyes, then at least in rebuilding the chimerical world. There was a stronger sense of unity and brotherhood among the Kithain than ever before. What's more, the rise of democracy and the idea of freedom and equality for all ensured that each generation was more egalitarian than the last.

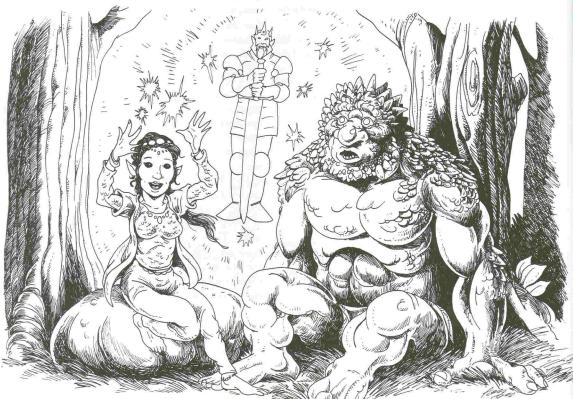
Though it was a hard road and the journey to true unity is still far from over, we saw how much the tribes had accomplished working together in the time since the Shattering. We knew that the sidhe would shatter it all in a heartbeat.

The Accordance War

Our role in the Accordance War is well known. We were ambassadors and diplomats, suing for peace with the sidhe in back rooms and audience chambers, trying to make them see the world was not and could never again be their tidy little fiefdom. When those means failed, we were scouts, skirmishers and assassins, using our gifts to hit our targets and then fade quietly into the night. Our impassioned speeches stirred the commoners to resist the wiles of the sidhe, while our slashing steel assured them that we were more than willing to back up our words with deeds. When the tide of the war turned darker, we joined the now-legendary "suicide squads," like Oklahoma's noble Thirteenth Brigade, Jersey's defiant Storm Crows and the itinerant fanatics of the infamous commoner

Wolfpack. When their last stand finally came, facing down a forest of sidhe pikes, this latter group alone was responsible for the deaths of nearly a hundred of the enemy. Elegbara fought with passion, knowing full well that sidhe rule could mean only a reinstatement of the oppression and distrust of centuries past.

Oh, it is true that some of our kind served on the side of the sidhe during the war, primarily Ojo, who believed it was the will of the orishas that the sidhe had returned to rule. But the majority of Elegbara fought them to their last breath, Ojo and Iku alike. And while we can understand some of the oaths and inclinations that drove the loyalists of the other tribes to assume their places beneath the sidhe once more, we can only weep for what might have been if they had refused to hear their former masters' call. If the other tribes only had the courage to stand up for themselves and recognize that they did not need the sidhe leading them, that they had made their greatest achievements *after the sidhe fled* (in disgrace, no less), what a different world we might have now!



The High King Ascends the Throne

When High King David Ardry ap Gwydion took the throne, I must confess there was a long period of bitter anticipation among the Eleghbara, for we had already felt some of the bite of sidhe displeasure and fully expected him to follow the lead of his fellows and view us with the same contempt. To our great surprise, he did not, nor did he back down in the slightest on his vow to create a representative parliament, grant amnesty to commoners captured during the war or any of a dozen other promises made during his early days on the throne. Even under pressure from his fellow sidhe to cast the commoners aside and rule with aloof authority, he lived true to his promises of friendship to all and did his best to mend the wounds of the war and heal the fae of Concordia. If anything, we were the untrustworthy ones, inspecting his every word and deed for some sign of treachery or animosity, and so we wound up missing out on many of the early policy decisions of Concordia because we would not accept his oft-offered hospitality.

While we could never bring ourselves to trust the sidhe as a whole, over time we grew willing to accept and eventually follow David's lead. There was hope in the kingdom, even with unrest in the mortal world and whispers of Winter looming on the horizon. Noble and commoner had their differences, and bad blood still ran deep for some members of both sides, but David did his best to bridge the gap, and so our kind had a time to heal and renew its ties once more.

A King Is Lost

This is the saddest of tales. Across the sea, an ifa to Kotoyesi, ruler of the Kingdom of Ife and the greatest

living oba, had a vision in which the High King disappeared in a cloud of blackness and the kingdom of Concordia was pitched into chaos, spreading a blood-red stain across the world. As the kingdoms fell to steel and fire, a wolf bearing the moon in its jaws dropped from the sky and bounded across the world. Where its paws touched the earth became cracked and frozen, as if in the grip of a terrible frost. A dark star burst to life in the heavens, and then there was silence like the grip of death surrounding all things under the sky. Kotoyesi immediately dispatched Hazir and Akuko, his swiftest runners, along the fastest trods he knew, all the while trying to contact the High King through modern means, but it was to no avail. Hazir and Akuko were lost without a trace somewhere along the great trods that cross the sea, and Kotoyesi's attempts to raise the royal palace at Tara-Nar, or indeed anywhere else in Concordia, were greeted with a maddening electrical silence. By the time the connection was re-established, it was too late — David was missing, and Concordia was in an uproar.

Now, child, it appears war is once again on the horizon, as old hatreds rekindle and the dark faerie tribes return to the world. Likewise, mortals have reached unparalleled heights of progress but once more splinter into factions that can only bode ill for global harmony. Are we on the verge of a new Spring or an Endless Winter? It is a darkening time, but the dawn of a new millennium as well — a time, in short, of great unpredictability, when accident and chance seem as much the rule as purpose and destiny.

That's right, child. It is our time. At last, it is our time.



Lexicon

Traveling as far and wide as they have, it is no surprise that the Elegbara have come up with a number of different names and descriptions of things they encounter in their travels. Though the language tends to vary from region to region, some terms have remained nearly constant since the beginning of the Tribe

Abeokuta (ah-BEH-o-koo-TAH) — Literally, "under the rocks"; the name of a city. Also used by the Elegbara to indicate the underworld or those things that dwell there.

Abiku (ah-bee-koo) — A ghost or restless spirit, derived from legends about stillborn children who would return repeatedly to plague their parents. Also mule (MOO-ley).

Agemo (ah-GEH-maw) — Literally, a chameleon; used by the Elegbara for their kinain, or blood relatives, since they blend in with both faerie and mortal society.

Aithu (EYE-thew) — The debased Thallain counterparts of the Elegbara, these scavengers have escaped imprisonment in the Deep Dreaming and recently returned to Earth. They travel in packs and subsist mainly by thievery and confidence schemes.

Awo (ah-WO) — A secret cult or society, or just a single secret.

Bete (BET-eh) — A shape changer, one of the many tribes of beast-people in the world.

Elegba (eh-LEH-GBAH) — A praise name for the orisha Eshu.

Elegbara (eh-leh-gbah-RAH) — A different name for the orisha Eshu; taken as a family name by his changeling descendants, who also refer to themselves as Eshu's Chosen or variations on that title. Can be either singular or plural, depending on context.

Engai (n-GUY) — A sentient chimera, or chimerical beast; also used by shamanistic Elegbara for the spirits of the natural world.

Eshu (ay-shoo) — The orisha of accident, chance and unpredictability, messenger and linguist to the great orisha Olorun, a trickster who watches over gateways and highways. Father of the Elegbara tribe of changelings. Eshu is also the Kithain name for the Elegbara; while the name is not disrespectful, they prefer the latter, as it is more unique to them.

Griot (GREE-oh) — A storyteller and oral historian responsible for remembering the lore of a tribe and passing it on to the next generation. Many oba eshu are griot to their tribes.

Ifa (ee-FAH) — A name for the orisha of divination, Orunmila. Also used to designate the actual tools and processes of divining. Also the Elegbara name for the Soothsay Art.

Ijapa (ee-jah-PAH) — Literally a tortoise; the animal trickster hero of Yoruba legend. An Elegbara name for the pooka kith.

Iku (ee-koo) — Death and darkness; also used as the Elegbara equivalent to Unseelie.

Ile-Igbo (ee-lay-EE-GBO) — Literally, "a jungle place"; any mythological city or location. Also the Elegbara term for a freehold; sometimes called a *hounfour* (hon-four).

Ilesha (ee-LAY-ee-shah) — Translates to the House of God; a paradise, considered equivalent to the Kithain ideal of Arcadia.

Ile-Titu (ee-LEH tee-TOO) — A praise name for the orisha Sonponno; has also become an Elegbara slang term for those of European ancestry, as it literally translates to "of cold ground," and Sonponno is the orisha of disease, which ran rampant during the days of early contact with the white folk.

Iroko (ee-ro-ko) — A variety of oak tree; also the Elegbara name for the ghille dhu kith.

Itiyee (ee-tee-YEH-REH) — An uncommon slang term for sidhe, derived from traditional ceremonial characters who have extremely exaggerated long ears.

Jakuta (JAH-koo-TAH) — A praise name for the lightning orisha Shango, meaning *Stone Thrower*. The Elegbara name for the troll kith.

Kehinde (KO-EEN-day) — Lastborn of twins; the Elegbara name for the piskey kith.

Kokumo (KO-KOO-maw) — A personal name that translates to *He Will Never Die*; the Elegbara title for the Egyptian ruler Osiris specifically, as well as all others who underwent the transformation into the Undying.

Oba (AW-bah) — A ruler or king. Also used to indicate a noble race of Elegbara, the last pure bloodline descended from Eshu, who have stayed behind to guard the ancestral homelands of their Tribe and offer guidance to their traveling cousins. Fewer than a hundred are known to exist, and they are entirely unknown to the Kithain at large.

Obatala (aw-bah-tah-lah) — The orisha who created dry land and the first humans. Son of Olorun and younger brother of Orunmila.

Ogun (O-goön) — Orisha of iron. Also the Elegbara name for Dauntain and other hunters of changelings.

Ojo (aw-jaw) — Daylight and life; the Elegbara equivalent of Seelie.

Olokun (O-LO-koon) — Orisha of the sea. The Elegbara name for selkies, and to a lesser extent other aquatic kiths.

Olokuta (O-LO-koo-tah) — Orisha of stone; the Elegbara name for the nocker kith.

Olorun (aw-LAW-roon) — The supreme orisha and ruler of the sky; roughly equivalent to the Western notion of God.

Olu-Igbo (o-loo-EE-GBO) — Orisha of the bush and the wilderness; the Elegbara name for the satyr kith.

Opa (aw-PAH) — A staff, the favored weapon of many Elegbara.

Orisha (o-ree-shah) — A god or demigod, often a deified ancestor. Viewed as "patron saints" of their particular realms of control, they are offered prayers and sacrifices in return for their favor. For example, all Elegbara offer praise and sacrifice to Eshu, their father

orisha, to assure them of good luck in their travels. Also loa (low-ah).

Orisha-Nla (o-ree-shah-nLAH) — Literally the "Huge Orisha," it is another name for Obatala, maker of the earth. It is also used to refer to a number of lesser orishas created from pieces of Obatala's body, who watch over the elements. Also, the Elegbara name for the Inanimae.

Orisha-Okò (o-ree-shah O-KO) — The orisha of agriculture and the hearth. Elegbara refer to the boggan kith by this name, or sometimes by the shortened version of *oko*.

Orunmila (aw-ROON-mee-lah) — Eldest son of Olorun, and the orisha of divination.

Oshosi (aw-shaw-see) — The orisha of hunting; also, the Elegbara name for redcaps.

Rom — Conventionally known as Gypsies, this itinerant culture has long ties with the Elegbara, especially their Urmen family. They distrust non-Gypsies, to the point where even Elegbara of Rom descent distrust others of their kind. They speak Romany.

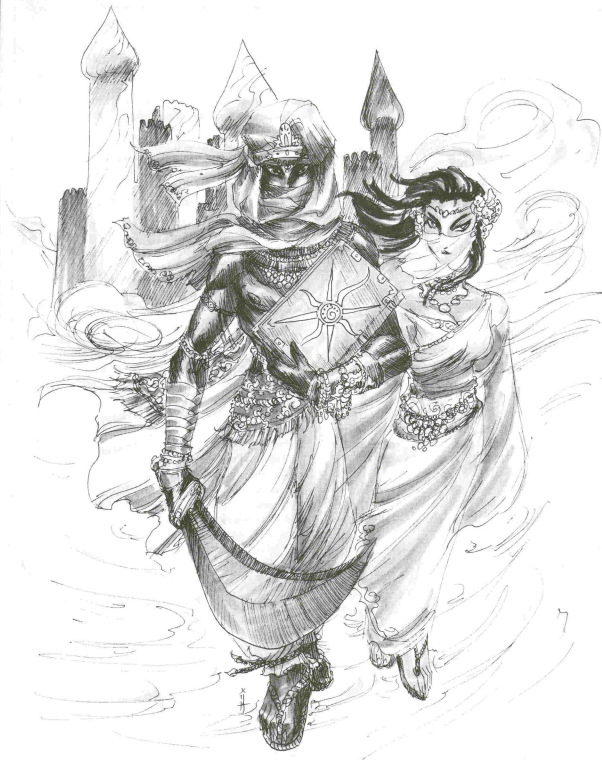
Shilmulo (SHEEL-moo-loh) — A vampire or similar corporeal undead.

Sonponno (shawn-pawn-naw) — The orisha of disease, especially those that produce sores or lesions. The Elegbara name for the slugh kith, derived from their unfortunate appearance and not generally derogatory.

Taiyewo (TAH-yah-wo) — Eldest of twins; also, the Elegbara name for clurichaun.

Tribe — For the Elegbara, a family of changelings with an orisha patron; the equivalent to the term *kith*. Capitalized when referring to the Elegbara themselves.

Uhuru (oo-hoo-roo) — Literally, "freedom." The Elegbara philosophy of freedom for all beings to pursue their own destiny; their name for the Spirit Pathways Birthright.



CHAPTER TWO: A CULTURE WITHOUT BORDERS

*It just doesn't get any better —
There isn't a captain
There's only a crew!
The storms we weather together —
The places we've been
And the things that we do!
— The Mighty Mighty Bosstones, "Pirate Ship"*

Elegbara Society Growing Up Eshu

Bonsoir, chile. My name is Marie. These fine gentlemen have decided it would be best if I were the one to tell you a thing or two about what life in the Tribe is like, so you'll know what to expect long after tonight's campfire has done burned out. What's that? Oh, why thank you, chile! I see you've already got the family talent for flattery. Tell you what, when this night's over, I'll tell you a little secret about me, maybe slow those sweet words of yours a touch. Sound good, *cherie*? Well then, settle in, and let's let the story take shape again.

It should come as no surprise, really, that different members of our Tribe come into their faerie nature in a lot of ways, depending on where they were raised and how the society around them treats those with our special talents. Some are eased into their new lives and can reflect on every step of the process with patience and wisdom; others are dropped into it faster than they can comprehend and must struggle to make their way through even the smallest parts. Fortunately, as you're learning tonight, fellow Elegbara have a habit of showing up in

either case to help newcomers through the transition and teach them about their heritage.

Now, I know this doesn't always hold true, chile, but I've seen quite a number of our kind come into themselves over the years, and so I wouldn't discount my words out of hand, either.

African and Middle Eastern

Those Elegbara born in our ancestral homelands generally have the best time of it, as you might well imagine. Many of the cultures there still recognize the orishas and pay homage to Eshu, and no few of them are our blood-kin either, always watchful for another one of us to raise her head. It's quite possible that a child could grow up hearing about our ways her entire life, even if she only thinks it's make-believe, and that makes it a lot easier to deal with her when the Chrysalis occurs. An Elegbara child born in these lands might even be raised in the court of one of the oba, if she is especially lucky — this is common in areas strong with our kin. The other fae tribes don't travel to these lands much. We generally have free rein to teach what we want and go where we please without them interfering, especially the cursed sidhe.

Those of us born to the lands most favored by Eshu are typically the ones best suited to telling our history and legends, and we tend to be those with the greatest sense of our ultimate purpose. Even the Iku raised here have a strong appreciation of the truths and meanings that underlie all things — they just choose to deny it, is all. This is also the center of the highest concentration of those of our Tribe who follow the Muslim faith, as might well be expected. It's due to their influence that the Elegbara of this region tend to focus on their relationship with their community rather than seeing themselves as completely alone in the world. Part of the price of having this territory to ourselves since the end of the colonial era is that we're the ones responsible for it, and we have no one to blame but ourselves if disaster falls upon it.

Indian

There aren't too many of us born in these parts these days, at least not recently, but Indians have absorbed enough of our legend that some of our kind do surface still, and the oba have some lands here, so I figured I'd mention them. India is the original homeland of the Rom, our Gypsy blood, and while they've done about as well as mortals can to scatter themselves all over the map, they still have roots here, too, so it gives us something of a common ground when we need to talk to them. Around India there's a lot of stress on mysticism and the illusion of reality, which suits us fine. Those of us born here tend to follow their Ojo nature, and most have a definite flair for the Arts of our kind, becoming wandering mystics and holy men. Some of them, however, decide that if reality is an illusion, then it really does mean that there's no point in anything, and so those few who embrace their Iku side make up for it by being some of the most devilish souls in our Tribe. Either way, in Indian Elegbara our affinity for tales tends to show up in the form of parables and riddles, which we leave to the audience to decipher to gain enlightenment. Their oba tend to be even more obscure in their teachings, but chile, believe me, if one tells you something, you do your best to puzzle it out, because it's bound to teach you something that will change your entire worldview.

Rom

Although many of the other tribes believe that all Elegbara share ancestry with the Rom, the actual number of us who do is really quite small. They remain even to us a highly proud and secretive people and most likely always will be. No, the real reason for the perception is that the Romani were among the first of our kind to move among the Kithain of Europe and the Americas, so it was those Elegbara whom the other tribes first laid eyes on, and their impression stuck, for better or worse. Make no mistake about it, though, chile, those of our kind raised among the Rom are some of the most clever, most adaptable Elegbara alive, with a true passion for the road and a habit of escaping situations a greased sluagh couldn't

squirm out of. They're raised from birth to believe in magic and dark things stalking the night, not to mention taught all sorts of old folktales and the like. Most make the change into true Elegbara with little difficulty; I reckon that when you're already used to living on the edge of "polite" society, it's not much of a stretch to join a world even further apart from the mundane one, *non?* Quite a few remain close with their mortal families, traveling with them to act as guardians and spokesmen for their kin, although a growing number are going their own way and adopting motleys of their fellow Kithain as their surrogate families. Those who leave their Rom past behind seldom speak of it, however, even with lovers or close friends — for them, the ties of blood include the bonds of silence, and if there is one thing the Romani value, it's privacy from the prying eyes of outsiders.

Although we Elegbara are all quite clever with words, those of Rom ancestry are truly inspired and can weave lies like spider webs — so fine and delicate that one can hardly notice them, yet strong and sure to bind fast whoever blunders into them. There is a reason we refer to trickery and con games by one of their terms, *chile!* But don't misunderstand me: despite centuries of prejudice saying otherwise, the Rom are not innately devious. Indeed, most would rather put out one eye than tell a lie to those they cherish! They've lived apart from the rest of the world for so long and fought against so much hatred and violence that they don't consider non-Romani worthy of their trust or respect. So they have no trouble taking what they want from outsiders however they can. It is neither good nor evil, it's simply their way. If you earn their trust, Elegbara or otherwise, you'll know it; until then, be friendly, but remember that you're still an outsider to them.

American and European

All right, *chile*, let me tell you something. Before this century, Elegbara born of European ancestry were as rare as sinners at a Christmas service, either here or in the Old Country. About the only exceptions were the Moors in Spain, who brought our learning to the barbarians of the

time, and the Portuguese, who shared our love of exploration and were some of our closest kin during the race to the New World. Certainly, we had cousins in the *taiyewo* and *kehinde* of the British Empire, but no matter how close they remained to us, they were not true Elegbara any longer. Aside from the occasional passionate tryst or forbidden marriage, our blood did not mingle much with those of the other tribes. Then came the triangle trade and the move to the New World, and many of our kin were either dragged across the sea in chains or went there to find new horizons and escape the tyranny of old traditions. Unfortunately, in the rush of the journey many of our old ways and legends were lost, so that while those Elegbara who came to the realm across the ocean found themselves with a glorious new land to explore, few had any real grasp of their true nature. South America is a little better, since it was settled by colonists friendlier to our ways, but as a whole most Elegbara who came to the New World were hard pressed to keep their traditions alive.

So, it became more common that those of the Tribe who were born to children of the slaves and settlers gained our powers, but not our knowledge. While this has gradually been remedied as time passed and the prejudice against us and our kin diminished in favor of celebrating our roots, it is still the main problem with those born in Concordia or the Old Country. Unless one of the Tribe finds them early on, many are confused about their role in the world and become little more than rootless vagabonds, because that's what the other tribes expect them to be. On the positive side, this need to get by on their own makes most of them fierce individualists and daring adventurers, which we respect. Without knowledge of what they truly are, though, most manifest their gift for stories as a love of folktales and more recently the "urban legends" of the areas they live in, although some take up the life of con games that they're told is their birthright. As Concordia rises in prominence and the number of Elegbara born there grows, this task of finding those who have not learned the truth of their heritage has become

more important than ever before. Fortunately, chile, we Elegbara haven't met a challenge we didn't like!

Pretty Fae for a White Guy

It is apparently a matter of some debate in the other tribes whether Elegbara of other races really exist. Although it is evident to you already, chile, what the answer to this question is, I feel I must take a minute to truly lay this misconception to rest. While the majority of the tribe traces its mortal ancestry to roots in Africa, India, the Middle East or even the Rom, ultimately it is Eshu himself who decides who bears his mark. After all, he is the orisha of *accident and chance*, and what better description of genetics could there be than that? There are families as ancient as Africa itself who have never birthed an Elegbara infant, while another family with a motley assortment of European nations for a pedigree may find itself with an Elegbara child after only one or two generations. The Chosen of Eshu have been to every corner of the world over time — one never knows when or where their influence might show up!

Of course, this is not to say that such Elegbara are common, nor that their lives are any easier on account of their ancestry. Not only must they cope with their new existence as one of the fae, but they must also combat the notion (both within and without, I fear) that they are somehow not "true eshu" because of the simple chance of their ancestry. To this I say that while they are certainly in the minority of the Tribe, if Eshu has seen fit to make them one of his Chosen, then damn what the world might think!

Native American

What'd you say? Yes, chile, you heard me right. There are a very, very few of the Tribe born to Native American ancestry. Though many are the result of later migrations, a handful are the descendants of ancient explorers who dared the wild ocean by trods or ships to make landfall centuries before Columbus and his kind were even born. Those that survived found a culture agreeable to the orishas, and over time they merged together, forming a bond that lasts to this day. Most of

them come into their heritage in the company of nunnehi, and more than a few of them don't even realize they're any different from their spirit brothers and sisters until they meet one of our kind. From what I hear, they share the same deep bond with the earth that their nunnehi relatives do and can call upon the native totems as well as the orishas to work their magic. Some of them even claim to be able to walk into the spirit worlds as the *Bete* do, but as for me, chile, I'll believe that when I see it. We Elegbara are good at getting places, no question, but I doubt that any of our kind could go somewhere as fantastic as that and not return bragging of it the entire way!

Well, believe it or not, chile, most of these Elegbara are deeply in tune with their adopted tribes and call on their gift for tales in the form of tribal legends and secrets, a valuable gift indeed in these times in which the ancient ways are too often left to decay. They generally leave the rest of us be, and even if their nunnehi kin don't care for us much, they're still family deep down.

Asian

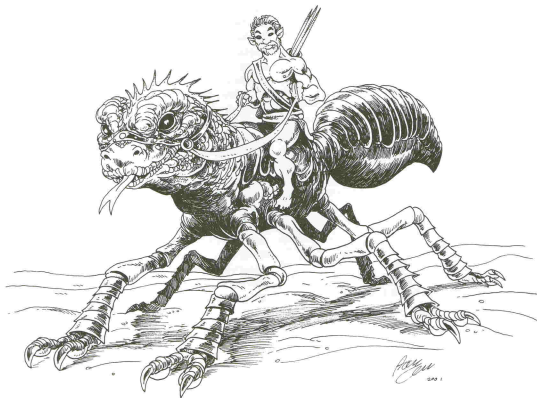
If you were listening during the history, you heard that the faerie folk of the Middle Kingdom (as they call Asia) are polite but not exactly receptive to our kind. They have claimed their territory, and while they're not aggressive about it, don't you go thinking that doesn't mean they won't... *remove* you if they catch you on their territory, chile. Still, when has putting a "Do Not Enter" sign up somewhere been anything but a challenge to our Tribe? So yes, while they are quite rare and generally limited to the islanders and the nomadic tribes of the northern lands, there are Elegbara of Asian upbringing as well. Our ways tend to wear quickly on many of the societies there. While they approve of hospitality and welcome our Ojo notions of duty and honor, the wandering habits of the Tribe tend to be viewed with suspicion, a sign of weak character or deep troublemaking tendencies. What's more, outside of the few cultures there that support such habits, these differences tend to make us easy to notice (if not as easy to catch), and believe me, chile, that is never a good thing when it comes to the *hsien*, the native changelings. Thus, most Elegbara born and raised in the Middle Kingdom tend to either quickly

learn how to suppress some of their wilder tendencies (which leads no few to fall into Banality, sadly enough) or else take up lifestyles that allow them to camouflage these traits somewhat. They become performers, fishermen, wandering monks, and so on. It's a risky existence, to be sure, and no few of them flee it for lives of greater freedom elsewhere. But take it from me, as one who has had a glimpse of the ancient cities and sweeping landscapes waiting throughout the Middle Kingdom, for some of us it's a risk worth taking.

Perhaps because of their reluctance to showcase their talents in public for fear of attracting attention from the hsien, Elegbara of Asian birth tend to channel their gift for tales into writing and poetry. A few even claim it was one of Eshu's Chosen who invented writing in Asia long ago. Regardless, their works are surpassingly vivid and enchanting, and hearing them read aloud . . . oh, there aren't words for how beautiful it is to hear such masterful words from such harmonious voices. It's simply breathtaking.

Aboriginal

I've heard a legend that says that one of the original children of Eshu wandered south across the sea on a rainbow bridge to chase a falling star. There's no proof that this is where the Elegbara among the Aborigines came from, but given our ways it doesn't sound too improbable either. Truth be told, the Elegbara born among the Originals, as they're called, don't tend to wander far beyond their native shores. It's almost as if there's something there that's holding them back, or maybe something they're trying to protect, but either way they don't seem to be in any hurry to tell the rest of us. Oh, they're friendly, but even when they're talking to you they tend to have a faraway look in their eyes, like there's somewhere else they'd rather be, even more so than normal with our Tribe. From what I've seen and heard of them, the Elegbara of Aboriginal upbringing have a strong tie to the Far and Deep Dreaming — a legacy of their connection to the Aboriginal Dreamtime, I suppose. Most of them also seem to have a powerful connection with Uluru, the sacred site of the Originals,



though they refuse to discuss exactly what the connection might be. Who knows what is really the case? I can say one thing for sure: whoever finds out will earn a legendary name in the Tribe!

Eshu's Blessing

Always, always remember one thing, chile: while we cherish our mortal kin, respect the Kithain, and honor the orishas, we are Elegbara, and we are different from them all. Eshu has granted us many wonderful gifts to carry out his tasks in this world, and it is about time you learned a thing or two about where they come from and what they are for. After all, would you send a soldier to war without weapons or ask a writer to write without words? *Mais non!* So listen close, chile, and I'll tell you secrets about yourself you had never dared to dream were true.

Spirit Pathways

Perhaps our best-known talent of all, we Elegbara have a knack for always being in the right place at the right time — the last thing any of us is in for is a dull existence! Wherever the action is, you can be sure you'll be right in the thick of it, or if not, you'll be on your way there before you know it. Before I go on about it, though, I want you to notice something I said and make sure you heard it good and clear: I said the "right" place and time, didn't I? Not "happiest," not "most pleasant," not "most obvious," and certainly not "easiest" — just "right." Now, you take a good long moment to sit there and think about what that means. It means that no matter where you find yourself in this world (or any other), you're right where you're meant to be; there's no doubt, no fear, no hesitation about it. Oh, the Ojo and the Iku argue back and forth like catty old ladies about why this is so, but that's not important right now, because both of them still agree that it is, and that's all that matters. The only thing that can turn you from the path you belong on is failing one of the tests of the orishas (to believe the Ojo), or to deny yourself what you truly desire (so say the Iku). Otherwise, no force in this life (or beyond) can keep you from reaching the next stop along your path. Where you are may not be the place you had in mind at the beginning

of your journey, but it's always where you were meant to wind up. If you cannot figure out why, then that's your burden.

By the same token, you must accept when it's time to move on to something new, whether a change of location or a new affair of the heart. No amount of trying will let you hold on to a thing when your path dictates that it's time to seek something new. Ah, I see this truth is already known to you, chile. Well, I will speak more on the softer arts later, but for now know this: most of the other tribes forget that for every new horizon we stride toward, it means we are leaving another behind, often for good. All lives are a constant cycle of discovering the new and discarding the old; we simply recognize this more directly and do not linger where we no longer belong, either literally or metaphorically. It's a hard truth to remember, I know, but a truth just the same.

Uhuru

Over time, this outlook found expression in the philosophy known as *Uhuru*, or freedom: essentially, that all beings should be allowed to pursue their own destinies, with only the orishas intervening as they see fit to test the worthy and damn the wicked. This freedom goes beyond the purely physical realm, however — Elegbara despise any attempts to coerce or manipulate them into acting against their will, and they resist such pressure violently if need be. Even those of us who live off the gullibility of others rely on the target's free choice in taking the bait to make our scams work. It teaches the victim a lesson about his own greed in addition to helping to fatten our wallets. If we do not say, give or do something of our free will, then it is corrupt and unworthy of our name, and we simply will not have that. Perhaps it seems foolish to fight so hard over something as intangible as dignity, but chile, without dignity, what is life, anyway?

To give up your freedom voluntarily is to place your destiny in the hands of another, and that is more than any living thing should ever demand of another. To have it taken from you is the gravest offense imaginable. This robs the imprisoned being of his very essence and condemns him to aimless wandering in the afterlife. The

most callous Ojo or wicked Iku refrains from slavery or kidnapping for this reason, as even in their debased state they would rather be responsible for the death of their foe's physical body than for the death of another being's soul. Now, do you see why we so rarely enter into oaths, even with other Elegbara? You are not forbidden to do so, simply advised to use the greatest caution. A piece of your freedom given is a piece that is lost to you, quite possibly forever, and you'd do well to remember that before swearing an oath in the heat of passion.

Hospitality

As a consequence of our wandering ways, we Elegbara have a long and intricate tradition of hospitality. I won't trouble your poor head with all of them now, but simply let you know what the basic expectations are. Ancient custom as well as the Kithain Escheat demand that you accept another of the Tribe in need, no matter what the circumstances. We are few and far between enough that it's seldom much of an imposition, chile, but it also means that unless it would mean accepting a dire enemy into your house, it can never be refused. Few look after us save each other, and if we cannot count on even that, then the Tribe will quickly fall to pieces. So, if one of us shows up on your doorstep, be polite and do what you can; it's not just being family, it's being practical, because one day you may well find yourself on her doorstep in need of aid.

So long as guests are in your house, you must honor their requests (within reason — most of us aren't exactly well off, and self-sufficiency goes a long way in this family besides) and see to it that they are cared for as well as you are able. If harm befalls a guest, you must see to it that justice is served, as if he were blood-kin of your own. You also may not turn out guests unless they steal from you or harm one in your household, though let me tell you, chile, you're certainly welcome to let the air get a little chilly if some freeloaders aren't getting the hint! Hospitality is not offered for a price, however. While you may accept any payment the guest freely offers, or reparation for damage caused, it is forbidden to demand something in return for the gift of your household. Finally, when you are traveling and come into the hospitality of another, you must honor your host's customs as best you can and do your best to be no more of a burden than necessary,

regardless of your host's means. Do not steal from your host, be it a glass from his table or the virtue of one of his children, and most of all do not bring strife or violence under his roof. Leave with as much goodwill as you bring.

See? Those weren't so bad. The next time you look for a place to stay in a land you don't know, you won't have to worry about upsetting the local branch of the family just by making some fool mistake.

Talecraft

Other tribes often overlook our love of stories. They think it's nice but nothing to write home about, that we just happen to tell them especially well and that's all there is to it. Well, chile, that's like saying the sun is bright; it's true, sure, but it doesn't really do the full effect justice, now does it? We love stories because we are stories, and don't ever forget it. It's because mortals first started telling tales of our adventures that Eshu noticed us and accepted us as his children. Stories allowed us to keep in touch during our darkest times, and stories allow us to teach others as well as entertain them. Besides, as messengers and wanderers, we see and hear much more than others do, and it's only natural that we'd develop a talent for passing on what we know in a way that others find pleasing.

There's a mystical aspect to what we do as well: stories touch, they teach, they transform those who tell them as much as or more so than those who hear them. I have a grump's eyes that've watched a century pass turn bright as a child's with but a few simple words. I have heard an audience of children cheering the prince to rescue his lady love from a dastardly villain. I have seen stones weep upon hearing the conclusion of a tragic tale. Once, during the darkest hours of the Accordance War, I even saw an Elegbara turn a defeated group of commoners into a stalwart band of heroes, equal to a sidhe host twice their size, with only a story from his lips. And those are but a tiny handful of the tales I could tell about the stories that are our lifeblood, how they have changed the world in ways great and small.

But most of all, chile, we love stories simply for themselves, beyond any other meaning or purpose they might have. A well-told tale is its own reward, and we believe this with all our hearts and souls. How can we

Storytelling Spirit Pathways

New Storytellers are often puzzled with how to handle this peculiar talent of the eshu for always being in the right place at the right time. After all, it's a fact of roleplaying that player characters always seem to show up just as something exciting happens; games would be pretty dull otherwise! Others worry that this Birthright limits Storyteller creativity, as the eshu player announces, "I'm going looking for the duke's missing sword," and then expects to reach the object of her quest before the pizza arrives, often at the expense of the story the Storyteller had planned.

To avoid such problems, consider the below advice on handling the two main aspects of this Birthright; the following is not gospel, but it should help provide some relief for harried Storytellers in understanding this very cool but sometimes very arcane Birthright.

☉ **Perfect Timing** — The trick to Storytelling eshu perfect timing well is to use it to heighten drama, to further your story instead of defeating it. Don't hand the character easy victories, but instead set up even greater challenges, which his perfect timing just happens to give him a chance (however slim!) at pulling off. Any character can arrive just in time to defuse a bomb. Only an eshu will arrive with an extra second's time to decide whether he should defuse the bomb and simply avert disaster, or see if he can instead hurl it at the villain's Doomsday Machine and take out two threats at once. It need not always be that over-the-top — if it is, the players will quickly become jaded to it — but it should be an interesting twist to an already interesting situation.

Another good twist on this theme is that the character's timing can be perfect whether it's really a good thing or not. For example, an eshu may notice the gun in time to push a mortal out of the way of a drive-by shooting, only to find out that he's saved a Mafia boss, vampire henchman or similar despicable soul. Now not only does he have a host of new enemies, but he may be wanted by law enforcement officials as well, not to mention have the dubious gratitude of a notorious figure. A few such wry twists of fate, and players will stop thinking their perfect timing is a get-out-of-jail-free card.

☉ **Stated Quest** — If the player names a specific person, place or thing that he's heading out in search of, feel free to pile on the challenges, detours, surprise twists, sudden reversals and other complications. Remind him that his Birthright guarantees the most interesting (and dangerous) route, not necessarily the one he might've picked out for himself. What's more, success is never a guarantee — after all, if an eshu could never fail or die, there'd be no challenge!

Just make sure that no matter how you handle it, the other characters in the motley don't become background extras in the movie of the eshu's life, or you'll quickly have a lot of dissatisfied players on your hands.

not? Take away everything else they might mean, everything else they might do, and we would still tell stories, because that is who we are. We could no more stop telling them than stop breathing.

History

Of course, no small part of our storytelling talent also comes from our sacred duty to remember the lore of the tribes, both mortal and Kithain. Our perfect timing allows us to witness many great events. Our outsider's perspective gives us the ability to remember things objectively. And our travels ensure that stories remain fresh in the minds of others, keeping them from forgetting past mistakes quite so easily and inspiring them with tales of glory and greatness. Once we only minded our own tales and those of our mortal kin, but over time we have absorbed the legends of all those we come in contact with. I suspect we could surpass even the sluagh in our knowledge of the other tribes. What they forget is that even the wildest tales of pure imagination still contain some truth, about the teller if not the subject. So, while most of the others believe us to be outsiders with little interest in their society, in truth we understand it better than most of them do.

Listening

Only by listening do you learn how a master crafts a tale, and many people are surprised at how eager we are to hear a well-told tale. Remember what you're told, chile, and always keep your eyes open and ears keen for new trails and new tales. Have no fear — ask questions, take detours, be persistent and most of all never turn away a chance to transform what you know into a tale that will enrich the lives of others. It's as much a pleasure as a sacred purpose to our kind.

Recklessness

Of course, as they go against so much of what is taught and expected in this cautious day and age, it's only natural that not everyone understands our ways. The other tribes like to say that we are reckless, that we will accept any gamble or any challenge no matter how impossible it may seem. As if it were a bad thing! They live like mortals, ducking challenge and excitement in

favor of the same routine they've known for years, afraid what the slightest risk might do to their precious courts and careers. We're unafraid to live our lives, chile! They call it recklessness just because we refuse to stick to the dull paths they'd prefer to travel on. Sure, some of them make a go at grasping the true meaning of *Uhuru*, and those that do earn our respect, but while we may be friends and allies to the others, we will never understand their need to turn a deaf ear to the call of adventure. We are the Chosen of Eshu and fear no hardship.

Make no mistake, if someone offers us a proposition, chances are we'll take it if it doesn't look like outright suicide (and, truth be told, some of our wilders are pretty generous about that last part). Why shouldn't we? One never knows when the orishas are testing you, chile. As some of the Iku prefer to look at it, how will you ever know your limits until you test them? Be careful of those who try to exploit this to their advantage, however. There's a huge difference between being heroic and being manipulated, and one you would do well to remember if you wish to last long around the other tribes. Of course, even so, there are few things sweeter than coming back from what some sucker thought was a suicide dare and taking his money . . .

Orishas

Let me take a moment to better explain another matter of spiritual importance to the Tribe, the orishas. They are not truly like patron saints, though that is the best way most westerners can grasp them, nor are they necessarily indicative of voodoo, although that religion borrows heavily from their legacy (and no few of us practice it as well, chile). Perhaps the best way to think of them is like the totem spirits of native tribes around the world, creator spirits who have chosen a particular group as their protectorate and who grant favors to them in return for prayer and sacrifices. Some orishas are gods or demigods, and always were, from before time was known; others are ancestors who have risen to godhood through some great triumph (or tragedy). While not all Elegbara choose to follow them, all Elegbara believe in them. Even the Muslim or Christian members typically do not doubt their existence, but rather think of them as guardian angels, messengers of God or similar entities.

Aw, \$%&#@! Not Another Damn Challenge!

Storytellers will almost inevitably find themselves questioned about just when the eshu Frailty applies. This usually happens after another character — all too often a fellow motley member — finds out that an eshu is supposed to take any dare offered. She begins deluging the hapless character with an endless string of challenges, bogging down the adventure and causing the eshu player to feel that his character is more like a fraternity pledge than a heroic wayfarer. The main question is one of balance. Forcing an eshu to accept absolutely every challenge offered takes away a lot of player freedom, especially if other characters begin trying to exploit the Frailty for selfish or petty purposes. However, enforcing the Frailty too infrequently doesn't do either kith or character justice.

Therefore, in the interest of giving some idea of the types of challenges that should and shouldn't be covered by this Frailty, Storytellers should take the following guidelines under advisement when considering what challenges need be honored and which can reasonably be ignored. Players should not be allowed to grow too comfortable behind these prohibitions, however — they are intended to protect against abuses of this Frailty, not to shield the character from any uncomfortable situations that come up. Finally, this list covers only challenges and propositions made by other characters; "natural" risks in a situation (a wide gap between buildings, a rising drawbridge in the road ahead, etc.) are another story entirely.

- **Oaths** — Eshu are free to decline any challenge that as part of its completion would force them to break either the letter or the spirit of a formal oath they have sworn (i.e., one backed by the Dreaming). Cleverly worded gambles can certainly bring them right up to the edge, however. Promises made without the backing of Glamour are fair game. Considering how rarely eshu swear formal oaths, this generally shouldn't be a problem.

- **Urgency** — Eshu need never even stop to consider a proposition made to them when already in the middle of a truly urgent situation — a friend in danger, a freehold under attack, and so on. Note, though, that most eshu still remember such challenges, even if they don't take them up at the time, and will often come back when the crisis at hand is over.

- **Daring** — Hey, it has to be a *challenge*, right? By definition that means something above and beyond the norm that requires some real effort, skill or luck to achieve. Thus, trivial propositions such as those on the order of "bet you can't tie my shoes" and "Hey, eshu boy, ten bucks says you won't drive me to the mall" don't qualify as challenges worthy of this Frailty, though of course the eshu can still do them if he desires.

- **Dignity** — Eshu are free to refuse challenges that are designed solely to degrade and humiliate them even if they succeed at the challenge itself, such as infamous dares like "Eshu, I'll wager that you won't clean this public restroom with your tongue." Note that this doesn't mean any challenge that gets an eshu dirty or places him in a potentially embarrassing situation is prohibited — far from it. Eshu can and will get down and dirty, both literally and metaphorically, if that's what a quest requires. This guideline simply covers those propositions that can serve no other purpose but to force an eshu to shame himself whether he succeeds or not.

All Elegbara pay homage to Eshu, if only as a token show of respect. Some few develop deep bonds with other orishas as well, although this is the exception to the rule. We see the workings of the orishas all around us, every day, in the world we live in and the challenges that confront us. Who knows, chile? If you are brave and your legend great, maybe one day you will join them in the palace above the sky. It is the highest honor we can bestow, and none have earned it in centuries, but that means only that it's due to happen any time now . . .

Social Structure

We Elegbara are something of a paradox as family matters go, especially to outsiders. We are a close family and will do much to help each other in times of need, but at the same time we are scattered all over the world and so may see each other only rarely as the years go by. They wonder what keeps us together in our lonely lives on the road, and how we have managed to preserve so much of our culture while still adapting to the customs of those around us. They marvel at how most of us have such a strong sense of identity, even thousands of miles and hundreds of years away from where we feel most at home. They grow puzzled at how we have many nobles, in our homelands especially, but no real hierarchy that we organize them by. I'm glad to say this causes the sidhe in particular no end of consternation! So, what's our secret?

Simple, chile: every Elegbara takes care of herself first, and then if she's got the means and the energy left over, others of the Tribe as well. That's it. If it sounds too simple to be true, then you're not really Chosen of Elegbara.

What's that? Well, I suppose in a sense you're right, chile — such a smart kith for such a young age! We do have a "higher authority" of sorts, the oba council, who give us guidance and make sure that important tales reach the farthest Elegbara. Even they are not our masters, though, simply those whose destiny it is to provide a stable base for the Tribe, and they are the first to say so.

Oh, sure, we have other nobles, too, but, like I said, there's no great big flowchart of power they all fit into. A caliph might have a dozen lesser nobles under him, each with his own piece of land and responsibilities, or he might have none and tend his court himself. Those of

lower station give respect to those above them. But in general each noble minds his own lands and his own business, so there's no need for the complex and inbred hierarchy of the sidhe. If one noble finds issue with another or has business in the lands of a fellow noble, they settle the matter openly and forgive any offenses as soon as the ordeal is over. We are able to be this "relaxed," as you say, precisely because we value the wisdom of our nobles more than their titles. Since we all must survive on our own out on the road, we respect only those who earn it, and that is our ultimate measure of authority.

Eshu Motleys

Although rarely, we do sometimes organize ourselves into regular motleys, as the Kithain call them. Such gatherings typically come about only in response to some great threat to the Tribe or in order to protect one of the few freeholds we call our own. These arrangements usually last for the time it takes to complete one task or uphold one oath, and no longer; while members may remain friends after that time, chile, they seldom travel together again. We enjoy each other's company, but only for so long — after that, fear that the threads of our destinies will start becoming too entwined makes most of us take to the road alone once more.

No, chile, for the most part we travel singly or, if in a motley, one composed of many different Kithain to ensure that things remain lively on the road. About the only kith we will refuse to travel with are the sidhe; while individuals may earn enough of our respect to share our path with us, as a rule they are too prone to complaining and giving orders for them to be anything but a hassle. Of course, some of the other tribes may have their own reasons for not wanting to take up with us, and that's their problem, but for our part, we consider all of them good company after a fashion, save the sidhe.

Freeholds (Ile-Igbo)

What's that? A "contradiction in terms"? Hardly, chile! True, we control very few ile-igbo outside of our ancestral lands, but that's more on account of how we don't want to be tied down than any particular objection to the idea. Most of the ones we do claim are the personal homes of grumps, who use them as story circles and gathering places where they can catch up on tribal news

and pass on their tales to the younger ones still out on the road. Most famous of these houses is the one called the Bullring, in Barcelona, Spain, though whether it earned that name for the acts of daring that the guests have performed or the amount of truth behind the stories they share around the circle is a matter of opinion. Either way, it's a real nice place, a stylish modern compound to mortal eyes and a grand old castle in the Moorish tradition to the fae who stay there. One of the few recognized Elegbara nobles of Europe holds court there, scion of our Oraiz family line, and any given night of the year you can find him mingling with his guests or telling stories around the fire. His family is old and well connected, and he'll do his best to hide you or help you out if you're in trouble. Just remember to mind your manners under his roof and pay him back if you can—he's done a lot to help keep our Tribe active in the sidhe loyalist environment of Europe and has earned our highest respect because of it.

As for other places, well, they don't tend to be nearly that formal, but more like faerie equivalents to the youth hostels popular in Europe and Australia, staffed by Elegbara when they're available and agemo when they're not. These places are plain but comfortable, and no one minds if you stay a while as long as you pitch a tale and a do chore or two to earn your keep. Open your eyes and you'll find one in just about any big city, though whether it has any other Elegbara currently staying there is anyone's guess.

Traveling the Dreaming

Other tribes look to us for guidance when it comes to following the silver path out of the familiar realms of the Near Dreaming and into the true wilds of the Dreaming. With Eshu as our guide, we have walked the paths of the engai since the first mortal dreamed, and it is no exaggeration when I say that we know more about them than do all the other tribes put together. Most of us take quests into the Far Dreaming at least once in our lives, and no few tread those paths with some regularity. Even our kind do not travel into the Deep Dreaming without good cause, though. It's too easy to lose yourself forever out there, chile, and that serves no one's destiny.

It would take more time than this Earth has seen to try to describe the vastness of the Dreaming. In any event, if you have true Elegbara blood, you'll only want

to see it for yourself anyway, so I'll forego the descriptions and focus instead on telling you what to remember in the lands that lie beyond the Near Dreaming. First of all, the farther out you go, the more your mortal side fades. This may sound wonderful, and it is at first, but it makes it difficult to remember why you're out there, and if you're not careful you'll lose your grip on the mortal world and simply vanish into the depths of the Dreaming, never to return.





Second, as you delve deeper, your stories begin to take on lives of their own, spawning illusory or actual chimera to reenact your words. If you lose control of your tale, beware, for there are legends of chimera turning on their creator to preserve themselves. Last, and most important! — look me in the eye as I tell you this, chile — *never leave the silver path*. Ever! For any reason, at any time We don't usually hear back from those who do, and even if they manage to crawl back, we put most out of their misery, for their minds are hopelessly shattered by what lies in the realms off of the path.

Did you understand those rules? Excellent. I can see you're already itching to see exactly what lies beyond the Near Dreaming, and that's good. Just remember what I've told you and make sure that when you *do* return, the tales of your journey go far and wide. I'll be waiting to hear what you see.

Lifestyle

One more little thing, chile, and then I'll turn you over to my elder friend for your final lesson of the evening. What's that? What else could there possibly be? Why, style, of course. Now that you know all about what an Elegbara is, you ought to know what it's like to live as one.

Style

Ask any member of the other tribes (especially a Concordian fae) what an eshu looks like, and chances are they'll describe something like this: all bright fabrics and colored sashes, with big gold hoop earrings, and wearing little jingly bells all over them so that they sound like wind chimes as they walk. Or worse still, he'll avert his eyes and mumble something about a loin cloth, and possibly a turban as well. Oh, chile, *mais non*. To be sure, we all take pride in our ancestry, and there are those of us who dress to honor the ancient ways of their people, especially on holy days, but as a rule traditional dress is in the minority when it comes to everyday wear. Instead, most Elegbara adopt the dress of those cultures they travel among, though more to help understand their ways than to help blend in. Of course, we cannot help but add

some touches of our own to the mix — variety represents our past travels and sets us apart from the ordinary denizens of the realm. As a result, most of us have a very unique, very striking appearance, in mortal form as well as fae; I understand the other tribes find this rather seductive in an exotic way.

My, my, what a wonderful coincidence, *non*? Looking good is more than a fashion to us; it is an expression of who we are. If our looks betray the hours and dust of the road, that's one thing, but if we allow ourselves to slide into slovenliness or neglect, we are disrespecting the noble heritage of our ancestors and giving more fuel to the fire of the bigots and their "dirty foreigner" stereotypes. Mere survival is nothing without dignity, and no matter what we may choose to wear, we wear it with the pride that is our birthright.

Carousing

Though we may not have the level of reputation for merriment as the olu-igbo, we enjoy parties and festivals with a zest that surprises most of the other tribes, who always seem to assume that we're unhappy unless we're the center of attention. Well, we certainly don't mind telling tales to the assembled guests, and we've long been favorite leads in the little parlor dramas and impromptu performances that mark any changeling gathering, but the other tribes forget that our other great pleasure is *listening* to stories as well as telling them. Besides, chile, you haven't seen a real party until you've got one or two of us under the same roof, and someone starts a game like "I never" or "truth or dare" — those are some of the most legendary gatherings in faerie history!

Romance

We're likewise considered among the most sought-after heartbreakers of Kithain society, and with good reason — who wouldn't want a lover who can recite the most beautiful verse known, who has a passion for traveling the world, and who will brave any challenge on behalf of a loved one? To say nothing of our perfect timing, which applies in more ways than one, chile. We sweep others off their feet, glorying in the radiance of adoration, and when we're smitten there exists no such

thing as an "impossible," as far as our love is concerned. The other tribes are only too glad to revel in these feelings along with us. The problem comes when they can't handle our need to move on, either to a new town or a new paramour. They know of our wandering ways but still tell themselves that they'll be the ones to "tame" us, to make us give up the road for good and settle down to the life they know. They just don't understand that it's not a question of being happy or unhappy, it's who we are, and we could no sooner give it up than they could survive without their hearts beating. And so we end up breaking their hearts and getting an undeserved reputation as faithless lovers because of it. Sad, chile, but true.

Fortunately, even such a black eye doesn't seem to dissuade new lovers from learning the ways of our hearts. If you're truly lucky, one day you may find one who doesn't wish you'd give up the road, but shares your life with him as the being that you are. It is rare, but oh so

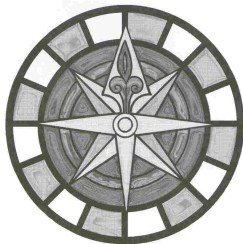
wonderful when it happens. Until then, enjoy the fruits of the garden. Just remember that you're responsible for all the pieces that you pick, no matter what your intentions might be.

Performing

Though it remains our most sacred means of passing on stories, actual storytelling is by no means the only way we sate our hunger for them. Those with a passion for words become some of our Tribe's gifted writers and poets, while those with a love of performance may become exceptional singers, actors, lyricists and orators. What matters is that all Elegbara have a primal need to tell stories, a need that will take hold even before the Chrysalis and express itself any way it can.

Well, I believe that's about all. It's my turn to fade back into the shadows of the fire and let my old friend tell his story. Just remember, chile, we're family now.

Take good care of us.





CHAPTER THREE: THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD

*It is sometimes necessary to travel a great distance out of
your way to come back a short distance correctly.*

— Edward Albee, "Zoo Story"

A View from the Trails

Marie has told you much of how we view ourselves and how we get along together. Now I shall reveal our understanding of the society that surrounds us all.

The Courts

Many Elegbara chafe at being classified under the Celtic-derived notion of Seelie and Unseelie fae. While for ease of reference we recognize those terms in our dealing with the Kithain, amongst ourselves most Chosen of Eshu prefer to the express this difference in terms more familiar to us. Rather than Seelie, those who follow the ways of honor and tradition prefer to be known as

Ojo, or daylight, fae. Likewise, since our philosophy stems from casting off the old ways and indulging our passions, and therefore the "death" of tradition, Elegbara counted as Unseelie consider ourselves allied with Iku, or death, when announcing ourselves in our courts.

Do not be mistaken, this is not to say that all Ojo are kind and generous or that all (or even most) Iku are murderers and revelers. Both groups follow the principles of honor and Uhuru in their own way. It can be as bad to be caught in the clutches of an Ojo judge who refuses to bend the law for a worthy cause as it is to be cornered by a ruthless Iku who bears a grudge. Likewise, except in the most extreme cases, we attach no stigma to followers of either path, as more than any other tribe, we are individuals and proud of it. Judge another Elegbara by his chosen philosophy at your peril.

Seelie (Ojo)

I feel I can safely say that most fellow Elegbara you meet call themselves Ojo; it comes very naturally to most of us, and those who embrace it draw great strength from the millennia of tradition and history it represents. However, rather than uphold the usual Seelie code (which came along much later than we did), we have our own set of standards by which we judge whether or not one of our kind is true to the philosophy of Ojo. Mind you, this doesn't stop most of us from respecting the Seelie code of the Kithain anyway, since they rarely oppose each other. It's simply that we have different core standards.

Heed the Call of Fate

Kismet, destiny, fate — call it and conceptualize it however you like — all Ojo believe that everything that happens has been ordained by the orishas. Indeed, how else could we always be in the right place at the right time unless there was some greater plan or organization to things? We are the Chosen of Eshu; by right of our heritage, the orishas notice us and write into their plan for the world great things for us to say and do. This is not to say that we are puppets pacing in place, however, or that you can sit passively back and expect a great fate to come to you. Along with the belief in orishas and their grand design comes the realization that they can and will place obstacles in our path as tests to see whether we are truly worthy of our destiny. Those who fail to overcome such trials are sad souls indeed, for they have lost their way in their spirit as well as their body, and many must struggle for years before they reach their path again. That is why we can, no, must, accept any challenge or try every test that is put before us — one never knows when it might actually be the tests of the orishas, and besides, they're usually a lot of fun as well. Pushing your limits is the only way to truly learn them.

Of course, this isn't an absolute rule. If a friend bets that you can't get across town in half an hour and you don't succeed, it doesn't automatically mean that your spirit is forever cursed. I assure you, you'll feel the difference when you let yourself down and when you have failed the challenge of an orisha.

Pass On What You Have Heard

Although it has recently enjoyed a fad with Western intellectuals, the concept of an oral history is nothing new to us. Countless generations of Elegbara served as griot to the villages we dwell in, and even those of us raised in different cultures are often walking histories of the towns and lands we come from. We are creatures of story, so it is a great injustice to our very nature to pass up any chance to hear a new tale or learn the history of a particular location and its inhabitants. Of course, it is not enough to simply memorize what you read or what you're told. As a wandering storyteller, you've seen more and have a wider perspective than almost anyone you're likely to encounter, and that means you have a responsibility to share what you know so others can see the "big picture" as we do. All of the great stories create bridges between people, showing them they have common emotions and experiences. History is the same way; if it's not told and retold, it's quickly forgotten, and any lessons that might have been learned from it are lost. Every story that is forgotten, every history that crumbles to dust unread is a blow against us. For millennia we have been the memory of our mortal cultures, our Elegbara families, even the Kithain tribes themselves. If we do not uphold this trust, there is no one else who can take our place now. It is our duty to teach as well as remember, to bring about change through knowledge and understanding (even if it's often disguised as entertainment).

Seek Justice for Those Unheard

Save for the Oba, who walk among their lands with pride in full view of the public, we are forever outsiders, wanderers without roots and travelers never entirely trusted by those to whom we speak. No matter how often we may visit a place, how well we learn its language or how often we share in its customs, deep down the natives will never consider us one of them. At times we feel this distance quite keenly. Sometimes our mere presence represents something the natives hate or fear, whether because of our race or ancestry or because what we have to say goes against what the locals want to hear. Even those blessed folk who realize that wanderlust is simply our way, not a sign of detachment or disinterest, seldom fully trust us, no matter how much they may care for us.

We are simply too unstable, too liable to run off without warning one night, and that makes us unable to truly get inside their hearts. We explain, we entertain, but we do not remain.

Due to this distance, we feel a close kinship with others perpetually at the edge of society and do our best to help such runaways, castaways and fringe dwellers when they're in need, or at least remember their story if nothing else can be done. What's more, if there is absolutely no other alternative, our restless ways make us excellent avengers, able to slip in and right the wrong as best we can, then disappear over the horizon before anyone is the wiser. This isn't pure philosophy, it's also survival—such people are also the ones most likely to be around if we need help ourselves, and by gaining a reputation for helping them it's more likely they'll consider taking a risk on our behalf someday.

The Seelie Code

Here is a brief summary on Ojo attitudes toward the traditional Seelie values of our Kithain cousins. While we follow our own precepts more often, we don't dismiss these out of hand.

Death before Dishonor

Those without honor are without dignity, and without dignity your existence is little better than an animal's. Despite popular opinion, we are no strangers to retreat when necessary, but cowardice and oath breaking are unforgivable in any circumstance.

Love Conquers All

We may have many lovers in our lives, but anyone who truly becomes our beloved becomes the center of our existence, for we have given the greatest offering we know—part of our freedom. Guard lovers with your life, avenge any slights made against them, and, most of all, always return to them.

Beauty Is Life

We may find beauty in things slightly different from those our Kithain cousins relish—a beautiful sunrise after sleeping on the beach, the panorama of a never-before-seen vista viewed from a mountaintop, the thrill of beginning a new trip—but beautiful moments are our lives as surely as breathing and walking.

Never Forget a Debt

We dislike owing anyone anything—it is a limit on our freedom—and so seek to erase any debts we incur as quickly as possible. Failing to honor a debt is another matter entirely, however, and one we do not tolerate. If your word of honor is no good, how can you possibly expect your stories to carry any weight?

The Escheat

While we do not put the same stock in the Escheat that most Kithain do, we recognize that these rights make a certain amount of sense. We'd rather that more fae followed them naturally and had no need to post them on walls and memorize them in school, but until that time we'll work with what we have.

The Right of Demesne

This law seldom agrees with us. If we respect a ruler, we'll heed his words, but since we seldom spend very long in one place, it's hard to establish such ties. In practice, we generally ignore this rule when simply passing through an area, and most leaders let us go on our way in peace, figuring at the very least it's better to have us gone than staying to cause trouble in their lands.

The Right of Dream

We are the teachers of mortals as well as fae and as such should respect our students and their natural right to dream in peace. Minds that have their creativity ripped from them are no good to anyone and only further Banality.

The Right of Ignorance

We're fast, but not so fast we can outrun our enemies forever, and no one can ever outrun Banality. In any event, the less your opponents know about you, the harder you are to find, which suits us just fine.

The Right of Rescue

Many Kithain turn to us to organize such rescue parties, figuring our knack for surviving dangerous situations is just what they need. Fortunately for them, they're right. Rescuing a fellow fae in danger is not only good for the Dreaming, but an excellent way to earn a reputation with your fellows.

The Right of Safe Haven

Hospitality is very dear to us. Respect the customs of your host, do not overstay your welcome, and return whatever hospitality you were given twice over if your former host ever requires it. Fail to do so, and we will hear and come to punish you.

The Right of Life

Those who would take the lives of their fellow fae are quickly Undone by Banality. Do you need any more proof that this practice is foolish and wicked?

Unseelie(Iku)

Hmm. Since he is better suited to speak on the subject of the Iku, I will hand you back to my impatient young friend Jack while I find more fuel to keep the fire going. Listen well and, remember, show him the same respect you give me.

Hey, kid. You loving this show yet or what? Trust me, it just gets better, especially for us Iku. Oh, sure, the old man was plenty nice about not sounding too angry and disappointed with us, but you wanna know the truth? They think we're a joke, and a really nasty, bitter one at that, and the second you announce yourself as Iku you go down a whole

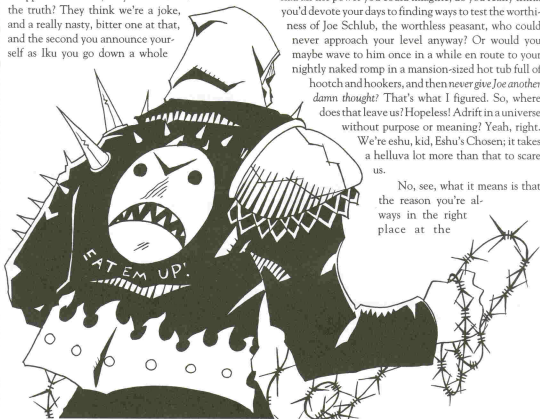
bunch of notches on their unofficial list. What's that? What list? You really are naïve, you know that? Every party has a best-dressed list, kid, They think that just because we don't bow and scrape to some unseen "destiny," we aren't really Elegbara, but it's all a load of crap. We have our own code, same as they do, and while it may not exactly line up with the one those Kithain Unseelie have, they certainly seem to work well together!

There Is No Destiny

Aw, hell, get that stupid look off your face. You heard me right. What, you thought that being Eshu's Chosen was some sort of package deal, that if you accepted the sexy voice, pointy ears, itchy feet and dashing charm, you had to sign up for this whole metaphysical bondage game that the Ojo are always rattling on about? Well, let me tell you something, kid — it ain't so. There may be orishas, I'll grant you that, but even so that doesn't mean it makes sense that they'd spend all their celestial time thinking of ways to trip up little cosmological ants like us. I mean, think about it. If you were king of the world and had all the power you could imagine, do you really think you'd devote your days to finding ways to test the worthiness of Joe Schlub, the worthless peasant, who could never approach your level anyway? Or would you maybe wave to him once in a while en route to your nightly naked romp in a mansion-sized hot tub full of hootch and hookers, and then *never give Joe another damn thought?* That's what I figured. So, where does that leave us? Hopeless! Adrift in a universe without purpose or meaning? Yeah, right.

We're eshu, kid, Eshu's Chosen; it takes a helluva lot more than that to scare us.

No, see, what it means is that the reason you're always in the right place at the



right time isn't because some higher power is moving you around its cosmic chessboard according to some giant plan. It's because that's the only place you could be, given the choices you've made and the turns you've taken. See what I'm saying? We're free, truly, ultimately *free*. That means that to the eyes of those who try to see things through the blinders of some big meaning or destiny, it appears absolutely amazing that we consistently find ourselves in just the right place instead of constantly schlubbing through the mud of mundane events like they do. They expect their lives to be an endless chain of stupid, boring stuff because that's what they've been trained to expect — no more, no less. But we know better, and we choose not to let it happen that way, then surprise! All of a sudden our lives don't suck like theirs do. Because life doesn't have to — there's no plan, no purpose, no destiny tying anyone down to anything! Hell, anyone could be like us if they'd just let go of what they're hanging on to, but, so far, hard as they might try, we've never found a single candidate who could really do it. Their loss.

Leave Trouble in Your Wake

If there's one thing that we agree with those stuffy Ojo bastards on, it's this: society has to change, and I

mean in a big way. Which one? Jeez, you're slow. All of them, kid. Society itself is what I'm talking about. Ever notice that every government everywhere sucks, but nobody seems to do anything about it? Or that when they do, it's these half-baked ideas that work out even worse than what we have already, and people wind up clutching their fascist security blankets tighter than before? See, the way we look at it, it's our job to gather stories and learn histories, right? Society will forget otherwise. Isn't that what the Ojo always say? Seriously, I know they mean well with all that



"evolution, not revolution" crap, but you look like a pretty pragmatic type, and that tells me you know how much plain good intentions and cheerful thoughts do in this world. Both humanity and the fae have had *countless* chances to learn from their mistakes, to take the stories we tell them and finally realize why they keep bashing their heads against the wall, but they just don't get it or, worse than that, kill those who do for being "dangerous." For all the good they have in their hearts, all the Ojo have basically done in the last thousand years or more is tell the same stupid folks the same stories every generation, and then act surprised when nothing changes. Wanna know why it never does? Because after a while, no matter how well they told them, these stories and lessons became background noise, boring and predictable, instead of being primal and *dangerous* like they really should.

So what we wanna know is, where in our job description does it say that we have to play fair with what we know? Let's combine our knowledge and our gift for words to raise some real hell and make things happen for a change — incite riots, spread rumors, twist words, fan the flames of civil unrest, things like that. By Ogun, we're supposed to be the embodiment of chance, accident and unpredictability, not the local community outreach! Chaos at both snaps people out of their complacent modern slumber, and believe me, there's nothing like fear for making sure your audience is giving you its full attention. So yeah, teach when you can, but make sure it's a lesson the bastards will always remember, and if that means breaking a few rules of polite society to get your point across, so what? That's why we travel so fast! Society's all going down the tubes anyway, so you might as well give it a little shove and help it slide better. To hell with all this "keepers of ancient stories and secrets" nonsense. Always make those in power afraid of what you know and doubly afraid of what you might do with it. And if anyone in particular crosses you along the way, well, if you're capable of bringing a city to its knees with just a few dirty secrets and inflammatory speeches, imagine what you can do against one person.

Vengeance Is Divine

And so are we. Don't fool yourself, kid. We are Elegbara, Chosen of Eshu, the favored children of the mightiest, most feared orisha there ever was. So act like it! Dress well, speak well, and always try to leave having made an even better impression than you did when you came in. Make 'em scared, make 'em jealous, make 'em want you so bad they can't stand it — whatever floats your boat — but *never* let them think they're anywhere close to your level. If you've got style — and we all do — they won't even think you're being cocky when you do it; they'll be too busy trying to figure out how to be more like you, sidhe included. Most of all, don't take crap from anyone, especially humans. If someone tries to tell you something's off-limits, or cut you off during a good story, or cut in on the move you're making on the beautiful young thing you're lusting after, make 'em sorry that their father ever figured out how to work his zipper. Screw this Robin Hood-style "all outcasts look out for each other" stuff. I've been on the streets, so I know that's not how it works. Look out for yourself above all else, and make sure that those who mess with you wind up missing something important afterward — whether it's their ego or their colon is a matter of personal style, but the net result should be the same. One more person who will never, ever mess with you again! Understand me? Good.

The Unseelie Code

Okay, here's the lowdown on the Unseelie "code," just so you don't step on too many toes if you find yourself hanging with a bunch of them. Remember, though, these are the Unseelie — even these rules are as often as not observed in violation. Got it?

Change Is Good

Well, duh! We *are* change, raw unpredictability incarnate. Honestly, the others should be paying us for the lessons we give them in how to live life this way.

Glamour Is Free

I don't know how to break it to you, kid, but on the road we don't usually have time to cultivate those long, touchy-feely relationships the others do when it comes to

gaining Glamour. So you know what that means — it's Ravaging time! After all, we're bringing some excitement to their lives, so why not get something in exchange?

Honor Is a Lie

We hate making promises, because it means we aren't free, even if only in the littlest way. Fortunately, our way with words makes it easy for us to seem like we've promised one thing when we've actually sworn no such thing, so we don't usually have a problem with this. Just watch out for oaths backed by the Dreaming. Swear to those, and no silver tongue can save you from getting pimp-slapped by the Dreaming if you break it.

Passion before Duty

Another easy score for us, so to speak. When you figure out you're one of the only people on the planet who realizes you have true freedom to do as you please, it becomes astonishingly easy to indulge yourself. Enjoy, kid.

The Shadow Court (Iku-Abeokuta)

Hey, the old man's still not back yet, so allow me to let you in on another little secret, kid. Ever heard of something called the Shadow Court? You have? Cool. Let me just begin by saying that who they are and what they do goes way, way beyond those Samhain games you've heard about. That's just their public face, to screen out the wannabes and convince the Ojo that they're nothing more than a bunch of punk kids with tricks and costumes. No, the real court is something a lot more serious — and a lot more secret — than that, so much so that I can't even tell you everything I know about them. Not here.

Suffice it to say that there are some among the Iku who don't feel that even the relaxed standards and recreational hell-raising activities of that group quite quench their thirst for rebellion and excitement. As a result, many of these seek out the Shadow Court, or as we know them the Iku-Abeokuta. Provided they prove themselves truly committed to the Iku philosophy and pass some seriously scary, bloody initiation rites, they're in. What's that? What do the Iku-Abeokuta actually do? Well, no one outside of the group really knows for sure.

Rumor has it that they're real unhappy about the Seelie painting all Unseelie as villains and then refusing to hand over power on the traditional transition day, and so these guys've got all kinds of plans for commoner revolution, antinoble terrorism and so on. Some of them are even more radical, products of the last two centuries of democracy and individualism, and want to eliminate the nobles altogether. Basically, they're the fae version of the Weather Underground, if you're old enough to know what that means; if not, look it up. Your history teacher sucks.

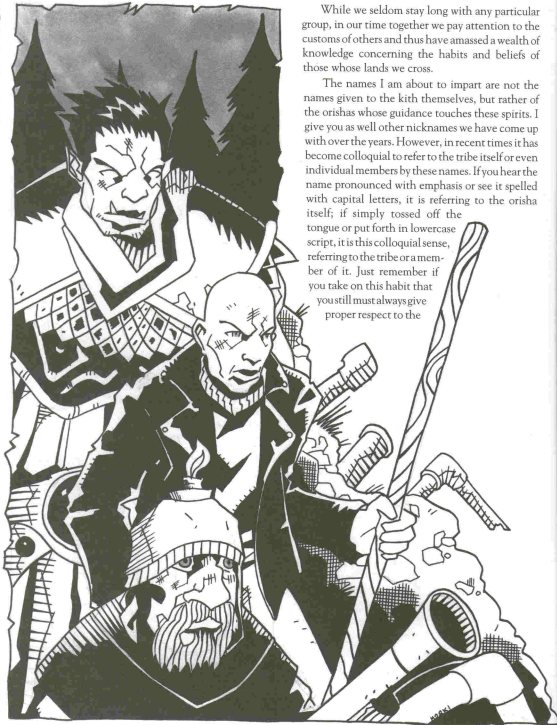
Naturally enough, those of our kind that join become stars — we hate the sidhe already, we're real good at getting the masses riled up and we just love taking risks. Sound like perfect revolutionaries to you? Me too. So, why don't all of us Iku just join and get it over with? I can't say for certain, except . . . well, there's something not right about a lot of those Shadow Court types, not right in a way that even we don't like. Nearest I can describe it is a kind of nihilistic touch that just gets under your skin and leaves you feeling . . . dirty. Be careful if you think you're in the company of these guys, doubly so if they try to push a dare on you. I've heard they sometimes try to trick us in fatal dares just to laugh as we die. Cheerful, eh? So much for "commoner" fraternity!

Well, that just about covers it, and who'd've thought, here's the old man with the firewood. I'll be seeing you, kid. Yeah, imagine that. Perfect timing.

The Kithain

I hope your time with Jack answered the questions you needed answered. Then let us move on to other things as the fire rebuilds.

The Chosen of Eshu have traveled farther and seen stranger lands than any other race, enchanted or mortal. It is only natural for us to have a more balanced outlook on our fellow beings than do our less-well-traveled peers. Once you have watched the sun rise from another man's house, you are more likely to appreciate the view he has throughout the rest of his day. What's more, as we are expected to return any hospitality we receive while traveling, it is only fair that we house such guests comfortably should they choose to invoke this ancient right. This becomes difficult if you do not follow the peculiar manners of your host while staying with him!



While we seldom stay long with any particular group, in our time together we pay attention to the customs of others and thus have amassed a wealth of knowledge concerning the habits and beliefs of those whose lands we cross.

The names I am about to impart are not the names given to the kith themselves, but rather of the orishas whose guidance touches these spirits. I give you as well other nicknames we have come up with over the years. However, in recent times it has become colloquial to refer to the tribe itself or even individual members by these names. If you hear the name pronounced with emphasis or see it spelled with capital letters, it is referring to the orisha itself; if simply tossed off the tongue or put forth in lowercase script, it is this colloquial sense, referring to the tribe or a member of it. Just remember if you take on this habit that you still must always give proper respect to the

orisha whose name you borrow, especially if you're using it casually, or risk becoming a name stealer and being punished accordingly.

Boggans (Orisha-Okò, Little Folk)



It is a misconception that we have nothing but contempt for these industrious little homemakers. Someone must tend the hearth fires, after all. We are simply glad it's not us! It's also hard to understand how they can be truly happy with a world that is only as wide as their own backyard. On the other hand, they still recognize the value of hospitality. For that they have our abiding respect. Their sedentary ways make them excellent audiences for our tales. Our accounts of sweeping vistas and faraway lands can hold them spellbound for hours. Best of all, most consider such entertainment well worth a free night's food and lodging, and if there's one thing you should never argue with on the road, it's hot food and a place to stay!

However, there's something about their complacency and love of material comfort that really rubs our Iku cousins the wrong way. Much of their suspicion of our kind comes from tales of how one of Elegbara's beloved came in dripping honeyed words and leaving with many things stuck to his palms.

Show them you mean no harm or, perhaps more important, that you don't have room in your pack for all their finest tableware.

Clurichawn (Taiyewo, Green Eyes) and Piskies (Kehinde, Silver Folk)

Not all the Kithain are truly foreign to us; indeed, there are two tribes who are our distant blood-kin. Descended from twin brothers who were followers of Elegbara, these siblings traveled farther than most of us and took on different traits as they mingled with the natives they encountered. We consider them family,

however, and delight in their company. Taiyewo means older twin, and kehinde means younger twin. Elder of the pair, the taiyewo are taller and fair and wiser in the ways of history and performance than their younger siblings. They have inherited our joy of preserving traditions through song, poetry and tale craft. By contrast, the younger kehinde are small and quick. They inherited our love of challenge and the open road, as well as a deep connection to the hearts of those they meet.

Many have been so long among their respective cultures that they fail to see our family resemblances, but there is no denying we fit easily together. For this reason we tend to keep them as our traveling companions. Treat them as you would your family and encourage them to explore the common roots we share.

Ghille Dhu (Iroko, Tree Folk)

When one of our kind says a tribe is few and far between, you know that it is as close to a literal truth as you will find, and that is exactly the case with the iroko! These elusive Kithain tend to remain on the Isle of the Mighty, as our oba keep to the lands of Oyo, and speak little even to the Kithain that are most like them. Those few we have coaxed into talking tell the strangest, most wonderful tales from behind the very eyes of animals and plants themselves. They defend the wild places as some of our own do and have suffered just as greatly at the hands of the cities.

If you can find one, do not approach it directly, but come quietly into its grove, lay your palms up to show that you mean no harm and simply wait. If it comes forward after a few hours, it has judged you acceptable. If not, offer praise for the pleasure of using its grove for a few hours and depart in peace.

Nockers (Olokuta, People of Stone, Masons)



Followers of the orisha of stone, most are much like their patron's element: tough, inflexible and possessed of a rather dark nature. Yet like their patron, their forms and uses are quite endless as well, and they form a great deal of the solid foundation that the rest of the Kithain depend on. Their job is to take the drab stone of the world and, with some sweat and cursing and hard work, sculpt and carve it into something better than the sum of its parts, like the Dreaming. Keep an ear out for their inspired profanity. Such imagination! Even we respect their gift for words when it comes to insults, and it is said that no one truly knows how to curse until he spends time with the *olokuta*.

When it comes to dealing with these hard-bitten fae, I recommend learning enough about their particular talents to praise them intelligently. Beware — their pride in their work never diminishes, and more than one of us has been unceremoniously ejected from their life for daring to criticize them too closely one night, even after months of solid praise.

Pooka (Ijapa, Turtles, Sly Folk)



Matching wits with members of this tribe is a great pleasure for us. Their love of wordplay nearly equals our own, and they are the least likely of all Kithain to hold our tricks and tall tales against us. Their animal forms allow them to travel in ways we envy, and their innate curiosity makes them natural companions. More than one motley has been saved from madness or worse by the well-timed antics of an *ijapa*, and even more souls have been coaxed back to the path of *Uhuru* by a trickster who taught them to laugh once again. Aside from the *jakuta*, they are also least likely to complain when the way becomes rough. Those who find themselves needing to win a place in a *pooka*'s home for the night had best have a collection of riddles, jokes and juicy gossip ready to keep their host entertained, or risk finding themselves at the mercy of the host's sense of humor all night long. As

traveling companions go, they rank up there with the *olu-igbo*, right behind the twins. Unfortunately, the same qualities that make *ijapa* fun to travel with for a while also make it hard for us to get along with them in the long run. Their incessant lying tires even our love of language after a time, and their fascination with words and embellishment leads them to interrupt us constantly, and if there's one thing we can't stand, it's a tale needlessly interrupted.

Redcaps (Oshosi Hunters, Shark Teeth)



A savage pack of bastards who care only for tales of violence and the gory epics of old! We respect their refusal to lie down and civilize their habits and legends in the face of progress, but our respect for them begins and ends there. If you can remember the *original* Grimm fairy and you don't mind a constant barrage of abuse and violence, feel free to spend a night at one of their households. I can guarantee that it's an experience you won't soon wish to duplicate. Even our *lku* tend to avoid them. They have no sense of honor or dignity and like to exploit those who do.

Particularly drunk or nasty packs of them will occasionally get it in their heads to hunt a lone *eshu*. If you even suspect that this is the case, run, and run fast until you leave all doubts behind. They're as likely to leave survivors as they are to play fair.

Saturs (Olu-Igbo, Wild Men)

Alongside the *ijapa*, we considered the goat-legged *olu-igbo* the only other common Kithain worth half a damn out on the road. At times they seem to embody *Uhuru* incarnate. Too often, however, we watch helplessly as they manacle themselves with addictions and indulgences. Many do not seem to understand that it is not enough to simply thumb one's nose at society. True freedom is the will and the dignity to follow your own

path. Still, they are hardy, intelligent, quick to forgive a slight and have a love of music and dance that equals the love we harbor for words. All you need to do to find a place with the olu-igbo is to teach them a new song or dance that you've picked up. They'll keep you up half the night practicing it, but that can have some rewards of its own.



One other reason we love the olu-igbo is that they seldom have problems with our migratory habits and take no offense if we indulge in passionate affairs for the few weeks we're in town and then leave for months on end. Our lives can get very lonely very quickly if we're not careful, and many olu-igbo understand that and help us the best they can. (And yes, since your eyes ask the question, their best is very, very good.)

Selkies (Olokun, People of the Waves)

Like the iroko, with whom they share the Isle of the Mighty, these mysterious fae test even our talents to find. We find their accounts of undersea life fascinating, and those of us with a love of seafaring sometimes even strike up friendships with these fae while traveling the ocean together, but that is about the extent of our contact with them. Pleasant enough to be around and boon companions away from land, but that is all.

Sidhe (sometimes Itiyere or Long Ears)

What can I say to sum up everything one needs to know about these arrogant, ungrateful, backstabbing usurpers? <spits> There. I think that about does it. Once, they had an orisha like all the others, but as they abandoned the world in its hour of need, so too did we strip them of that ancestral right. It took a great debate among the elders of the oba before it was settled, but once it was decided, it was done in such a way that their name was struck from the world forever. Not even the most wicked

could utter it in dreams. When we saw how they returned during the Resurgence, blind and helpless, with no sense of themselves, we knew our curse had run its course. Did you never wonder why the sidhe invent so many names and titles for themselves? They are forever trying to fill the void left by the absence of their orisha and so invent ever-grander names in an effort to make up for the loss they feel in their souls. Never forget — these jealous children denied our noble birthright and convinced the other tribes to go along with this disgrace. Don't hesitate to return slights in kind, nor blood for blood; you do Eshu proud with every act of revenge.



There are some *few* sidhe out there worthy of our respect. The wandering Scathach remained on Earth when the others fled, and for the longest time we were the only ones who knew they existed at all. Treat them well, for our bond goes back many centuries. As for other sidhe, they may occasionally be friendly, but always remember the injustice their ancestors served to your people before you return the favor.

Sluagh (Sonponno, the Stricken)



Pity the poor blighted sonponno, for the diseases of the world have twisted their frail forms into the shameful shapes they now wear. Such is the price they pay for coming from the nightmares of the world. Most bear the burden of their curse with an amount of queer but undeniable dignity. Forced into hiding by their very natures, they delight in our stories of the worlds beyond

the crypts and sewers. You can easily learn many important secrets from them simply by carefully exchanging tales of your travels for the choicest bits of local black-mail and gossip.

They place much emphasis on tradition and etiquette. Those of us who seek to sit and speak with them had best learn their customs well beforehand, or else find themselves excluded from their more elite circles. If you receive an invitation to one of their high tea ceremonies, wear something fashionable but not ostentatious, keep your voice down and, most of all, come prepared to trade a lot of lore. They also put great stock in discretion, and their information network stretches nearly as far as ours. If you betray the trust of one, don't expect to ever hear much from another again.

Trolls (Jakuta, Stone Giants)



Our history with these fae is very sad. They never seem to realize that they hold the same values as our Ojo brothers and sisters. All these reactionary warriors see is our inability to stay in one place and our reluctance to bind ourselves with the kinds of oaths that are their lifeblood. They mistake these traits for shiftlessness and untrustworthiness. Of course, the exploits of our lku relatives do little to improve their vision of us. It is seldom pleasant to meet the local jakuta in a town still recovering from an lku drifter passing through. Most subscribe to an idea of "seen one eshu, seen all eshu" and label us as troublemakers. What's worse, they have been trained to tune us out when we start speaking in order to avoid "falling prey to an eshu's silver tongue."

On the other hand, if a jakuta has had positive contact with one of us in the past, that same "seen one, seen 'em all" rule tends to work in our favor. Find any such jakuta in town as fast as possible and you won't be able to find a better friend, at least as long as you're in that particular town.

The Gallain

Of course, we're also wise enough to realize that the enchanted world doesn't end with the Kithain. Our wanderings brought us in contact with most of these strange families long before the younger tribes. Maintaining patient relations with many of these wounded communities has become increasingly difficult thanks to the blunders of our more misguided cousins. Yet this forms a vital part of our society, for without such contact we would not only lose many important allies but dishonor the efforts of our ancestors as well.

Inanimae (Orisha-Nla, Pieces of God)

Long ago, Elegbara taught us the secret of speaking to rocks and trees and rivers. Thus, we discovered the hidden kingdoms under the surface of the world, where the spirits played and talked of the silly mortals around them. At first they would not speak to us, but we are nothing if not charming, and in time a relationship developed between their world and our own. We told them tales of what it was like to be alive, to love and dance and cry, and in return they spoke of the glory of a new sapling breaking from the soil or of a river as it tumbles down a waterfall. Their words are mighty and their memories long, and we understand that well.

Be respectful — the modern world has treated them harshly. Many have no concept of Banality, having last awakened several centuries ago, so if you see one in need, do your best to assist it. Doing so fulfills the ancient pact Elegbara made and provides you with a unique and valuable source of information as well.

Nunnehi

Long before Leif Erickson set foot on the shores of Nova Scotia, we had already sailed now-forgotten ocean trods and met the nunnehi nations and established ties with them. When the Europeans came, we sympathized with the nunnehi's plight and did our best to prevent the same tragedies we had seen in other places from happening all over again. Some of Eshu's Chosen had long since intermarried with nunnehi bloodlines. Today a small but significant number of our kind born in Concordia are of Native American stock. It's even whispered that some of these cousins have the ability to walk into the spirit world as their nunnehi relatives do, but the truth of these stories has not yet come to our ears.

To this day, we are at least tolerant if not actually friendly with each other. More than one eshu has received an anonymous note urging him to leave the area before an act of nunnehi violence has occurred. Likewise, mysterious messengers who come bearing news of an impending sidhe "police action" have allowed quite a few nunnehi to escape to safety just moments before the riders reach their encampment. It's not quite guerrilla warfare against the sidhe, but it's close.

Thallain (Orisha-Awo Monster People, Dark Ones)

When these twisted monsters started reappearing in the wake of the Resurgence, the oba immediately sent scouts to every corner of the earth. Several of these runners never returned, which itself was ominous enough, but those that did bore even worse news. The Shadow Court, long thought little more than a joke, was welcoming these refugees with open arms. Most distressing of all, at least to us, is that we found evidence that the aithu, our infernal siblings, have escaped their banishment. From what we understand, though, none of the other tribes have found out about them yet, which means we might still have time to return our demonic half-brothers to their uneasy slumber before our shameful secret is uncovered.

If you should ever run across any of these fiends, do not hesitate to send them to their next life. Make sure you pass on word of where and how you met them around the next fire; eventually it will get back to the oba, and maybe someday they will decide we must go to war once more.

Adhene (Awo-Abeokuta Those That Dwell Beneath)

Of course, we must also talk of the even stranger things we have met in the Dreaming, nightmare beings so alien and terrible that their increasing efforts to enter this world form an invasion of the darkest sort. A few of these Dark-kin are not quite the predators that their cousins may be. Some of the keremet were said to be our runners in ages past, and the aoinides are usually harmful in only the pettiest ways. But as a rule these creatures are dangerous. Since they have no idea of what it is to be

flesh, they have no fear of pain or death. Trick them into keeping to the Dreaming where they belong, if possible. Otherwise, show them what it really means to become part of this world — make them bleed.

The moirae, the Ladies of Fate, comprise the only exception. Our relationship with these servants of destiny stretches back in time to our first encounter with them across the Mediterranean Sea over a millennium ago. We fascinate each other. They read the tapestry of Fate while we swing on its strands. Their banishment wounded us deeply, and more than one of the Chosen ventured into the Dreaming to try to bring them back, though none ever succeeded. Now they have returned, and while they have changed somewhat due to their ordeal, they are still the companions we once knew. Seek them out when you can. Defend them from those who mistake their sacred purpose for simple vengeance.

Hsien

Few Kithain know anything about these enigmatic creatures, and fewer still care to find out. In many ways they are much like the orishas we know, and for that we can respect them. When we visited them long ago, they received us well and listened to our stories politely. When we were finished they asked us to remove ourselves from their lands and their business, so we did. What else could we do? India was our great compromise with them; we both have strong roots in that area.

Every now and then, our travels take us through their territory, especially Japan, Hong Kong and Shanghai. If you enter their lands, announce your presence as politely and discreetly as possible, let them know how long you intend to stay and thank them for their mercy in permitting you to enjoy the fruits of their realm. They are animal spirits, answerers of prayers and masters of the elemental kingdom, worshipped as no less than demigods and possessed of magical powers to match. Those gestures are the absolute least amount of respect you can get away with offering them without being offensive.

Kinain (Agemo, Runners, Chameleons)

Never forget our half-brothers and sisters, those who share our blood but are not fully part of the Tribe. Most of them have inherited our wanderlust to one degree or

another. They can make fine companions for us, but it is a lot of work to keep them enchanted. It's typically better to keep in touch with them from time to time — they are family, after all. But do not to try to take them with you, for such trips only end poorly for all concerned.

Ordinary Mortals

All mortals have stories to tell, and if you stop to listen long enough you can learn many valuable things from them. If you're ever tempted to try to take one with you along your path, just remember that only a few can really let go of their lives for long. When it comes to a final assessment, come in and dazzle them with stories and adventure, then move on, leaving admirers in your wake if you can. That way they get to taste the truth of Uhuru firsthand, while you get to enjoy their finer points without having to worry about them down the road.

Prodigals

It's a dangerous habit of the Kithain tribes to disregard other supernatural groups simply because they do not fit into the neat and tidy perspective of the feudal structure. This has kept them largely in the dark about these other societies, but as our journeys frequently take us to places Prodigals congregate, we typically observe them more frequently. Many Prodigals consider fae to be little threat, if they even believe in them at all, so we have managed to learn quite a bit. Listen well, because few have any qualms about ending our lives if it suits their purposes.

Vampires (Shimul, Cold Ones)

Corpses who cannot put aside their hunger for life, these foul monsters infest most large cities like flies on a carcass, growing fat off of the death and misery of others. Fortunately for our sake, most cannot perceive us for what we are, and even those that can dare not move far from the cities for risk of starvation.

Shape Changers (Bete, Beast-People)

We share many common ancestral ties with these feral beast-men, but their ways have always been ones of violence and anger, and that has kept us distant from

them. We appreciate their love of the wilds and their respect for the spirit kingdoms, but that is all. One group of wolf changers shares ties with us through ancient Egypt, the Silent Striders. Their love of the trails, storytelling ability and reserved manners have allowed us to cultivate a friendship with them. Remember, however, that even the most passive shape changer harbors killing rages, so mind which way you toss your insults.

Wizards (Adahunse, Name Takers or Name Stealers)

From the earliest days, there have been humans who envied the power that Elegbara and the other orishas had, and in their envy these mortals sought out the secret names of things that they might share some of the power of the gods. Some came to the orishas and beseeched them for knowledge, offering their obedience in return for learning. Others spent time studying by themselves in an attempt to puzzle out the tiniest mysteries of Obatala for themselves. Some went mad from the pursuit of power, and in their madness learned how to unravel the world around them. Still others made pacts with dark spirits and wicked orishas to gain the magic they sought.

That is why we cannot trust the adahunse to this day — there is no sure way to tell which ones have earned their power through personal courage or benevolent service to the orishas, and which ones have made sinister bargains or simply lost their minds entirely. Never reveal yourself unless you absolutely must, and remember always that mortals were never meant to wield the powers these beings do. Only ill can come of it.

Ghosts (Abiku, the Unseen)

So many suffer in this lifetime, so much love is consumed by pain. It is small wonder, then, that many mortals die unhappily and that some actually return as abiku to lament their lost lives and torment those who live still. If you attract their attention, be kind and remember that many seek nothing more than to right some wrong or attend a lover not yet joined with them. This does not make them any less frightening, though, and should you offend one, I can only hope your mind will withstand the torture they will put you through. Remember, they have little to lose either way.

There is one other thing you should know: should you find paths that take you to the Bush of Ghosts, the dwelling place of the abiku, never choose to follow one lightly. Eshu's Chosen are creatures of life and energy, and the abiku see us with hungry eyes. Entering their land is a terrible risk even for our kind, and many who do never return or, if they do, come back hollow of spirit.

The Undying (Kokumo)

We know of only a handful of these beings, living links to the great Nile dynasties, but they are so maddeningly elusive. Oh, what we wouldn't do to listen to their tales and hear of the world that our ancestors knew firsthand, if only we could find one who would talk to us!

Hunters (Ogun, Iron's Children, Despoilers)

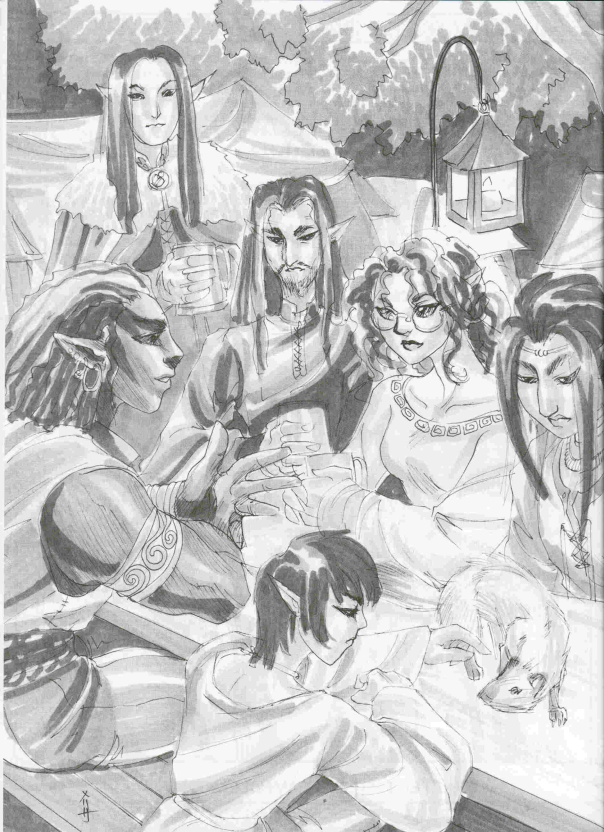
Mortals have long feared anything that lay out of the range of their firelight. Most who hunt our kind do so because they cannot understand what we are. Fortunately, we are well hidden from their sight, and so the

danger most humans pose to us is slight. Still, sometimes our agemo turn on us out of fear or envy, and they are the most dangerous of all. Get help for them if you can, but if they cannot or will not accept it, do not hesitate to put them down for good. As family, you can offer no greater compassion to them.

Others

No, let the fire burn down. It is a good time for me to get some rest and for you to press on if you want to make it to Philadelphia by morning. Had your fill of tales of the supernatural? For all that you have just learned, realize that there are probably entire worlds and civilizations still unknown to us, worlds just waiting for a grizzled old traveler or fresh young scout to explore. Enjoy yourself, young one. Keep your wits sharp, your senses ready and your feet fast. On your way, now! Don't look back.





CHAPTER FOUR: LEGENDS AMONG THE TRIBE

*Last night I saw a fool
Pass the edge of the world,
I dare not go back again —
History will be kind
And bear me in mind
And remember my name!
— The Toasters, "History Book"*

Herein may be found two variations on the eshu kith, one of great beauty and nobility, the other the reviled and disinherited members of the Tribe. Particularly notable eshu also make an appearance here.

Nobles of Purest Blood: Oba

Every so often over the past millennium or so, Kithain visitors to the eshu ancestral homelands would find themselves in the court of a mighty caliph or matriarch whose visage was radiant like the dawn and whose words

crackled with power and authority. These leaders appeared to be like the eshu the Kithain were familiar with, but somehow different as well: their eyes burned with golden light like the trapped essence of the sun, and their posture suggested the strength of the mountains and the grace of the rivers. Perhaps strangest of all, the normally defiant and adventurous eshu these Kithain were familiar with treated these rulers with great deference, at times bordering on outright servitude. Yet as soon as they were out of the caliph's presence, the eshu became their normal selves again and refused to discuss anything about the encounter or the strange ruler they had met. If

sorely pressed, all they would say is that as the rising sun gives hope to the world, so too did such visits give them direction. And for centuries, that is all the other Kithain could learn, much to their frustration.

Of course, this is because the Chosen of Eshu are no fools and know very well when they've got an advantage to hang on to it for as long as they can. Thus, they have allowed few to even become aware that the oba exist. They are simply too rare and too important for the Tribe to allow their existence to become public, lest enemies of the Elegbara target them for destruction. Such fears are not entirely unfounded, either. The oba are the beating heart of the Tribe, the last pure bloodline directly descended from Elegbara himself. As such they are entrusted with the Tribe's most sacred responsibilities — tending what few lands the Tribe can still truly call home and keeping the Tribe from drifting apart by acting as leaders and spiritual guides. Though a Concordian eshu quite possibly may never see one, or even learn that they exist, all Elegbara feel the presence of the oba in their hearts, and when one dies, the entire Tribe knows it. Even to the Iku, oba are the closest things the Elegbara will recognize as rulers of their kind, and that alone should tell the skeptical exactly how important they are to the Tribe.

Young oba are nearly identical to regular eshu, save for their eyes, which are always speckled with either striking gold or shining silver, depending on whether they are Ojo or Iku by nature. Most are born into noble families and are thus raised toward the thrones they will eventually assume, learning the courtly arts of war, politics and leadership. An increasing number are born in less fortunate circumstances, however, and must endure years of deprivation and dodging Banality until their true nature finally shines through. Oba are also legendary hell-raisers in their childling and wilder years, sharing the same love of adventure and weakness for a wager that their cousins do. Eventually, though, they feel a deeper call bidding them to return to the lands of their birth. Upon their return, they are taken in by other oba and undergo the secret rites of rulership, emerging in their full glory at last as leaders and spiritual guides to their Elegbara brethren.

Oba organization is loose at best; there are perhaps three dozen of them with titles, for one thing, and for the majority of their time they concern themselves with the task of overseeing the day-to-day business of their lands, both mundane and chimerical. Although the actual laws they enforce depend heavily on whether they are Ojo or Iku, all oba are widely respected for their wisdom, fairness and hospitality and gladly take in fellow Elegbara who need assistance, provided such guests mind their manners and don't protest over a little housework. Most important of all, twice a year the oba secretly gather in a grand council to discuss matters of importance to the Elegbara as a whole. These meetings last for up to two weeks, depending on how much there is to discuss and how long the debate takes to resolve. At the end of the council, a simple vote decides what course of action or words of wisdom they wish to pass on to the Elegbara regarding the issues that concern them. Trusted runners are immediately dispatched to the far corners of the world with word of these decisions.

To help escape detection, the oba are careful to wrap these pronouncements in the guise of a new story or bit of unearthed lore so that eavesdroppers are unaware of the true import of the tale. All eshu instinctively recognize that what they are hearing is important, though they may not know exactly why unless they are aware of the oba. While certainly not obligated to heed these proclamations, even the most rebellious Iku at least give them some serious thought. This is the ancestral trust of the Tribe speaking, after all, and their opinion carries great weight.

Appearance

At first, oba appear much like their eshu cousins: tall, slender and graceful, with pointed ears and enchanting voices, although in them these features sharpen further to pure perfection, making the oba almost painfully beautiful to behold in their fae aspect. Most striking of all, however, is their eyes — merely speckled with gold or silver before they take a title, an oba's eyes become softly shining orbs, like miniature suns or moons, once they assume the throne. This radiance changes with their mood as well, growing brighter when they are angry or

excited, and dimming to a contented glow when the oba is happy or at peace. Though some ostentatious oba dress lavishly, adorning themselves with the trappings of wealth, most actually prefer to wear the common dress of their land, with perhaps one or two slight changes to indicate their station. This applies to their fae dress as well as their mundane habits, but no one will ever mistake an oba for a regular commoner. Their very posture suggests their lineage, a noble line that extends unbroken to the dawn of time. Due to the natural purity of their bloodline, there are no oba not of pure African, Indian or Middle Eastern descent.

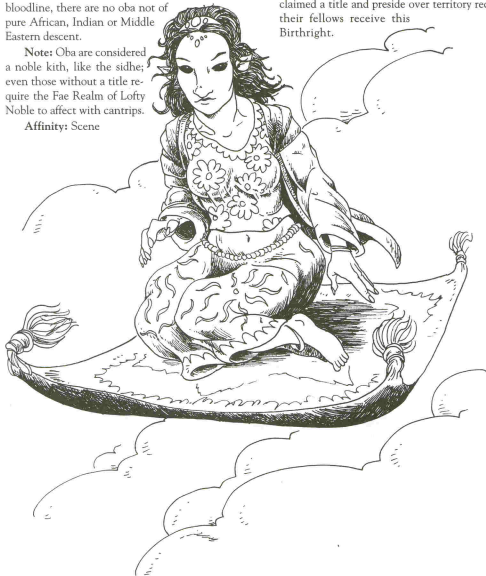
Note: Oba are considered a noble kith, like the sidhe; even those without a title require the Fae Realm of Lofty Noble to affect with cantrips.

Affinity: Scene

Birthrights

Spirit Pathways: Identical to the eshu Birthright; this is a reflection of the hell-raising years oba enjoy before settling down into responsibility. This Birthright is lost immediately and forever when the oba assumes a title, replaced by the Mantle of the Orishas Birthright (below).

Mantle of the Orishas: Identical to the sidhe Birthright, Awe and Beauty. Only oba who have lawfully claimed a title and preside over territory recognized by their fellows receive this Birthright.



Until then, they are considered too immature and untested to receive the glory of this power, regardless of what their actual age and life experience might be. When oba are found eligible, this Birthright is activated as part of the secret ceremonies required for coronation.

Oba cannot bond with lands outside of Africa, India or the Middle East; all attempts to claim lands elsewhere have failed, and in one instance even resulted in the death of the oba as the very earth rebelled and swallowed her whole. For that reason, oba will rarely, if ever, be found outside these lands except in the most extreme circumstances.

Oba can never botch rolls involving Empathy or Leadership.

Tale Craft: Same as the eshu Birthright. Their tales hold great weight as they impart wisdom to the whole Tribe.

Frailties

Reckless: Identical to the eshu Frailty; this Frailty is immediately and forever lost when the oba assumes a title, replaced by the Native Soil Frailty (below).

Native Soil: Oba are literally tied to the lands they love. Upon assuming a title, they become bonded to the land they rule and cannot leave it or its Near Dreaming counterpart for long without becoming sickly and eventually wasting away to nothing. This prohibition does not include traveling the Far or Deep Dreaming, though oba are still loath to leave their lands for long and will not agree to do so unless the need is truly dire. Oba may leave their territory for up to one full cycle of the moon. After that they begin losing Health levels at a rate of 1 per day, which cannot be healed by any means until the oba returns to her lands. Oba are innately aware of this time limit. Outside of their lands, oba suffer a +1 difficulty to all rolls due to their constant pain and distraction.

Quote: *Our words are the words of the rocks and the trees and the rivers and the sky. We listen to the orishas, then pass their guidance along to our people. What greater mission could there be than to protect one's family?*

Creatures of Blackest Heart: Aithu

Though they hate to admit it, even the Chosen of Eshu have their dark secrets, and one of them is the aithu. Though they look similar on the surface, the aithu are a corruption of everything the Elegbara embody. Eshu like traveling alone, while aithu typically run in small raiding parties, preferably with others of their own kind. Eshu tell stories to entertain and enlighten others, while aithu use their gift with words to rob the innocent and unwary. Elegbara are synonymous with dignity and pursue their chosen passions with grace and style; aithu are crude and unrefined, delighting in rough humor and pastimes considered immature by small children. Eshu follow the path of destiny or freedom, as suits their nature, and heed the call of adventure; aithu, on the other hand, see no point in destiny of any kind and flee at the first sign of trouble when the going gets even remotely tough. Elegbara claim that the aithu first sprang up as the result of ignorant humans perverting tales of their own lku brothers, turning them from noble rogues into little more than scavengers and bandits. As these stories multiplied, so too did the aithu, which is why to this day they travel in packs. They even corrupted the very name of Elegbara, twisting it into the vulgar aithu, which is perhaps the greatest crime of all in the eyes of Eshu's Chosen.

These differences, combined with the fact that aithu raiding parties frequently targeted the very lands the Elegbara called home, gave the oba no choice but to finally declare war on them several centuries ago, seeking to drive them from the world forever. It was a war carried out away from Kithain eyes, raging throughout Africa and even spilling over into the Middle East and parts of Eastern Europe. At first it was a nearly even match, for despite their powerful magic and superior courage, the Elegbara still fought alone, as was their custom, while the aithu traveled in raiding parties that frequently overwhelmed their lone opponents through sheer numbers. At last, however, the wrath of the oba exploded into full-

blown battle rage, and brimming with fury they led the first and last great war parties of the Elegbara against their enemies. The devastation was terrible and casualties heavy on both sides, but in the end the Elegbara triumphed as they knew they would. The few surviving aithu were captured and banished to a distant oubliette realm of the Dreaming, where it was believed they would languish until the end of all things.

Last year, however, word came from a trusted scout that the telltale tracks of the aithu had been found in a region of the war-ravaged Sudan. Following these marks led to a camp that, while abandoned at the scout's approach, confirmed that not only had the aithu returned, but their numbers were rapidly on the rise again. Worse still, in their haste to flee the scene, they had left behind proof that not only confirmed there were more bands of aithu active in Africa, but that several packs of

them had also already infiltrated Europe and Concordia as well. While they hate making such private business public, the oba know that the time has come for them to let the Kithain know of the existence of these twisted cousins, before they malign the name of true Elegbara forever. Now all that remains to be seen is just how widespread they've already become.

Left to their own devices, most aithu will gather in packs of their own kind, or failing that, other villains who share their love of theft and trickery. Crafty aithu bands (there are a few) use their numbers and Birthrights to set up elaborate confidence games, possibly fleecing a dozen or more people at once. Even the most suspicious folk don't tend to expect that a whole group of seemingly innocent people could all be working together, after all. Lazier or less intelligent aithu simply form street gangs or



biker clubs and travel where they will, using their voices to hold mortals captive as they rob houses or entire neighborhoods, then slip away under the cover of the Mists. Aithu prefer to keep their own company but will work with other Thallain and members of the Shadow Court if none of their own kind can be found, effectively adopting these friends as their new pack. They loathe eshu and oba, though, regardless of court, and will never keep company with them for long except to betray them or otherwise do them as much harm as possible. In battle, aithu enjoy using their numbers to their advantage, and given time to prepare they will attempt to use their disguise ability to lure their enemies into carefully arranged ambushes, striking from surprise whenever possible. They are not noted for their courage, however, and most will retreat if injured or even if it simply looks like the fight is going against them. Aithu typically put a surprising amount of work into pulling off their schemes, then flee town to enjoy themselves and do as little as possible until the money runs out, at which point the cycle starts anew.

Appearance

When they must, most aithu can pass themselves off as rather unkempt eshu, though their differences become more obvious the closer one gets. Aithu are slightly shorter than their eshu counterparts, with stubbier ears as well. While most eshu are fairly thin, aithu appear lean and hungry, no matter how well nourished they actually are. Their hair naturally twists into dirty tangles, while their eyes are dark, wild and clever, like those of a scavenging animal on the prowl, and they fidget constantly, always checking the nearest exit. Aithu have slight but distinct points on their teeth, which they often hide by smiling only right before they spring a trap. They like fine clothes and luxury accessories but tend to wear them out quickly, so even their newest clothes look slightly ragged. Despite their relatively recent return, due to their rapid breeding habits there are already aithu from practically every racial stock one can imagine, though African and Mediterranean features still predominate.

Note: Aithu are a Thallain kith and as such do not have a Seelie Legacy, but rather two Unseelie Legacies they alternate between. This also means that cantrips require the Fae Realm of Elusive Gallain to be of any use against them.

Affinity: Actor

Birthrights

Entrancement: All aithu have enchanting voices, like their eshu cousins, but over time they have developed a very specific way of using their voices to help hunt for prey. They may try to trap an audience with the hypnotic power of their voices, allowing the aithu a chance to escape or making their targets easy pickings for their associates. Targets may not be assaulted in any way or the effect is immediately broken, although targets are treated as surprised for the first round of combat due to the distraction of the magic. Note that this does not prohibit picking pockets, stealing jewelry or other nonaggressive thievery. Once the tale is over, the Mists ensure that mortals usually don't remember this Birthright's use. (Supernatural creatures may, at the Storyteller's discretion, roll half their Willpower versus a target of 8 to remember that *something* didn't seem right.) To use Entrancement, the aithu must begin telling a story, spend a Glamour point and roll Manipulation + Persuasion, resisted by the target's Willpower. If the aithu gets even one success, the target is frozen in place until the aithu finishes speaking or the effect is interrupted as outlined above. Oba and eshu are completely immune to this Birthright. It is impossible for aithu to ever botch a Subterfuge or Athletics roll.

Pitiful Visage: Aithu have limited natural shape-shifting talents and may spend a Glamour point and make an Appearance + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 7); if successful, they can alter their features to appear as either a kindly old person or a beautiful and naive young thing. This change lasts for up to 1 hour per success. Aithu usually employ these unthreatening disguises only to better catch potential victims off guard or to help escape the notice of angry victims of past scams. Specific individuals may not be imitated with this Birthright, nor can it drastically alter the character's height and weight, though the appearance of the other gender may be impersonated if the aithu desires. Finally, it does not change any "scientific" details about the aithu (fingerprints, retina patterns, etc.), nor does it change a character's Attributes in any way — it is a purely surface transformation, though a convincing one. Suspicious fae may see through the disguise by beating the aithu's successes on a Perception + Kenning roll; likewise, vigilant Prodigals may attempt similar tests at the Storyteller's discretion.

This Birthright can never be activated in front of mortals, but an aithu who is already transformed may wear his disguise in their presence normally. The Mists protect aithu who shift back to their true shape in front of mundane witnesses.

Frailties

Spellbound: There's one easy way to tell aithu from their eshu cousins: aithu cannot stand listening to the stories of others, because they easily become absorbed in them and fall into a state much like the one caused by their own Enchantment Birthright. To avoid this, they will constantly interrupt, change the subject and otherwise actively disrupt the efforts of others to tell stories. If someone is particularly persistent, the aithu will become openly hostile and seek to remove themselves from the offender's presence as quickly as possible. Little stories, such as someone relating what they did at school or a minor incident that happened one day when they were five, do not trigger this Frailty, though they are still quite irritating to the aithu. Only longer, more involved tales trigger it (Storyteller's discretion). For some reason, fellow aithu and other Thallain never trigger this Frailty, although even then aithu like being the center of attention and are quite rude to those who try to take it from them.

Any time the Storyteller feels the character has been exposed to too much unblemished narrative, or any time the aithu is the target of an appropriate Social roll, the character must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). Failure means the aithu is entranced for the duration of the story. What's more, when it is finished, aithu feel compelled to either return anything they've taken from the target or offer the storyteller some minor favor or small gift as payment for the tale (a few dollars, a single meal, etc.).

Quote: *Mind if my friends and I come in out of the cold for a moment? We won't be long.*

Tale Spinners of Note

Even among the Elegbara, some are considered more noteworthy than others. The following are some of those who have earned a great name for themselves within (and in many cases, outside) the Tribe.

Scherezade

All Elegbara offer prayers to Scherezade, the Lady of Legends, especially those who frequently find themselves a mere tale away from disaster. Some even claim that she has appeared in dreams and visions to teach a tale to those in dire need of one to save their lives, though of course the truth of such stories is impossible to verify. In any event, the Elegbara revere her as one of the earliest and greatest orishas to arise from the ranks of the Tribe, and the common eshu parting expression *May you live to tell a thousand tales* has its origins in the early forms of her legend.

Not much is known about the life of Scherezade apart from what she herself chose to tell (indeed, another common name for her is the Mistress of Veils) and that which mortals and Elegbara alike have since passed down over generations. However, two important elements escaped the mortal accounts of her life: the first, the legendary "floating freehold" known simply as the Scherezade's Circle, is described in full in the Appendix. The second concerns her descendants, who continue to be a source of both pride and frustration to the Tribe.

As the Elegbara tell it, though at first Scherezade was a mere servant of her sultan's whim, once she had won his favor she eventually bore him five children. Two were fine sons, and three were daughters, triplets, who had a gift for prophecy but were cursed by one of the sultan's jealous wives to bring misfortune wherever they traveled. Such was the havoc that followed them, in fact, that Scherezade had to plead with the sultan to spare their lives with the finest story of her life. When it was over, he agreed to spare them the blade but decreed that they were to be forever separated, lest they bring an end to his kingdom once and for all.



Angry and bitter at their exile, the three daughters — all Elegbara themselves — swore a curse in return, one they sealed with their blood: that if three of their children were one day to come together, they would bring the entire Middle East down in flames around them. So saying, they vanished from the face of the world. It is said that Scherezade whispered a story to the wind every night to keep them safe, but she never saw them again. Every few generations, however, there would arise an Elegbara or a pair of them whose gift for tales was clearly the mark of some great lineage and whose lives enriched the Tribe, but whose arrival was heralded by disasters throughout our homelands. Some of the eldest claimed that during those times you could hear a woman's soft sobbing on the desert winds.

So continues the cycle. There have not been any of Scherezade's line known in nearly two centuries, but the greatest ifa show signs that two are already at large somewhere in the world and that the appearance of the dark star means a third is also wandering the world. Should they come together, it could mean the beginning of Endless Winter . . . or herald a new Spring for all the tribes.

Jack "Black Train" Eton

Growing up just a step ahead of the law in one of the rougher neighborhoods of Trenton, New Jersey, during the early '80s, young Jack wasn't quite the callous criminal some of his peers were, but his anger at the raw deal he felt he'd been handed kept him from staying out of trouble for long, though he had a talent for never getting caught for anything really bad. His nine lives were bound to run out sooner or later. Finally brought before a judge for something that wouldn't go away with a month of smiling and good behavior, Jack took the option the judge offered him. He enlisted in the Navy for as long as they'd let him, figuring it would at least get him the hell out of town to see the rest of the world for a while.

The ceaseless drudgery and strict discipline spoiled even his modest dreams of touring the globe, however, and before long Jack found himself regularly getting in trouble with the Naval authorities, just as he had with the civilian ones. Sick of it all, Jack had no purpose, no vision and a lifetime of frustration looming ahead of him. He was sitting alone in a seedy dive on one of his rare shore leaves when lady luck stepped in to save the day, as a local punk band took the tiny stage and began to play. Initially contemptuous, Jack became entranced — as he likes to put it, punk wasn't the missing piece of his life's puzzle, it was the



inspiration he needed to say the hell with the puzzle altogether, toss the pieces in the trash and just live his own damn life. In that one (now infamous) night in the pit, he became a deserter, a punk, an Elegbara and an avowed lku all at once, and he hasn't so much as glanced back since.

Jack quickly became a fixture of the growing punk scene, acting as a roadie for dozens of seminal bands and in time touring with a few of his own. He watched the scene grow, cheering as it made the mainstream nervous and mourning the gradual distancing from its two-tone roots that in time made a black punk rocker like him an exception rather than the rule. Naturally enough, those who warped the music to suit their neo-Nazi leanings never ceased to piss him off, and legend has it he earned his nickname "Black Train" as much for his ability to plow through his opponents as for his equally powerful need to always be on the road.

Although the life kept him young for a time, grumpdom eventually settled in. Rather than fight against it, Jack returned to his home state, where he continues to book shows, give advice to bands and otherwise support the scene that he loves. He is forever fascinated by the primal core of energy behind the music, which has managed to stay the same even as trends and bands alike came and went, and draws his Glamour from the joyous frenzy of the pit as much as from the ideology of the lyrics. An avowed anarchist, he sees the sidhe as being just as bad if not worse than the mortal power structure. He's wanted by both for a variety of lesser and greater crimes, though the knights the sidhe have sent to collect him always seem to get the worst part of a

mosh pit right as they think they have him trapped. Barring some truly outrageous crime, the courts have unofficially decided to leave him in peace. Jack also acts as a combination mentor/mouthpiece for many of the young Iku in the Tribe.

He can most often be found working the door at DisHarmony, a small midtown bar that he's made famous for its rowdy Thursday night punk shows, telling stories and joking with the kids while bouncing out those souls who simply come looking to start trouble. Though now a full decade or more older than most of the kids in the scene, if Jack's afraid of growing old or losing touch, he doesn't show it. Chances are that most Concordian Iku have at least heard a couple of the CDs by one of his many bands.

Marie Laveau

There is some debate over whether this enigmatic Elegbara, a self-proclaimed member of the Shadow Court and "Voodoo Queen of New Orleans," is actually the original lady to bear that name, as many of her admirers claim, or merely someone who has taken her name from the orisha that arose from her following. But even the most ardently skeptical fae feel a moment of uncertainty when they look into Marie's flashing eyes. For her part, Marie does not say, but her uncanny likeness and her mastery of the darker Arts of fae magic is enough to convince most of her fellow Unselie not to take a chance on the matter. In her lighter moments, she claims she's been able to build her entire criminal organization without using even so much as harsh language. Critics respond by saying that if she wished someone to cooperate, she could easily ensure that evidence of her magic (or her victim) was never found, either.

Marie first appeared in the New Orleans area about two years ago and, as one might expect, immediately became a sworn enemy of Duchess Lisette Levay, who already styled herself head of New Orleans's voodoo community as well as its Shadow Court ties, and a bitter turf war began. Fanatics fought on both sides — some who claimed that Marie was a name taker and charlatan, others who believed that she had arrived to rescue the city from the clutches of its immature and impulsive leader. As usual, Marie was the calm center of her own storm, keeping a friendly if guarded face in public while keeping tight control over the war efforts behind the scenes. New Orleans became a battleground for all sorts of shadowy forces, and Kithain were forced to take a side or flee for their very souls as the magic escalated and both sides waited to land a killing shot. Meanwhile, the



Shadow Court waited as well, thrilled to see who would win the test of strength and thus their continued support.

Fortunately for Marie, the deadlock was ended by a combination of unforeseen events. Furor surrounded the disappearance of High King David, which Lisette hoped to use to gain control of the entire Kingdom of Willows, and the return of the long-lost sidhe of House Beaumayn immediately asserted a claim on the region. Reeling from these shots, Duchess Levay either retreated or was finally defeated, depending on whose supporters you ask. Regardless of the truth, however, Marie now rules from the bayou, and the festive life of New Orleans's changelings has begun once more, albeit with a noticeably darker cast than before. As for what she is planning to do with the region now that she has it at least nominally in her grasp, only Marie knows. She has been seen in the cemeteries often of late, bearing tools for what looks like some strange ritual, and there are those who have begun to wonder if she might not really be part of the Shadow Court after all.

To mortal eyes, Marie is the very image of her namesake, a beautiful child of the South with *café au lait* skin, enchanting eyes and a low, sultry voice that is positively magnetic on those she favors or pure fire to those she does not. In her fae mien, she appears very much like what you would expect if you asked a child to describe a voodoo priestess, all flowing scarves and flashing jewelry, with a number of mystical charms — some real, some not — and an almost palatable air of mystery about her. She is warm and gracious to her guests and has a widespread reputation in the Tribe for helping those in

need of the kind of favors only her magic can provide . . . for a small favor or two in return, of course. And while only a handful know it, she is deeply and powerfully entrenched in the Shadow Court, and all Elegbara who join will eventually have some business with her. She enjoys the fact that since she has publicly acknowledged her ties to the court, no one believes her to be a true part of it, and she plays with the advantages this image offers her as often as possible.

Dice

Though it is but the latest in hundreds, if not thousands, of names and nicknames that he has assumed in his staggering lifetime, Dice is always quick to point out to any who ask that his current name is his favorite one of all. "It captures the spirit of the times," he'll say, with a wink and a smile. "God may not play dice with the universe, but I do — and I intend to win!" This is assuming that an Elegbara is lucky enough to come face to face with this legendary wanderer to begin with. Dice is notoriously hard to locate, even for one of the Tribe, and his habit of disappearing for a dozen years or so then reappearing with a new face over his old soul doesn't make it any easier.

Some of the younger Elegbara, believing this constant switch is the result of his dying and being reborn in rapid succession, have made him a figure of almost cartoonish misfortune, always blundering into a trap and then shuffling off to be reincarnated with cheerful abandon. Dice doesn't seem to mind this reputation, however, and there are a few who claim he even added a few of the better tales to this myth himself. Even those who subscribe to this notion, however, do not deny the great wisdom and power that Dice commands, nor his superb record of appearing to aid other Elegbara in danger. He has become something of a guardian angel within the Tribe, the cavalry who arrives just in time to rescue those who usually are the rescuers themselves. Dozens of Elegbara owe him a life debt through such circumstances, but he just laughs it off if they bring it to his attention, saying it's no less than he'd expect from them if their positions were reversed. He shrugs off his considerable powers in similar fashion, claiming it's nothing others couldn't learn if they kept their eyes and ears open for a while.

Few suspect, however, the true reason behind Dice's magical mastery and seemingly flawless memory: he is a Sichuan, one of the rarest of the rare among changelings, a fae who has perfectly balanced the twin halves of his nature and, in so doing, become effectively immortal. His last actual reincarnation was nearly a thousand years

ago and counting, although he quickly took to switching faces frequently to keep both friends and enemies alike from guessing his secret. That his current face is that of a young ile-titu, a white man, only speaks volumes about his playful attitude toward the expectations of others, both within the Tribe and without. Despite the belief of many grumps, Dice is solidly Ojo in outlook, for though he tends toward the prankster side of Eshu's legacy, his jests are always designed with a lesson in mind for those willing to learn and laugh at themselves.

His tremendous life span has allowed him to become what every Elegbara dreams of being. He is fluent in hundreds of languages, master of more than a half dozen Arts, walker of every great trail and trod on Earth and the Dreaming, and witness to more acts and teller of more tales than most folk have hairs on their head. His legendary irreverence, nothing more than his way of handling the weight of so many years, conceals a noble soul dedicated to teaching and guiding his fellow Elegbara toward the destination that he himself has already attained.

Those who have seen Dice of late claim that he has become increasingly interested in recovering a mysterious relic, once thought to be located on the Isle of the Mighty but now lost to unknown hands. While he is uncharacteristically silent about what it does or even why it has become his duty to reclaim it, stories have begun to circulate within the Tribe that he has begun asking others for aid, which in turn makes the elders



nervous. If one as great as Dice is asking for help, then what does it say about the power of this artifact?

Zubaidah Down, "The Desert Flower"

Though she came into her Elegbara nature only last year, this newest and youngest of the oba is already making a name for herself in a tribe full of legends. She has opened her freehold (a golden castle known as the Pearl of Dawn) to members of all tribes. She hopes to help create a worldwide changeling parliament where nobles and commoners alike can settle their differences and learn to work together instead of fighting against each other as they all too often do. The castle encircles a lush oasis and stands at the convergence of several major trods in the Dreaming. In the mortal realm it is located outside a small rural town in western Nigeria.

Standing before the last oba council, resplendent in her traditional raiment and with a glowing crown of truth upon her brow, she told them of her vision and how she intended to pursue it. Impressed with her conviction, the council granted her request to reveal her court to the world and is watching with no small anticipation to see how successful she will be.

Although she knows the road ahead is long and the task she has chosen tremendous in scale, Zubaidah is truly dedicated to her goal of fae unity. She has already taken the first steps toward building the compact that she envisions, sending invitations to the fae of Concordia, the Fiefs of Bright Paradise and the Isle of the Mighty, appealing to all fae to join her at the Pearl of Dawn, or at least hear her words. She also sent entreaties to the nunnehi of Concordia, the Menehune of Hawaii, the Empires of the Inanimae, the Undersea Courts and even the reclusive hsien of the East in hopes of creating a truly representative body. She is enough of a pragmatist to realize that the chances of these "outsider" groups joining are distant at best in the current political environment. Still, she holds out hope, and her words carry true conviction, which has not gone unnoticed even by those parties who have refused her invitations.

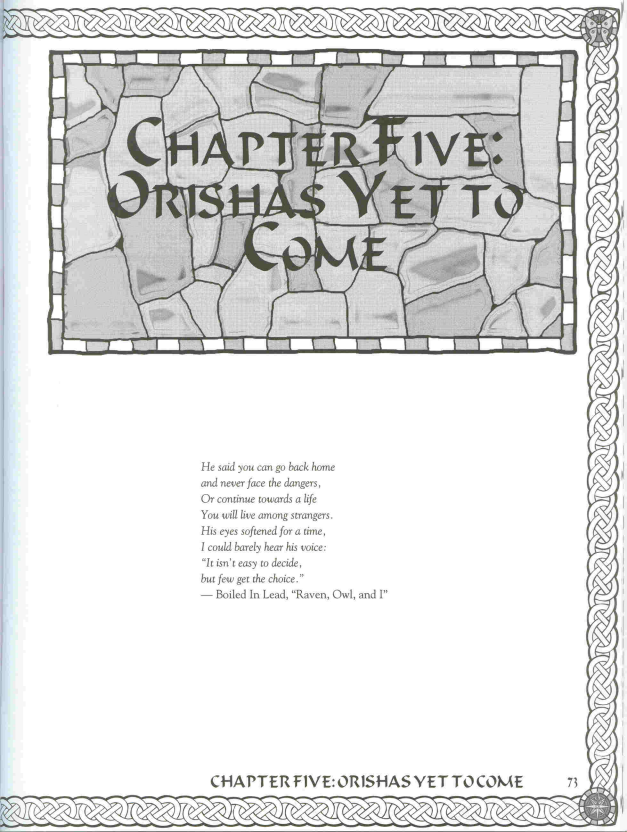
Born the middle child of thirteen in a fairly prosperous and traditional Yoruba family, Zubaidah has long been skilled at cooling tempers and building bridges, not to mention having her efforts get noticed by those around her. Her childhood in Nigeria was happy and full of the old legends and folktales. It is actually something of a surprise to the other oba that with such a background she did not come into her Elegbara nature sooner. Zubaidah

herself simply accepts it as the will of the orishas, who know the secrets of timing and destiny better than any mortal could. She is a beautiful young woman with elegant features, skin the color of the night sky, and eyes like the sun at dawn. As a mortal, she frequently is found in the casual wear of the West, but in her fae mien she always wears traditional Yoruba ceremonial dress, always some shade of gold to represent her Ojo view.

It remains to be seen what will happen with her plans for a fae parliament, but in the meantime the gates of the Pearl of Dawn are always open to guests, and she welcomes the chance to trade stories and discuss changeling politics with newcomers. She tolerates the various whims of her guests as best she can, but she does not tolerate violence or bigotry in any form, and any who cannot check their urges in those respects are quickly shown the door. The Pearl of Dawn has also acquired a reputation inside the Tribe as the starting point for many unique journeys, as the strange and eclectic mix of kith that are found there virtually ensures some form of adventure is bound to break out sooner or later. Zubaidah tolerates this as well, as long as they are not too rowdy, and smiles at the knowledge that one day they will realize that these adventures do as much for her cause as anything else.







CHAPTER FIVE: ORISHAS YET TO COME

*He said you can go back home
and never face the dangers,
Or continue towards a life
You will live among strangers.
His eyes softened for a time,
I could barely hear his voice:
"It isn't easy to decide,
but few get the choice."
— Boiled In Lead, "Raven, Owl, and I"*

Guerilla Skater

Quote: *Manual over the bridge, grind that handrail, nail the gap to the street and grab a bumper for a ride downtown? Please. I was hitting tricks like that ten years ago. Just tell me where we can do some real skating in this town, and I'll show you how the pros are afraid to do it.*

Background: Your parents said skateboarding was too dangerous, but with money saved from two birthdays, you bought a board and practiced at a nearby park. You loved the sheer freedom of skating. All the respect you got for your skills was almost unnecessary. Two weeks after high school ended, you declared your intent to go pro and haven't looked back since.

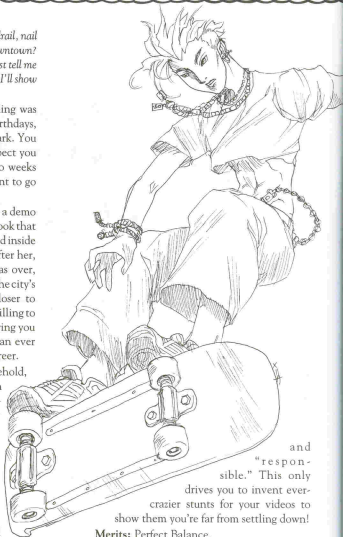
You were blowing off steam in London after a demo when suddenly this girl soared by and gave you a look that meant only one thing: *Beat that!* Something surged inside of you, and before you knew it you'd taken off after her, locked in an incredible duel. By the time it was over, you'd busted every trick in your arsenal, had half the city's foot patrol on your heels and were still no closer to catching her. Exhausted, frustrated, but still unwilling to quit, you pushed for one last burst of genius to bring you even with her. You flew into the air, higher than ever before — and took the first nasty fall of your career.

You regained consciousness in a little freehold, surrounded by a motley of London's lesser known Unseelie fae. Your new fae nature opened a welcome array of new possibilities (and a brand new landscape just begging to be skated). With a new sense of confidence, you set out to carve a real name for yourself.

You and your new motley began making underground skate videos. Unlike in competitions, where you refrain from using your Arts, the gloves come off and the Glamour flows when the cameras start rolling. To amuse yourself and build your reputation, you refer to yourself by a variety of comic names and always use a disguise for these videos.

While few believe the more outrageous stunts are anything more than "clever editing" or "special effects," your tapes have become a hot under-the-table commodity in skate shops around the country. Even your sponsors like this roguish double identity.

Concept: You live for competition, though your toughest competitor is often yourself. You're gracious in the way true stars in their field often are. You're enjoying managing your own line of custom boards and gear. The members of your motley tease you about becoming banal



and
"respon-
sible." This only
drives you to invent ever-
crazier stunts for your videos to
show them you're far from settling down!

Merits: Perfect Balance.

Roleplaying Hints: Spins, flips, tricks, grabs, lines, ollies, manuals, grinds, runs — this is the world you live in. If you're not actually skating or hanging out with others who do, chances are you're counting the minutes until you will be. But don't be obsessive about it; you realize that not everyone shares your passion. And if someone still gives you lip about it, well, there's no harm in showing up someone who's being rude, right? Though typically Seelie in outlook, your Unseelie side tends to surface when the cameras start rolling.

Equipment: Custom skateboard, backpack, discman, skate videos, dog-eared copy of *Hawk*, some punk and jungle CDs.

KITHBOOK: Eshu™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Court: *Seelie*
Legacies: *Paladin/Rogue*
House:

Seeming: *Wilder*
Kith: *Eshu*
Motley:

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●●	Charisma	●●●●●	Perception	●●●●●
Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●	Intelligence	●●●●●
Stamina	●●●●●	Appearance	●●●●●	Wits	●●●●●

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Computer	●○○○○
Athletics	●●●●●	Drive	●○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○	Gremayne	○○○○○
Dodge	●●●●●	Firearms	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○	Leadership	●○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Linguistics	●●●●●
Kenning	●●○○○	Performance	●●●●●	Lore	○○○○○
Persuasion	●●○○○	Security	●○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Streetwise	●●○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Arts		Realms	
Dreamers	●○○○○	Legerdemain	●○○○○	Actor	●○○○○
Resources	●●○○○	Wayfare	●○○○○	Fae	●○○○○
Retinue	●●○○○		○○○○○	Scene	●●●●●
	○○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○

Other Traits

Perfect Balance

Glamour

● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Willpower

● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

==Ravaging/CDusing Threshold==

Banality

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Experience:

Health

	Real	Chimerical
Bruised	□	□
Hurt	-1 □	□
Injured	-1 □	□
Wounded	-2 □	□
Mauled	-2 □	□
Crippled	-5 □	□
Incapacitated	□	□

==Birthrights/Frailties==

Spirit Pathways
Tale Craft
Flaw: Recklessness

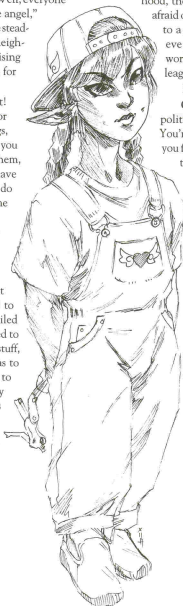
Bad Influence

Quote: *C'mon, do it. It'll be fun! Old man Allen will never know — we'll be gone before he even knows which window's broken. I double dog dare you! Chicken!*

Background: Lord Almighty, but you are trouble! Everyone in your house, no, in your neighborhood, knows what a hellion you are. Well, everyone but Momma. You're her "little angel," youngest of six children, and she steadfastly refuses to believe all the neighbors' stories about the hell raising that you do. You couldn't ask for better protection than that.

And do you ever exploit it! You have an amazing talent for getting other kids to do things, just by talking to them. Sure, you can do dares with the best of them, but why bother when you can have more fun getting other kids to do what you want and take the blame if something goes wrong?

Even the realization of your fae nature hasn't stopped you. You took one look at yourself in the mirror, tried your first minor cantrip, and thought "Cool." The local court tried to teach you things, and you smiled for all the grumps and pretended to care about chivalry and all that stuff, but what you really wanted was to start using your new powers to cause some real trouble. Pretty soon the other childlings wouldn't play with you anymore, but none of the grumps would listen to their stories of your wicked ways.



Just like Momma, they don't want to think a charming child like you could be bad. Suckers! Of course, if they knew how many violations of the Right of Ignorance you and your tricks were racking up, they might not dismiss it so easily.

You're the unquestioned master of your neighborhood, the cool kid everyone's real nice to and a little afraid of at the same time. You've honed your talents to a peak of wicked perfection, and now, on the eve of your Togail, you stand ready to enter the world of the wilders and try for the really big league stuff.

Be afraid, Concordia. Be very afraid.

Concept: You really are a nice, charming, polite child — to the adults in your life, anyway. You're the same way to the other kids, too, until you figure out what kind of goading or temptation they'll respond to: taunts, praise, whatever it takes. Then you're positively demonic, a natural pusher. Before they know it you've worked them way up the ladder of risks, and when they finally fall and get caught, your Birthright always ensures that you're in the clear when it comes time to assign blame. You're not truly evil. You simply have no concept of the hurt that can come from your tricks.

Roleplaying Hints: When with grumps or any other adults in a position of authority, be absolutely perfect. When you're around childlings or other kids, become their best friend first, then gradually see how far you can push them into taking risks. No need to hurry, though — you have an amazing amount of patience for a childling. You'll win eventually.

Equipment: Excuse note from parents (forged), skeleton key, cigarette lighter.

KITHBOOK: Eshu™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Court: *Unseelie*
Legacies: *Knave/Courtier*
House:

Seeming: *Childing*
Kith: *Eshu*
Motley:

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●○○○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Computer	●●○○○
Athletics	●●○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○	Gremayre	○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Law	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Kenning	○○○○○	Performance	●○○○○	Lore	○○○○○
Persuasion (<i>Best Friend</i>)	●●●○○	Security	●○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Streetwise	●○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Politics	●○○○○
Subterfuge (<i>White Lies</i>)	●●●○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Arts		Realms	
Contacts	●●○○○	Chicanery	●●○○○	Actor	●●○○○
Dreamers	●○○○○		○○○○○	Fae	●●○○○
Retinue	●●○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○

Other Traits

Glamour

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Willpower

● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Banality

● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Health

	Real	Chimerical
Bruised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurt	-1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Injured	-1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wounded	-2 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mauled	-2 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crippled	-5 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incapacitated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

== Ravaging/CDusing Threshold ==

== Birthrights/Frailties ==

Experience:

Spirit Pathways
Tale Craft
Flaw: Recklessness

Wandering Capoeira Teacher

Quote: *All life is a dance between pleasure and pain, peace and aggression. I've merely learned how to combine them better than most people.*

Background: You were a quiet child. Your too-wide eyes looked beyond the gangs and drugs that filled the streets of the run-down barrio where you lived, seeing instead the honest, hardworking people who called the neighborhood home. You learned that goodness and beauty can survive under any conditions. Your mother gave you all the encouragement she could, helping you enroll in a dance school across town.

Unfortunately, this "un-macho" passion and your natural do-gooder streak got you in trouble with the neighborhood gangs. You never backed down and fought them when you could. There were too many of them.

Dreams of a dance scholarship kept you going.

Trouble finally exploded when you reported some gang members for robbing an old woman, and the rest came after you. Three grabbed you. The fourth flashed his knife, cutting deep gashes across your chest and stomach. Dizzy from fear and blood loss, your vision turned . . . strange. The gang looked monstrous, with huge sharp teeth and flame-red hair.

Suddenly your teacher burst into the alley, dressed in flowing robes, her pointed ears creating an otherworldly effect. She struck down your attackers, using quick, dancelike movements, delivering bone-shattering kicks and disabling knee strikes, yet flowing gracefully out of the way of return blows. A few seconds later, the gang lay at her feet, clutching various broken pieces of themselves and howling for mercy. She led you out of the alley and into your new life.

After dressing your wounds, she told you what it was to be Elegbara, Chosen of Eshu. She taught you the martial arts as she had learned from her mentor. You learned dance by day and capoeira, the favored fighting art of the Tribe, at night. You discovered its African origins, how slaves in Brazil used it to fight back against their oppressors, employing capoeira's handstands and other acrobatics to fight even in manacles. Through capoeira, you could face terrible odds.

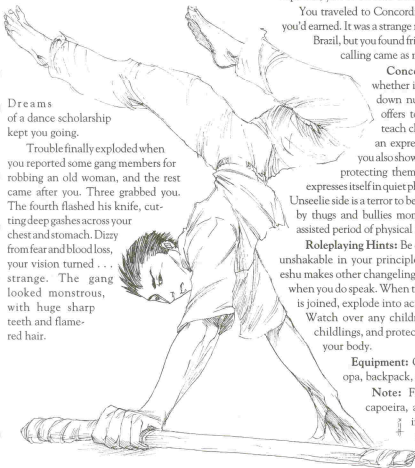
You traveled to Concordia on the dance scholarship you'd earned. It was a strange new land, a world away from Brazil, but you found friends there quickly, and your calling came as naturally as the dance.

Concept: Your soul is dance, whether in play or battle. You turned down numerous professional dance offers to travel on your own. You teach children to embrace dance as an expression of peace and joy, but you also show them capoeira as a means of protecting themselves. Your gift for stories expresses itself in quiet philosophy and parables. Your Unseelie side is a terror to behold, usually witnessed only by thugs and bullies moments before they enter an assisted period of physical inactivity.

Roleplaying Hints: Be quiet and polite but remain unshakable in your principles. The novelty of a quiet eshu makes other changelings even more likely to listen when you do speak. When the music starts or the battle is joined, explode into action with joy in your heart. Watch over any children in the area, especially childlings, and protect them to the last breath in your body.

Equipment: CD player, capoeira music, opa, backpack, small dance mat.

Note: For more information on capoeira, as well as special rules for incorporating it into play, see *World of Darkness: Combat*.



KITHBOOK: Eshu™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Court: *Seelie*
Legacies: *Sage/Fatalist*
House:

Seeming: *Grump*
Kith: *Eshu*
Motle:

Attributes

Physical	Social	Mental
Strength (<i>Wiry</i>) ●●●●○	Charisma ●●●○○	Perception ●●●○○
Dexterity (<i>Gymnastics</i>) ●●●●○	Manipulation ●○○○○	Intelligence ●●○○○
Stamina ●●●○○	Appearance ●●○○○	Wits ●●●○○

Abilities

Talents	Skills	Knowledges
Alertness ●●●○○	Crafts ○○○○○	Computer ○○○○○
Athletics ●●●○○	Drive ○○○○○	Enigmas ●○○○○
Brawl (<i>Capocira</i>) ●●●○○	Etiquette ●○○○○	Gremayre ●○○○○
Dodge ●●●○○	Firearms ○○○○○	Investigation ○○○○○
Empathy ○○○○○	Leadership ●○○○○	Law ○○○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○	Melee ●●○○○	Linguistics ●●○○○
Kenning ○○○○○	Performance (<i>Dance</i>) ●●●○○	Logic ○○○○○
Persuasion ○○○○○	Security ○○○○○	Medicine ●○○○○
Streetwise ●●○○○	Stealth ○○○○○	Politics ○○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○	Survival ●●○○○	Science ○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds	Arts	Realms
Treasure (<i>Blessed Opa</i>) ●●●○○	Soothsaying ●○○○○	Actor ●●○○○
Remembrance ●●●○○	Wayfare ●●○○○	Fae ●●○○○
Resources ●○○○○	○●○○○	Scene ●○○○○
Title (<i>Eshu</i>) ●○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○
○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○

Other Traits

●●●○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□
Willpower
●●●○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

== Ravaging/Consuming Threshold ==

Glamour

●●●○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□
Banality
●●●○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

Health

	Real	Chimerical
Bruised	□	□
Hurt	-1 □	□
Injured	-1 □	□
Wounded	-2 □	□
Mauled	-2 □	□
Crippled	-5 □	□
Incapacitated	□	□

== Birthrights/Frailties ==

Experience:

Spirit Pathways
Tale Craft
Flaw: Recklessness

Bloody Mary

Quote: *War knows no borders.*

Background: You came into the freehold a runaway, ten years old and already through your Chrysalis, but with absolutely no memory of who you were or where you came from. Etta took you in and raised you as her own daughter. She defended you from the worst insults of the others and did everything she could to track down your past.

After a couple of years your sweet nature won you friends, and your Togail was the largest fae party the county had ever seen. News of the return of the sidhe and the early conflicts did little more than merit a moment of wonder amid the already wonderful summer. Two weeks of summer camp seemed like an eternity, but it was a tradition Etta insisted on, so you left in a flurry of kisses.

No word ever came.

Frantic, you skipped out of camp and ran home, only to find the chimerical aspect of your town burned to the ground. The local Kithain were lost to Banality, and Etta was dead. You discovered that an army of sidhe razed the town chimerically when your friends refused to swear fealty to their "lords." Etta led the rebels and bore their ire.

After burying Etta, you took to the road, joining up with a commoner resistance cell that taught you weapons, stealth, unarmed fighting and survival skills. On the front lines in nearly every theater of the Accordance War, your reputation as an ice-cold warrior grew to legendary status. You took comfort in the knowledge that every sidhe you killed was one less who would enjoy the fruits of tyranny.

Then the Accordance War ended. All you knew was killing. You had developed a taste for it. So you packed up and headed abroad in search of work. At first it seemed wrong to fight for money instead of for a cause. Finally you realized that war is its own reason.

You've been a hired "gun" for over twenty years now, traveling around the world both in your mortal guise as a "security consultant" and your fae occupation as the head of the Frost Hammers, one of the top Kithain mercenary units in history. Recent news of the unrest in Concordia signals that it's time to return home and settle some old scores once and for all.

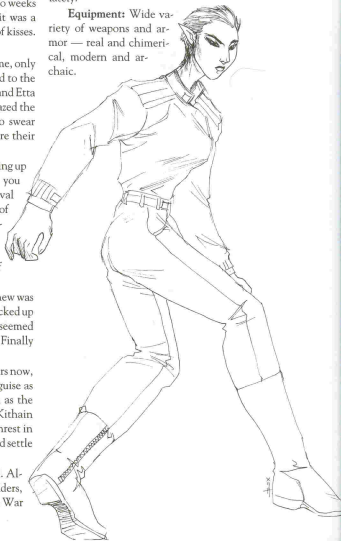
Concept: You're cold, aloof and professional. Although almost twice the age of most other wilders, you've stayed young, almost as if the Accordance War

froze you forever. You are ruthless and efficient in battle and will fight for anyone who meets your fee, despite your original intention to never hire out to nobles. Sometimes a small part of you asks whether the killing will ever stop, but that voice is quickly silenced — it's all you know, it's all you have, it's all you are now.

Merits: Faerie Eternity

Roleplaying Hints: A true ice queen, you never smile or laugh, except at an opponent who's about to die. Ask questions concisely and politely before accepting a job, and when in the field issue orders with cold dispassion. Nothing gets through to you anymore except the thrill of the battle, and even that has been harder to come by lately.

Equipment: Wide variety of weapons and armor — real and chimerical, modern and archaic.



KITHBOOK: Eshu™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Court: *Unseelie*
Legacies: *Beast/Bumpkin*
House:

Seeming: *Wilder*
Kith: *Eshu*
Motley:

Attributes

Physical	Social	Mental
Strength ●●●●	Charisma ●●●●	Perception ●●●●
Dexterity ●●●●	Manipulation ●●●●	Intelligence ●●●●
Stamina (<i>Relentless</i>) ●●●●	Appearance ●●●●	Wits (<i>Unfazed</i>) ●●●●

Abilities

Talents	Skills	Knowledge
Alertness ●●●●	Crafts ●●●●	Computer 0000
Athletics ●●●●	Drive 0000	Enigmas 0000
Brawl ●●●●	Etiquette 0000	Grumaire ●●●●
Dodge ●●●●	Firearms ●●●●	Investigation ●●●●
Empathy 0000	Leadership 0000	Law 0000
Intimidation ●●●●	Melee (<i>Broadsword</i>) ●●●●	Linguistics 0000
Kenning 0000	Performance 0000	Lore 0000
Persuasion 0000	Security 0000	Medicine ●●●●
Streetwise 0000	Stealth 0000	Politics 0000
Subterfuge 0000	Survival ●●●●	Science 0000

Advantages

Backgrounds	Arts	Realms
Chimera (<i>Sword</i>) ●●●●	Primal ●●●●	Fae ●●●●
Resources ●●●●	0000	Scene ●●●●
Treasure ●●●●	0000	0000
0000	0000	0000
0000	0000	0000

Other Traits	Glamour	Health
Faerie Eternity ●●●●●●●●●●		Real Chimerical

	□□□□□□□□	Bruised	□	□
		Hurt	-1	□
		Injured	-1	□
		Wounded	-2	□
		Mauled	-2	□
		Crippled	-5	□
		Incapacitated	□	□

Other Traits	Glamour	Health
==Ravaging/CDusing Threshold==	==Willpower==	==Birchrights/Fractions==

	●●●●●●●●●●			
	□□□□□□□□			

Experience:

Spirit Pathways
Tale Craft
Flaw: Recklessness

APPENDIX: TREASURES FROM THE TRAILS

Destinations are often a surprise to the destined.

— Thessaly, Sandman: *The Kindly Ones*

The Eshu are unique. So are many of their Backgrounds, Treasures, Flaws and Merits. They also possess an Art that is little known (if at all) outside their own society.

New Backgrounds

The following Backgrounds express the unique culture and history of the Elegbara and are restricted to eshu, oba and aithu characters, except as noted. The Elegbara tend to have Backgrounds that can easily follow them around somehow (such as Chimera or Retinue), or those which are scattered across the areas they're likely to travel (Contacts or Resources, for example).

Ceremonial Tattoo

Elegbara all tend to travel light. Anything that's not worn or easily carried is simply a burden to them, and most Treasures become troublesome to keep track of as the eshu travel. Yet sometimes a magical trinket is needed to turn the tide in battle or pull off a particularly clever trick. So the Elegbara reached into their tribal heritage and created tattoos infused with Glamour, making fairly inconspicuous Treasures that would be handy when their wearers needed them.

Over the centuries this process has become scarce as its practitioners die out and take the secret of the mystical ingredients and rituals for fashioning these tattoos with them. There are still a few Elegbara wise in the ways of

EXIT 6



this ancient magic, and those fortunate enough to receive such unique blessings bear them with great pride. As a rule, the tattoos are never bestowed on outsiders. Rarely, if someone proves herself a faithful ally through times of serious trial and hardship on several occasions, this honor is bestowed.

Ceremonial tattoos are designed according to the rules for the regular Treasure Background, including point cost, but with a few notable alterations:

- Each tattoo must be purchased separately, and characters may never have more tattoos than their permanent Glamour rating.
- Players and Storytellers should remember that *each* tattoo counts against the number of Treasures a character is exposed to for the purposes of entering Bedlam. Those who wish to heavily adorn themselves had best be well grounded in mundane reality or risk falling quickly into madness from the feel of Glamour constantly dancing across their skin.
- Tattoos are subject to the normal guidelines surrounding costs and activation requirements of Treasures. Typical activation rituals include dancing,

gesturing, washing or rubbing it with a particular substance, and calling out the name or symbol it represents. Though designed to be useful, tattoos must still appease the capricious demands of Glamour before granting their power.

- Tattoos are generally limited to Arts that affect the bearer alone or that provide some form of self-defense. Those with more powerful or far-reaching effects typically may have much more difficult activation stipulations, and some powers simply may not be appropriate to transcribe into tattoo form. The Storyteller must use discretion.

Royal Lineage

Similar to the Title Background, Royal Lineages represent an Elegbara's inherited social status and standing. It can prove quite useful in having a voice in tribal affairs or petitioning elders for advice or favors. While their sidhe counterparts expect their status to carry over into other arenas in life, pragmatic Elegbara prefer to judge an individual based on personal merit rather than on who his parents happened to be. Thus, most of their nobles do not automatically demand special treatment according to their rank, although wise Elegbara still grant the powerful some deference, if only to avoid their wrath. As the name of this Background indicates, one's rank is generally inherited. It is occasionally possible to advance in rank by performing some great service to the Tribe (securing your descendants a higher place of glory), or to lose rank by getting caught performing acts that dishonor your nobler and wiser ancestors. Most Elegbara remain in the same station throughout life, however, and are content with any role that falls upon them.

Due to their ancient feud with the sidhe and the contempt that the Shining Host instilled in the other Kithain regarding the titles of the Elegbara, this Background generally does not apply outside of Africa, the Middle East or parts of India. Anywhere else, the character is treated as no different from any other "commoner," no matter how royal his blood may be. Needless to say, this continuing disrespect is a sore point with the Elegbara, who draw much of their own contempt for the sidhe from this long-standing practice of ignoring their rightful titles. The exception to this are the oba, who remain nobles for the purposes of the Realm used in cantrip casting no matter where they are.

In their ancestral homelands or within a court whose ruling noble has specifically proclaimed their titles valid, the Elegbara is considered a noble in every sense of the

word, including requiring the Lofty Noble Realm for cantrips to be successfully cast against them. All oba receive a free dot of this Background during character creation, and most take at least one or two more.

- **Basic:** A low-level (though often aspiring) functionary, you do as you're told.
- **Minor:** You have a specific role, such as warrior or builder, and are trusted with it.
- **Useful:** A vizier or shaman with perhaps a small ancestral estate, your voice carries some weight.
- **Significant:** A sultan or lesser chieftain, you often have somewhat substantial lands out side of your own, as well as a strong say in Tribal affairs.
- **Incredible:** A grand caliph, shah or chieftain of a large tribe, your lands are considerable, and your influence in the Tribe is overwhelming.

Orisha Bond

While it is not exactly common among the Elegbara, there are those in the Tribe who feel a particularly strong bond with the orishas, such that they are able to gain a measure of their power in return for an extra amount of loyalty and service. Elegbara raised among the nunnehi or the more remote native tribes of their ancestral homelands are the most likely to develop such a powerful connection, though no few oba show a gift for it as well. This Background reflects a character who has just such a bond, be it to one of the orishas, a voodoo loa, a tribal totem of their native culture or similar higher power.

In game terms, this Background is handled the same as the Totem Background found in the **Changeling Player's Guide**, with one major alteration. Elegbara cannot use their bond to cross into the Umbra as nunnehi do, but instead can enter (or return from) their patron's home realm in the Dreaming and travel elsewhere from there. The systems for crossing over are the same, including bringing passengers along, and can provide a resourceful eshu with an excellent starting point for many fascinating trips into the depths of the Far or Deep Dreaming. Such powerful spirits as orishas or totems dislike having their homes used like revolving doors, however, so prudent Elegbara restrict such visits to times of great necessity, lest their patron revoke the privilege entirely.

Players should start with the orishas featured in this book, then work with their Storytellers to come up with

the statistics for other orishas, keeping an eye on game balance. What is acceptable as a patron for this Background is something natural as well as something with the weight of tradition behind it. Animals, plants, elements, orishas, honored ancestors and the like are acceptable, but modern conceits such as computers, technology, or figures from pop culture are out of the question. An eshu may follow Lightning, for example, because of its natural connotations, but not Electricity, because that implies its technological uses.

Each orisha or totem has a certain cost in Background points. The higher the cost, the more powerful the patron and the more potent gifts it confers on its followers. However, such spirits also demand an accordingly higher amount of respect and devotion from their followers as well. These benefits are conferred largely through game mechanics, typically an increase in an Attribute or free levels in an Ability, while the requirements are expressed as Bans, prohibitions that must be obeyed. In no case will a totem cost more than 5 Background points.

As always, use common sense and game balance when deciding what benefits and drawbacks a particular orisha or totem offers. The bond is ultimately a very personal one, and so there is no true right or wrong even between followers of the same orisha. However, players who attempt to abuse this Background for some free dots on their character sheet should be smacked down hard, or else the cultural value and mystique of this Background is lost.

Merits and Flaws

As the blessed children of Elegba Eshu, there are some traits that the Elegbara alone display, even among the great diversity of their fellow fae. Occasionally one of these traits will manifest in an agemo with particularly strong blood, but as a rule they are found only in true Elegbara.

Wayfarer's Feet (1-Point Physical Merit)

Your feet are especially durable and well suited to the long distances eshu typically cover. You are comfortable going barefoot year-round, regardless of local temperature or weather conditions, and need not worry about such natural walking hazards as splinters, city debris (including most broken glass), burning sands or jagged

rock. For travel and traction purposes the character is considered to be wearing sturdy hiking boots at all times. This Merit does not protect from outright attacks or weapons of any kind, nor does it cover crossing extreme surfaces such as fire or lava. It also doesn't make the character's kicks do any more damage than normal.

Long-Winded (2-Point Physical Merit)

This Merit reflects a capacity, both instinctive and trained, for being able to run long distances without becoming tired. Many of the cultures of the Elegbara homelands have employed long-distance runners as messengers and mail carriers for hundreds or thousands of years. A character with this Merit may run or jog at a steady (not sprinting) pace for up to 6 hours without feeling the least bit tired. After that, he must make only the normal Stamina checks to resist exhaustion once every half hour; he makes all such tests at a -2 difficulty. This allows the character to essentially walk at a normal pace almost indefinitely, provided he takes occasional breaks for food and water and a brief nap every 12 to 14 hours. He may do this for a number of days equal to his Stamina rating before he must begin checking for exhaustion. Note that this Merit does not apply to sprinting or other short-term bursts of speed, nor in other situations besides traveling. It does allow a character on foot to cover a surprising amount of territory in a relatively short period of time, particularly compared to those on foot who lack this Merit.

Gift of Babel (2-Point Aptitude Merit)

One of Eshu's original duties was to serve as Olorun's linguist, and as such he knew every language that ever was. Your character retains some of this flair and can potentially master an astonishing number of languages. You may learn twice the number of languages that a character with the same level of the Linguistics ability would normally be able to learn, and all training times with this ability are cut in half. Obviously, you must purchase some level of the Linguistics ability for this Merit to be useful; however, this Merit can be a godsend to diplomats and other characters who depend on the command of a wide variety of languages. This Merit can also be combined with the Natural Linguist Merit to make for a true mastery of languages.

Lost Horizon (3- to 5-Point Supernatural Flaw)

It is the destiny of the Elegbara to wander, but your travels are severely limited. You are bound to remain within a particular set of borders, and crossing their threshold immediately triggers a wasting condition identical to the oba Frailty, Native Soil. These boundaries need not be ones that are "officially" recognized, but they must be very clear and specifically detailed to character and player alike. The value of this Flaw stems from how limited your horizons are. A large or diverse territory such as a small country or a general region of a larger one (such as the Northeast in the United States) is worth 3 points. A smaller area, such as a single large state or several small ones, is worth 4 points. A ridiculously small area, such as a small state or a lone county within a larger one, is worth 5 points. Note that like the oba Frailty, this has no effect on traveling in the Dreaming; indeed, your character is likely to do so as often as possible to escape the tedium of the same mundane surroundings.

This Flaw stems from a curse or an ancient Geas and cannot be undone except by truly legendary means. All Elegbara pity those poor souls who suffer from this Flaw; it is true that the oba have a similar vulnerability, but that is due to their natural duty to the land, while your condition is generally a mystery or, worse still, a punishment for some terrible past crime. Storytellers should feel free to adjust the point value of this Flaw depending on how likely it is to have an impact on play. If the setting is going to be fairly static, decrease the value of the Flaw, whereas if it will be likely to come up especially often, additional points might be warranted. Storytellers may also forbid this Flaw if having a player take it severely disrupts their plans for their Chronicles. Oba cannot purchase this Flaw.

Living Legend (5-Point Supernatural Merit)

You are the living, breathing incarnation of some great hero or heroine; this does not have to be an actual historical figure, but can be a character from mythology or even (with Storyteller permission) a figure from more contemporary fiction. Note that you are an *incarnation*, not a *reincarnation*; you are not actually the reborn spirit of that individual, but the embodiment of the *legend* of that individual. Your mortal form must at least vaguely resemble your true "heritage," but your fae mien matches

it perfectly. Any Kithain with even the slightest knowledge of the original tale will recognize you immediately, and you are likely to attract a great deal of attention in the cultures that gave birth to the legend. You must purchase at least 3 points of the Remembrance Background to take this Merit to reflect the tie you have to the original legend. All Remembrance rolls made while interacting with or remembering things from your legendary "past" are made at a -2 difficulty (minimum difficulty of 3). What's more, you gain an additional two dice to all Social rolls with those who recognize you, Kithain or otherwise; being in the presence of such a famous figure is impressive, to say the least! At the Storyteller's discretion, this Merit may also allow you to have knowledge of, if not access to, certain chimera or Treasures related to your legend. A character who is the incarnation of Roland cannot expect to be handed his famous horn, for example, but would be a storehouse of information about the item and have vague ideas about where to look for it.

Note that this Merit does not provide any further access to the capabilities of your legendary "ancestor" than this. Whether you are nothing more than a very convincing lookalike, or whether you can actually walk the walk, as they say, is a question of what traits you choose during character creation and beyond. Your appearance and your "memories" may make it hard to get along unnoticed in ordinary society, and you may attract unhealthy attention from ogun and worse. It can also be very hard to live up to what is expected of you. Storytellers are encouraged to constantly remind players with this Merit just how exhausting and thankless it can be to live in the public eye.

Nemesis (5-Point Supernatural Flaw)

Maybe you're the reincarnation of some ancient hero or maybe you just have rotten luck, but whatever the reason, you've inherited a true nemesis, an opposite number determined to do you serious harm or even destroy you. This feud falls outside the scope of the regular Enemy or Hunted Flaws because it represents something more cosmic. Not only does this individual hate you and actively seek to do you harm, but the two of you seem to have been specifically designed to be enemies, and your confrontations bear testament to it. Your foe is nearly telepathic at anticipating your next move, and both of you always seem to have an answer for each other's best tricks or strongest powers, forcing a constant

struggle to come up with some new way of surprising each other. Both of you know it will never end until one of you is put out of the picture permanently. The Storyteller is responsible for creating this character and is under no obligation to reveal her full powers and potencies. Optionally, you may begin the game not knowing of your nemesis, but rest assured, the Storyteller will have you make her acquaintance before long.

Treasures

Having wandered the remote reaches of Earth and the Dreaming since the dawn of time, the Elegbara have come across oodles of mystical relics and magical artifacts. In modern times, many Elegbara make it a point to seek out such items all across the globe, though whether they do so out of greed, altruism or simple curiosity is a matter left up to individuals. While they find them attractive, most of the Chosen actually consider the majority of Treasures to be more of a burden than a boon, unless their magic is particularly powerful or useful. The Tribe's wandering ways make it all too easy for Treasures to be left behind when the eshu has to depart suddenly one night, and who wants to hand a total stranger (or worse still, a tracking enemy) something that valuable?

Treasures that Elegbara find most useful display many of the characteristics of their owners: hardiness, versatility and adaptability. These are just a few such items:

Durable Sandals (Level-2 Treasure)

Sometimes it's not grand things that make the most difference. These sandals seem a neat but not spectacular Treasure. To a wandering race such as the Elegbara, however, they are a much sought-after blessing. They never wear out or require repair. They are comfortable and keep the wearer's feet warm and dry regardless of the climate, and they offer a small boost to the wearer's energy while walking or running. All Athletics or related rolls are made at a -1 difficulty, and the wearer may walk or run for roughly twice the normal time before making a Stamina check. Additionally, any Hopscotch or Quick-silver cantrips cast while the character is wearing them receive an additional success (provided that at least one success was gained normally). If combined with the Merit Long winded, they do not allow any additional time before Stamina must be rolled, but do offer the rest of their benefits.

Although still most often found in traditional sandal form, variations have been seen in different regions and at different times: boots, sneakers, slippers and even toe rings. Most adapt to match the voile of their wearer after a little while, until they blend in anonymously with the rest of the wearer's appearance.

Trail Dust (Level-2 Treasure)

This handy Treasure always comes in a small, weathered-looking leather pouch adorned with an ancient symbol meaning "trail." Inside is a small quantity of what appears to be ordinary dirt or sand, of whatever kind is appropriate to the region the character is currently traveling through. When activated with a point of Glamour, however, and sprinkled across a character's bare feet, the character immediately gains a detailed geographic and directional knowledge of the surrounding area, roughly the same as a native of twice the character's age would know. Thus, if used in a city, the eshu would know the names and numbers of all the surrounding buildings, where the nearest police station or Chinese restaurant is, what streets take you where and what the best routes to avoid traffic might be. If used in the countryside, the eshu would know rocks and trees, not to mention any old paths, overgrown trails, hidden pools and so on.

The dust heightens the Elegbara's natural direction sense for a short time, allowing them to pinpoint specific routes and locations rather than rely on the more vague sense of direction they have normally. Note that all the information gained must be essentially locational or directional in nature. A character using trail dust may learn all the house numbers on a street, for example, but not who lives in them, and a search for restaurants would turn up how to get to all of them within range but reveal nothing about which one had the best cuisine.

Trail dust can only be used once per day, and its effects last for up to 4 hours and span roughly a 5-mile radius centered on the character. After seven uses, the bag is emptied and the character must recharge it by spending at least 1 hour gathering a fresh handful of dust and speaking prayers to the orishas, then sleeping with it under his pillow for one full week. Trail dust has no effect in the Dreaming, though there are rumors that pouches of silver dust exist that mimic this Treasure's effects away from Earth. Only eshu and oba who have yet to claim a territory can use this Treasure; for all other changelings, including aithu, it is simply ordinary dust.

Blessed Opa (Level 3 to 5 Treasure)

A traditional weapon of the Elegbara, an opa is similar in most respects to a Western quarterstaff, although many are quite intricately carved and adorned with a number of luck charms and other souvenirs their owners have picked up along the way. Most opa are hardened by firing or with cantrips and are effectively as durable as metal and can be used in melee combat against edged weapons without fear of breaking. Elegbara value them for both their elegant beauty and simple utility. What's more, since a staff is seldom classified as a restricted weapon by either Kithain or mortal authorities, it affords them a measure of protection that can be legally carried nearly anywhere in the world. Make no mistake, however — a well-trained staff fighter is incredibly dangerous, often more so than a swordsman, and opponents who underestimate their Elegbara foe seldom have a chance to do it twice.

Blessed opa are those weapons that are not only beautifully crafted but also imbued with one or two magical effects, the same as a regular Treasure weapon. Most have honored names related to their powers — for example, "Fire Serpent" and "Wind Dancer" — and have been handed down in families or between mentors and students for generations. No few have respectable legends of their own, aside from what is said about their wielder!

Scherezade's Circle, Unique Treasure

Actually a floating freehold rather than a true Treasure, Scherezade's Circle tends to come and go where it pleases. Sometimes it will stay in one place for years or decades then disappear for a dozen years, only to reappear halfway around the world as if it had always been there. Indeed, wherever it goes it changes to match the most comfortable setting of the time and locale. In the past it has been a quaint country inn, a serene vacation lodge, a hidden faerie circle, even a posh corner apartment. The only constant factor is the aura of pleasure and relaxation it radiates, which immediately puts all visitors at ease. Any Elegbara who enter immediately feel a great sense of history as well.

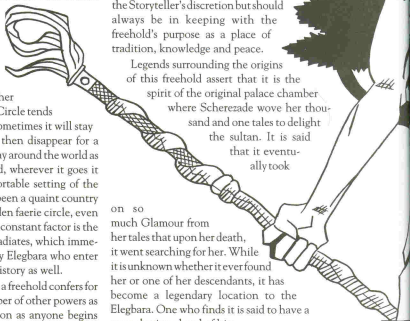
Aside from the normal benefits a freehold confers for fae residents, the Circle has a number of other powers as well, which become obvious as soon as anyone begins

telling a story around the Balefire or sacred stone. Even the most tongue-tied and shy folk become expert storytellers, receiving an automatic success on all Performance or Persuasion rolls related to their tale, and eshu become positively enrapturing to hear, gaining three automatic successes on such rolls. All uses of the Tale-Craft Art receive a free success as well. The Circle is a powerful force for harmony and unity. Anyone who tells a tale appropriate to her kith automatically refreshes her Willpower rating, as the sense of tradition of the Circle reaffirms her faith in her lineage. All Social rolls related to friendship or empathy are made at -2 difficulty. Finally, it becomes difficult to resort to any kind of violence while within the circle, even harsh language; a character who wishes to do so must succeed at a Willpower roll, difficulty 8.

Those powers are the most obvious of the Circle's talents. Others may exist, though most have been lost over time. Old legends hold that the Circle is capable of a number of greater powers: that a Treasure or prized possession thrown in the fire will reveal a vision of the owner's fate; that slough blood sprinkled on the hearth will cause ghosts to appear in the smoke; that it will open a trod to anywhere in the Dreaming, if appeased with a truly superb tale; and so on. The exact powers of the Circle depend on the Storyteller's discretion but should always be in keeping with the freehold's purpose as a place of tradition, knowledge and peace.

Legends surrounding the origins of this freehold assert that it is the spirit of the original palace chamber where Scherezade wove her thousand and one tales to delight the sultan. It is said that it eventually took

on so much Glamour from her tales that upon her death, it went searching for her. While it is unknown whether it ever found her or one of her descendants, it has become a legendary location to the Elegbara. One who finds it is said to have a great destiny ahead of him.





New Art TaleCraft

Stories represent a living link to the duties Olorun assigned to Eshu himself as messenger and linguist of the orishas. Over time Elegbara developed the Art of Tale Craft to represent this mastery of their sacred duties. As a potent though subtle tool in the repertoire of many an eshu wayfarer, Tale Craft helps even the odds against hostile audiences or a gang of enemies set on taking advantage of the kith's solitary ways.

Usually only Elegbara may master all forms of this Art. Occasionally they may share a rudimentary knowledge of Tale Craft with satyrs, pooka, piskies, clurichaun and rare individuals among the other commoner kith. By ancient custom, it is forbidden to teach this Art to the sidhe in retaliation for stealing the secrets of the Naming Art when they fled to Ilesha during the Shattering. Those Elegbara who are discovered to have done so are severely punished by the rest of the Tribe, and the sidhe in question often "disappear."

Some form of storytelling must be included in addition to or as part of all Bunks for this Art. It can be in a variety of forms (poetry, song lyrics, etc.), but it must always be present.

Attribute: Charisma

• Agemo's Blessing

Sometimes performers must change their material to match the mood of the crowd. For the Elegbara who find themselves facing hostile sidhe courts or savage redcap cannibals, this pressure is even more tangible. This cantrip allows wily Elegbara to ascertain the mood of the audience before beginning their tale in order to choose a story that fits the occasion. Additionally, it offers a way to save a failing performance by discovering the source of the crowd's displeasure. The Elegbara "sees" the determining mood of the crowd in the form of shifting shapes and colors, which offer symbolic clues as to the tenor of the audience. Dark colors indicate sadness or tragedy. Red slashes portend anger. Bright colors and pleasing shapes represent a desire for amusement or laughter.

System: The Realms most often applicable are Actor, Fae or Scene, though clever Elegbara may discover how to use other Realms to determine the audience for the cantrip. Most Elegbara disguise their Bunk for this cantrip as a prologue, joke or other mood-setting device.

Botches mean that the crowd reacts in the exact opposite way the eshu expected, ruining the first impression.

1 success — A vague idea; monochromatic visuals; no subtlety, shapes or texture.

2 successes — A good guess; one color, with slight shading differences and rough shapes.

3 successes — A solid notion; multicolor, with some shading and defined shapes.

4 successes — A great grasp; a dance of colors and shading, with multiple defined shapes.

5 successes — An amazing read; everything you need is in this tapestry, if you can interpret it.

Type: Chimerical

•• Flickering Firelight

This cantrip snatches wisps of incidental chimera born from the audience, allowing the Elegbara to create lighting and sound effects appropriate to the tale. Though the fragile chimera generated by this cantrip may only enhance the entertainment value of a tale, a clever caster can turn these creations to mischievous uses, such as dropping a room into near darkness, making phantom sounds echo out of nowhere or similar theatrical tricks.

System: The Realm determines the type of effect being generated — Actor or Fae for the representations of people or changelings (or elements of them, such as voices), Prop for music or set pieces, Scene for lighting and so on. Thus, truly elaborate productions often require multiple castings or perhaps several eshu acting in concert but garner commensurately impressive results.

Chimera created by Flickering Firelight possess only the barest of substance. They have no resistance to Banality, nor can they harm another in any way. Touching them causes them to dissipate, and they have no will of their own. Suspicious onlookers may pierce the illusion by gaining more successes than the caster on a Perception + Kenning roll (difficulty of the caster's successes +3). The effects last only as long as the story being told.

1 success — A muffled sound or poor image; no substantial lighting or sound changes are possible.

2 successes — Not bad from about 25 feet away; dim or raise lights and music.

3 successes — Convincing except for small details; a good likeness.

4 successes — Exact reproductions, down to the smallest details; spotlights and highly specific sound cues are possible as well as shifts in sound or lighting.

5 successes — Absolutely amazing creations; most special effects are possible.

Type: Chimerical (wyrd if caster has "called upon the wyrd")

••• Murmur in the Crowd

After reading an audience and setting the stage, Elegbara next learn to stir up their listeners' passions, nudging them in the direction of the desired emotion or response. Though most Elegbara consider it undignified to augment their natural abilities without good cause, performers faced with a tough crowd have no problem doing so. The idea or emotion must be simple enough to be expressed in one or two words and does not constitute a direct order. In addition, the Elegbara has no real control over how the crowd chooses to react. An audience of redcaps moved to "celebration," for example, will have a response very different response from that of an audience of boggans.

System: By appealing to the emotion or idea in question in their story, the eshu sends a temporary but powerful pulse of that particular passion through the crowd. Success moves an audience one step closer to the eshu's desired position. Multiple castings of this cantrip on an audience have cumulative effects, but even one failure immediately sets the audience back to where they were originally. The phrase "a hail of sneakers and rotten fruit" is the nicest way of expressing what happens to the mood of the audience when a botch occurs. The effects generally last only a few minutes after the performance.

1 success — Barest glimmer; the cantrip's effects last until the end of the performance, *maybe*. The audience feels a slight nudge in the desired direction but may easily ignore it. Enemies are unmoved.

2 successes — Murmur of approval; exterior events may still disrupt the effects before the end of the performance. The audience feels a definite inclination in the desired direction.

3 successes — Mass appeal; for the duration of the performance, the audience feels the desired emotion. Incidental enemies of the character are swayed.

4 successes — Tour de force; the passions stirred by the cantrip last up to 10 minutes after the performance ends, and only those who've had a lasting grudge against the eshu don't feel the pull of the desired emotion.

5 successes — Lasting impression; even bitter enemies are moved. The passion gradually fades away over the course of an hour after the performance.

Type: Chimerical

◆◆◆ Sticks and Stones

One of the survival secrets of the largely solitary Elegbara in their time on the road lies in this highly adaptable and effective cantrip. Used in conjunction with a story, this cantrip creates a chimerical shield from the chimerical words and images formed from the story. These images swirl in a protective circle around the caster, deflecting attacks.

The Elegbara may perform other actions while maintaining the shield, but she cannot move faster than a brisk walk and suffers a two-dice penalty to all such efforts due to the concentration required. She also cannot interrupt it to say more than one or two words ("Run!" and "Get help!" are popular) without breaking the cantrip.

System: So long as the eshu continues weaving his tale, the shield persists and is treated as normal soak dice, effective against all forms of direct chimerical attack. With an additional Glamour point, the shield may even protect from such hazards as fire or gas, though it cannot protect the character from total immersion effects such as drowning. The eshu may include others within the shield, but each additional person beyond the first costs an additional Glamour point and adds +1 to the cantrip difficulty, and everyone protected must remain in physical contact with the caster or lose protection. The effect ends when the caster finishes the story or consciously drops the shield.

- 1 success — One extra die for Soaking damage.
- 2 successes — Two dice for Soaking damage.
- 3 successes — Three dice for Soaking damage.
- 4 successes — Four dice for Soaking damage.
- 5 successes — Five dice for Soaking damage.

Type: Chimerical or wyrd, though if wyrd the shield tends to fail quickly in front of banal observers.

◆◆◆◆ Moment of Truth

At this level of power, the Elegbara can use the power of words and names to create substantial illusions. Similar to the Legerdemain Art of Phantom Shadows, any creations must be characters or other elements of the story the eshu is telling. Most are dismissed at the end of the tale or perhaps the evening's entertainment, though they may still gain sentience in the same manner as Phantom Shadows do and require the same Glamour costs to maintain if the caster wishes to keep them longer. Elegbara are considered responsible for any actions taken by their Beings of Truth (the name for entities created with this cantrip), and most keep close track of their creations until they are dismissed.

System: This cantrip is handled exactly the same as Phantom Shadows, including all costs and Realms required; see **Changeling: The Dreaming**.

Type: Wyrd

KITHBOOK: Eshu™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Court:
Legacies:
House:

Seeming:
Kith:
Motley:

Attributes

Physical

Strength ●0000
Dexterity ●0000
Stamina ●0000

Social

Charisma ●0000
Manipulation ●0000
Appearance ●0000

Mental

Perception ●0000
Intelligence ●0000
Wits ●0000

Abilities

Talents

Alertness 00000
Athletics 00000
Brawl 00000
Dodge 00000
Empathy 00000
Intimidation 00000
Kenning 00000
Persuasion 00000
Streetwise 00000
Subterfuge 00000

Skills

Crafts 00000
Drive 00000
Etiquette 00000
Firearms 00000
Leadership 00000
Melee 00000
Performance 00000
Security 00000
Stealth 00000
Survival 00000

Knowledges

Computer 00000
Enigmas 00000
Gremayre 00000
Investigation 00000
Law 00000
Linguistics 00000
Lore 00000
Medicine 00000
Politics 00000
Science 00000

Advantages

Backgrounds

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Arts

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Realms

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Other Traits

0000000000
0000000000
0000000000
0000000000
0000000000

Glamour

0000000000
0000000000

Willpower

0000000000
0000000000

Banality

0000000000
0000000000

Health

	Real	Chimerical
Bruised	0	0
Hurt	-1	0
Injured	-1	0
Wounded	-2	0
Mauled	-2	0
Crippled	-5	0
Incapacitated	0	0

Ravaging/CDusing Threshold

Birchrights/Frailities

Experience:

Spirit Pathways
Tale Craft
Flaw: Recklessness

KITHBOOK: Eshu™

Fellowship/Household: _____
Master/Leige Lord: _____

Societies/Bands: _____
San Day: _____

Merits & Flaws

Merit	Type	Cost	Flaw	Type	Bonus

Experience

Total: _____
Gained From: _____

Total Spent: _____
Spent On: _____

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Conceal	Range	Rate	Clip

Brawling Chart

Maneuver	Roll/Difficulty	Damage	Actions
Body Slam	Dex+Brawl/7	Special	1
Grapple	Dex+Brawl/6	Strength	1
Kick	Dex+Brawl/7	Strength+1	1
Punch	Dex+Brawl/6	Strength	1

ARMOR

Class: _____ Rating: _____ Penalty: _____ Description: _____

KitBook: Eshu™

Expanded Background

Contacts

Holdings

Dreamers

Mentor

Vassals

Retinue

Possessions

Gear (Carried)

Chimerical Items

Treasures

Chimerical Companions

Freeholds

Location

Description

KITHBOOK: Eshu™

History

Prelude

Date Ennobled:

Secret Societies:

Appearance

Chronological Age:

Mortal:

Apparent Age:

Date of Birth:

Hair:

Eyes:

Race:

Nationality:

Height:

Weight:

Face:

Visuals

Oath Bonds Chart

Character Sketch

KITHBOOK: Eshu™

Dreamers of Freedom

Born from the dreams of wanderers and storytellers, eshu follow their own enigmatic traditions, keeping alive the spirit of adventure and the desire for freedom. Embodying the dreams of Africa, India and the Middle East, they claim a lineage as royal as the noblest of the fae. Yet they bear the onus of irresponsible roamers and tricksters.

The eshu come forth to tell the story of their proud and ancient beginnings, the reasons behind their perpetual journeys and the secrets that lie beneath their carefree surface. The nomads of changeling society have found their voice at last.

Kithbook:Eshu features

- An insider's view of eshu history and society
- New variations on the eshu oba and althu
- New Treasures, Merits and Flaws
- Tale Craft: A new Art



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