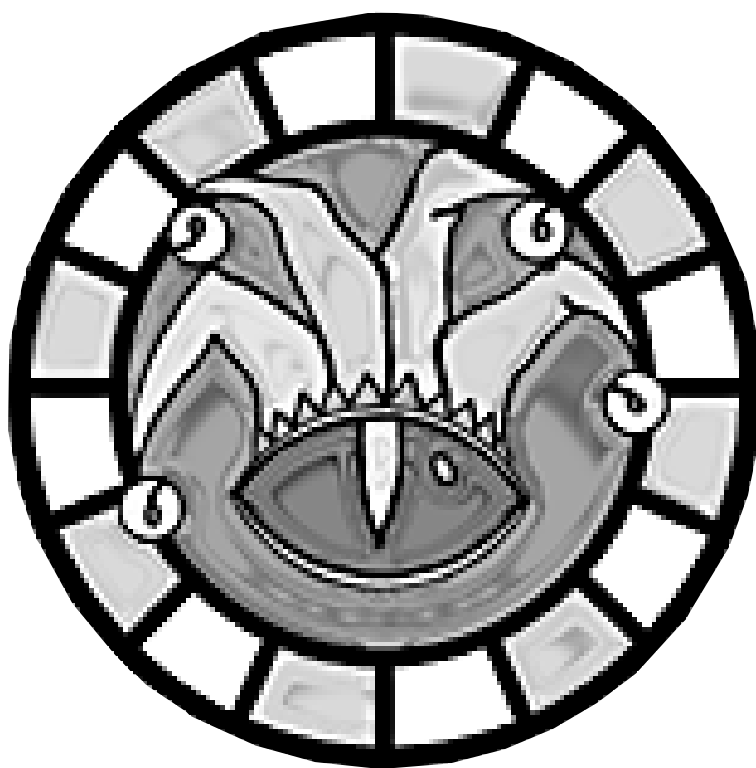
An intricate illustration featuring a pooka, a mythical creature from Celtic folklore. The pooka is depicted with a human-like face, large pointed ears, and a long, bushy tail with a yellow and red polka-dot pattern. It is shown in profile, looking towards the left. The background is a warm, golden-yellow color with a faint grid pattern. A large, stylized title "KITHBOOK: pooka" is overlaid on the image. The word "KITHBOOK:" is in a smaller, yellow, serif font, while "pooka" is in a large, bold, white font with a black outline. The pooka's face is partially obscured by the title. The pooka's tail is visible in the upper right corner. The pooka's hands are visible in the lower right corner, holding a small, yellow, three-leaf clover. The pooka's feet are visible in the lower left corner. The pooka's ears are large and pointed. The pooka's hair is brown and wavy. The pooka's eyes are large and expressive. The pooka's nose is large and prominent. The pooka's mouth is small and curved. The pooka's skin is a light brown color. The pooka's fur is soft and fluffy. The pooka's overall appearance is whimsical and magical.

# KITHBOOK: pooka

*Fig 3*

*Pooka* Kithbook Five  
For Changeling: The Dreaming

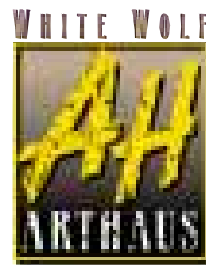
# kithbook: pooka™



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# kithbook: pooka

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# LION AND THE HEART OF WONDER

## A Pooka Parable

Once upon a time, there lived a pooka named Lion. In those days, names actually meant something and pooka spoke the truth like all other kith. One morning, Lion awoke to the chitter-chatter of a hundred different voices outside his den. He listened as they debated who should be the one to knock. Finally, to save them the trouble, he disentangled himself from his pride-mates, loped to the threshold and blinked at the gathered crowd. He saw that all his fellow pooka had come to pay a visit.

"What the hell are you doing?" Lion asked, his tail swishing in irritation. He crouched to study them all.

Buck stepped forward and dropped his horn-heavy head to look Lion in the eye. "Have you not heard?" he snorted. "There is to be a contest among the Fac. They Who Are Forever have offered a prize to the winning kith."

"Yeah? So?" replied Lion with a big, toothy yawn and a lazy stretch. "That doesn't answer my question."

Porcupine ambled forth, impatient, prickly, and announced, "Yeah, so, we want you to represent us."

Lion closed one eye—all the better to peer at Porcupine. "You want me to what?"

Mockingbird swooped down and sang, "Represent us. Represent us."

Lion roared with laughter. "You gotta be kidding me. No. Now go away. I'm going back to my warm bed." He stood, intent on returning to his den and his nest of pride-mates.

The other pooka all cried out in unison, "Wait!"

Bear pushed to the fore and said, "You are the bravest among us, Lion. They Who Are Forever called for the bravest."

Lion paused and looked back with a harumph. He couldn't walk away from a compliment. "You do it, Bear. You're almost as brave as I am."

Bear shook his head sadly, and Elephant trumpeted, "You are the strongest among us, Lion. They Who are Forever called for the strongest."

Lion looked up, up, up at Elephant and quirked an eyebrow. "You do it, Elephant. You're almost as strong as I am."

Elephant hung his head, swinging it back and forth, back and forth, and Gazelle's soft voice broke from the crowd, "You are the fastest among us, Lion. They Who are Forever called for the fastest."

"You do it, Gazelle. You're almost as fast as I am." Lion sat down and chewed on one of his nails. He watched the pooka shift and mill. He heard their grassy mumblings.

Finally, Butterfly glided forward and knelt in front of Lion. Her wings trembled with emotion and tears streaked down her face, leaving aqua stains upon her cheeks. "You are the wisest among us, Lion. They Who Are Forever called for the wisest."

Lion slid his golden gaze over the glorious creature and sighed. "Don't cry," he intoned, offering the tip of his tail to wipe at her tears. He hated to see anyone cry. "All right," he said begrudgingly. "I will do it—but on one condition."

The other pooka went completely still, a feat in and of itself. After several moments, Buck dipped his head and asked, "What's your condition?" in that deep, timeless voice of his.

With a pat to Butterfly, Lion stood and took a regal stance. He said: "When I win this contest, you will make me the King of All Beasts."

All the pooka gasped. They looked around at each other. Wolf raised his voice first. He howled in agreement. The other animals followed until the morning air reverberated with coos and caws, growls and grunts, barks and baying, and hoots and hollers. The pooka agreed unanimously. If Lion won the contest, they would make him their king.

Finally, the day arrived when all the faeries gathered in a glen to hear the conditions of the contest. Peacock made a beautiful cloak for Lion out of feathers from her tail. Sparrow gathered thistles and braided them into Lion's golden mane. Beaver gifted Lion with an oak staff he had carved with his own teeth, and Sheep gave Lion a satchel spun and woven with her wool. Thus equipped, Lion traveled to the glade in a driftwood carriage decorated with spider webs and violets, and pulled by Moose. He sat on a cushion of dandelion fluff with all the other pooka walking along in escort. Already, he felt like a king.

They Who Are Forever didn't come themselves. They sent a messenger, Unicorn, to relay their conditions. Unicorn stepped to the center of the glade, his hooves ringing on the stone platform where he stood. His eyes shimmered with sylvan light and his horn refracted the sun's rays into a billion bits of rainbow that danced upon the skin and in the hair of those gathered. Anticipation put a current of excitement in the air.

In his lulling, singsong voice, Unicorn announced, "Today there are nine who shall embark on a quest. This quest will take them to all the corners of the world." Unicorn's forest gaze perused the contestants, stopping lastly on Lion. The pooka stood proudly and boldly met Unicorn's eyes. Unicorn smiled, and continued.

"Your task," he said slowly, lowering his voice so all present would have to listen intently and lean forward to hear him, "is to rescue the true Heart of Wonder from its prison."

A general ooh-ah went up. Though no one knew what the Heart of Wonder was, it sounded impressive. Unicorn spoke over the noise of the crowd, "The one who does this..." He paused until silence had returned, "...shall earn a great honor for his or her kith. Go now and do your kiths proud." Unicorn left without another word.

Troll put his faith in Dán and trudged northward. Nocker set out in his chugging, choking, smoking carriage-contraption. Satyr capered off into the woods, with his band of maenads on his tail. Sluagh disappeared. Redcap gave a mighty whoop, tearing down the road with his hair flying behind him. Sidhe climbed back onto her horse, and, with her attendants in tow, she turned south. Eshu slung his small pack over his shoulder and padded toward the East. Boggan heeyah'd his mule into motion, the poor beast burdened with all of Boggan's worldly possessions.



Lion sat down on the stone that Unicorn had abandoned. "Oh, fleas!" he roared. "How am I to find this Heart of Wonder when I don't even know what or where it is?" He hung his head. Many of the other pooka looked on Lion's despair with disgust, but not Mouse. Being small and understanding how big the world can seem at times, Mouse crawled into Lion's lap.

"Don't worry," Mouse encouraged, her heart full of love for Lion, though he didn't know it yet. "I'll travel with you and, if nothing else, we'll have a big adventure."

Lion accepted Mouse's offer and the two set off to find the Heart of Wonder. Their travels took them through forest and field, over mountain and river. Finally, they came across a herd of deer at the desert's edge. As they approached, they passed carcasses and skeletons, rotting and drying alongside the road. The sun beat down, slowly burning all to dust. Only one tree remained to shelter the animals. Aside from a few crackly bushes, no plants grew there and no other animals roamed the land.

"We seek the Heart of Wonder," Lion told the herd. "Could you know where it is?"

One sickly deer looked at Lion and Mouse with hungry eyes. "I've heard of it," he replied. "I can tell you what it is, but not where it is. But I will only tell you if you promise one thing. We're dying of starvation and thirst. The river has ceased to flow. If you promise to find out why, I will tell you about the Heart of Wonder."

Lion readily accepted the deer's offer and listened intently as the animal described a beautiful gem, a ruby,

cut with so many facets that it would take a year and a day to count them. Lion and Mouse thanked the deer, renewed their promise to discover the source of the herd's woes, and then continued on their way.

Lion and Mouse walked and walked. Eventually they came to the coastline. They wandered along the beach, leaving their footprints in the sand. Lion and Mouse also saw horse tracks, mule tracks, contraption tracks, troll tracks, eshu tracks, satyr tracks, sluagh tracks and redcap tracks. This concerned them, because it meant that all the other contestants had managed to get ahead.

Hurrying along, the two travelers heard a voice calling, "help! help!" Lion and Mouse searched for the source of the cry. A fish lay writhing in a fisherman's net. His side bled where an ugly hook pierced it, and his smooth skin had lost its shine. The fish looked up at Lion and Mouse, crying, "Please, oh please save me. Otherwise I'll surely die and that's no lie." Without hesitation, Lion set the poor creature free.

"There," soothed Lion. "Go on home and take care when venturing near man."

"Thank you, thank you," cried the fish. "You will not be forgotten, Lion." The fish swam home.

Sometime later, Lion and Mouse found themselves in a beautiful forest. The trees stretched up to touch the sky. Giant flowers filled the air with intoxicating aromas and colorful mushrooms decorated the moss-covered ground. Lion and Mouse saw birds with rainbow plumage, large polka-dotted cats and frogs carved from precious gems. And yet, all the fantastic creatures living there looked sad.

At one point, Lion and Mouse stopped a small monkey to say, "We seek the Heart of Wonder. Could you know where it is?"

The monkey looked at the travelers with mournful eyes. "I've heard of it," she said. "I can tell you where it



is, but not which path to take. But: I'll only tell you if you promise one thing. Our beloved forest is shrinking. Everyday it grows smaller until one day it will be no more. If you promise to find out why, I will tell you about the Heart of Wonder."

Lion readily accepted the monkey's offer and listened intently as the animal explained that the gem sat at the center of the world. She went on to describe how it had been encased in a vile, thickening mist that would eventually swallow it completely. Lastly, she warned the pooka never to touch the mist, for it would surely melt their flesh. Lion and Mouse thanked the monkey, renewed their promise to discover the source of the forest's woes, and then continued on their way.

In short time, Lion and Mouse came upon a vegetable garden tended by a mean-faced farmer. They avoided the man, skirting to the west. Along the way, they heard a voice calling, "help! help!" Lion and Mouse searched until they found the source of the cry. A tiny mole had gotten her foot caught in a steel trap set by the farmer. Her little black face was wet with tears and she squinted up at Lion and Mouse, sobbing, "Please, oh please save me. Otherwise I'll surely die and that's no lie." Without hesitation, Lion set the poor creature free.

"There," soothed Lion. "Go on home and take care when venturing near man."

"Thank you, thank you," cried the mole. "You will not be forgotten, Lion." The mole limped home.

Lion and Mouse traveled on and the years passed. Crossing a hill, they smelled the foul stench of the lake long before they had reached it. It burned their noses and made them gag. As they approached, they saw why it smelled so bad. The surface of the oily water was covered with floating and bloated, dead fish. An old toad sat mourning by the lakeshore. Lion and Mouse stepped up to him and asked, "We seek the Heart of Wonder. Could you know where it is?"

The toad coughed—a horrible, racking sound—then looked at the travelers with sorrowful eyes. "I've heard of it," he said. "I can tell you what path to take, but not how to free it. But: I'll only tell you if you promise one thing. Our lake is dying. Everyday it becomes more and more ill

until one day it will be no more. If you promise to find out why, I'll tell you about the Heart of Wonder."

Lion readily accepted the toad's offer and listened intently as the animal pointed eastward with a crooked finger and described a valley where the sun simultaneously rose in the East and set in the West. "There," he said, "you'll see a cave. Follow the cave to the center of the earth and you'll eventually find what you seek." Lion and Mouse thanked the toad, renewed their promise to discover the source of the lake's woes, and then continued on their way.

Traveling toward Morning, Lion and Mouse eventually came upon a vast ocean. They looked out across its shimmering expanse and wondered how they could ever cross it.

"Fleas!" hissed Lion. "Now what will we do? We have no boat. The Valley of Sunrise and Sunset lies on the other side of the ocean and here we stand with no means to cross it." He hung his head in grief, certain that all was lost.

"Don't worry," replied Mouse. She petted Lion's soft mane. "Something will come along." And lo and behold, at that moment, a spout of water spewed up from the surface of the ocean and a whale appeared. He lifted one eye out of the water to peer at Lion and Mouse.

"I've heard your troubles," said the whale, his deep-deep voice echoing around in his body. "Swim out into the water and I'll take you on my back across the ocean."

Lion looked up and saw then that this was the fish they had rescued from the fisherman so many years ago. It had grown. So he and Mouse swam out and the whale surfaced beneath them. They traveled in style across the ocean. Once the whale had returned them to land, they waved and thanked him.

"One good turn deserves another," spouted the whale. He winked his huge, watery eye, then swam off to do whatever it is whales do.

Feeling quite pleased with themselves, Lion and Mouse headed into the hills, walking hand in hand. They stopped to rest in a wide field between two rocky ridges. As they ate their cheese and bread, and drank their wine, the sun painted the sky with swirling reds, oranges and purples.

"Look!" cried Mouse.

Lion looked. Clouds blazed with color and an aura of flame backlit both ridges. Indeed, the sun was both rising and setting at the same time. The two companions quickly searched for the cave and found it behind a flow



of morning glory and ivy vines. Peeking inside, Lion commented, "It's dark."

Together, Lion and Mouse slipped into the cavern's cool embrace. Down, down—ever downward they journeyed in complete darkness. Days passed, weeks, months, years even. They had only each others' voices and touches to keep them from going insane. Time and again, Lion thanked Mouse for accompanying him. He knew he could never have done it alone. And so, they continued to descend, never sure whether they were lost or not. Then, just as they had lost all hope and prepared to lie down to die, they noticed a red glow up ahead. They had found the center of the earth.

The cave opened up into a large room with seeping walls and a slippery, muddy floor. At the center of everything, Lion and Mouse saw the source of the red glow. A thick cloud of mist hovered around the Heart of Wonder. The ruby pulsed with an inner light that filtered through the mist. Mouse rushed forward, excited.

"Take care..." warned Lion. "...that you do not slip and fall into the mist." But he spoke too late. Mouse's feet slid out from under her and she skidded straight into the swirling, acidic fog. Lion watched in horror as the mist drained all the color from her until nothing was left but a drab, empty shell. Quickly, Lion crept forward on his belly, snagged a bit of Mouse's skirt with his claw and dragged her out. She lay in his arms, her once-emerald eyes now a dull gray.

"Oh, how silly I was," she whispered. "You must finish the quest, Lion. For me." Lion soothed her to the best of his ability, but he could not save her. Mouse closed her eyes and fell into a deep sleep. Her last words came so softly, that they were little more than a thought: "I love you." Lion wept.

"Oh, Mouse," cried Lion. "Now what will I do? I can't free the Heart of Wonder. You're gone. The quest is forfeit and I have nothing left." He hung his head in grief, certain that all was lost.

Mouse did not reply. At that moment, however, a corner of the floor heaved and shook. Momentarily, a small mole poked her head out. She shook the dirt from her hair and squinted at Lion and Mouse.

"I've heard your troubles," said the mole, her voice gentle and sad. "I'll get the stone for you. I can dig down and come up beneath it, so that I don't have to touch the mist."

Lion looked up through his tears and saw then that this was the mole they had rescued from the farmer so many years ago. He nodded and the mole disappeared back down into her hole. Lion waited. Before long, the

red glow disappeared from within the mists. Lion watched. The ground was lit from beneath by the gem, an aura of scarlet showing through to the surface as the mole carried the Heart of Wonder back along her tunnel. Lion held his breath. Finally, the gem rolled out of the mole's hole and a small black face popped out after it. Lion breathed. The mole beamed. Once Lion had the Heart of Wonder in his hand, he waved and thanked the mole.

"One good turn deserves another," grinned the mole. She squinted her eyes and wrinkled up her nose, then disappeared back into her hole to do whatever it is moles do.

"You have freed the Heart of Wonder." A voice behind Lion made him start and he turned to blink in surprise at the woman. She smiled kindly and Lion relaxed. The woman stood, feet apart, arms cradling some unseen baby. Her hair hung to her feet, green seaweed and vine. She wore no clothing and her skin was wrinkled and cracked, like the bark of an ancient tree. Sagging breasts looked like they had nursed all the world's children and her hips had a width designed for childbearing. In her whiteless eyes, stars shone against midnight blue. There was something timeless about the old woman, and Lion knew without a doubt that he had encountered a noble, eternal being. Lion bowed deeply. He looked down at the gem in his hand, then held it out to the old woman.

"Tsk," she commented, shaking her head until the leaves of her hair whispered against one another. "You must return with it. Though because you have freed it, I will grant you three questions. These I will answer and my answers shall be the truth." Slowly, her gaze turned down to Mouse and tenderness shone outward from her very soul.

Lion cupped the Heart of Wonder in both of his trembling hands, unable to take his golden eyes off the ancient faerie. He cleared his throat, considering what questions he would ask. He remembered back to all the days and nights that had passed upon his quest. Mouse was in every memory. Lion came across images of her crying for the deer and the forest and the fish. Suddenly, he knew which questions to ask.

"Tell me then, Wise Mother," Lion ventured softly, "why the river has ceased to flow when the animals and plants must die for it."

"That is your first question," the old woman acknowledged. She knelt, keeping the invisible child cradled in one arm and using a finger to draw a long line in the dirt. She crossed it with a shorter one, a third of the way down its length. "A dam keeps the water imprisoned in the north. In it, there is a weak stone. The stone must be pushed free. In three days time, after that, the dam will collapse and the river will run free again." Lion committed the old woman's answer to memory.

"Tell me then, Wise Mother," Lion queried, "why the forest shrinks when the animals and plants must die for it."

"That is your second question," the old woman replied, still kneeling. Her finger traced an arc in the dirt, attached at its apex to the bottom of the first line. "Monsters riding giant yellow dragons eat away at the forest. The dragons must be killed. Once they have drawn their last breaths, the monsters will go away for they need their dragons to survive. Then, the forest will grow again." Lion committed the old woman's answer to memory.

"Tell me then, Wise Mother," Lion wondered, "why the lake is clogged with filth when the animals and plants must die for it."

"That is your final question," the old woman murmured as she drew a fat circle at the top of the first line. "A horrible creature squats at the edge of the lake, shitting its vile excrement into the water. The hole must be plugged. Once it is, the creature will fill with its own poisons and die. Only then will the lake be able to heal itself and prosper again." With much creaking and cracking, the old woman stood. She dragged her foot with its thick, yellowed toenails across the glyph she had traced in the dirt, erasing it. "Now, I will do you one other favor," she said, lifting her night-sky eyes back to Lion. "I will send you wherever you would like and you will travel there in a heartbeat. You could return home, if you would like. Name the place."

Lion didn't want to try the old woman's patience, so he quickly stuffed the Heart of Wonder deep into his pocket and knelt to gather up Mouse's body. "I would like to return," he said, "to the lake where I met the toad. I have a promise to keep with him." And so it was.

Lion told the toad what he had learned. The toad thanked him profusely. Next, Lion traveled back to the forest. He carried Mouse the whole way. In the forest, Lion told the

monkey what he had learned. The monkey chattered with gratitude. Then, Lion journeyed back to the edge of the desert where he told the deer what he had learned. The deer bowed before Lion and the whole herd cheered him. Finally, Lion turned his steps toward home.

Never was there a pooka more happy to see home. "If only..." Lion said to Mouse, "...you were here with me for this moment." All the other pooka came to greet Lion, happy to see him, but deeply saddened when they saw his burden. They took Mouse from him and laid her out on the stone platform in the middle of the glade. They decorated her hair with hibiscus and honeysuckle, and dressed her in a white gown made of spun silk. She almost looked beautiful again, despite the pallor of her sleeping soul. Lion sat down beside the stone and hung his head.

All the faeries had been waiting for Lion. He was the last to return from the quest. The next morning, Unicorn arrived. They Who Are Forever did not come themselves, as was their way. Troll stepped forward. Nocker rattled out of the crowd. Satyr sauntered to the fore. Shuagh appeared. Redcap bellowed for everyone to get out of his way. Sidhe held her noble head high as she glided to the front. Gshu advanced and took his place. Boggan waddled forward. And Lion came last, his satisfaction in the moment marred by Mouse's absence.

Unicorn stepped to the center of the glade. He stood beside Mouse's body, looking down at her with shimmering, sylvan eyes. His horn's rainbows refracted sunlight, danced across her still form. Finally, he lifted his head and spoke to the gathering.

In his lulling, singsong voice, Unicorn announced, "Today there are nine who have returned from a quest. This quest has taken them to all the corners of the world." Unicorn's forest gaze perused the contestants, stopping lastly on Lion. The pooka, however, was looking at Mouse. Unicorn smiled, and continued. "Your task," he said slowly, lowering his voice so all present would have to listen intently and lean forward to hear him, "was to rescue the true Heart of Wonder from its prison." The crowd shifted and ruffled with impatience and excitement. Unicorn spoke over the noise of the crowd, "The one who has done so...", he paused until silence had returned, "...shall earn a great honor for his or her entire kith."

"Show the Heart of Wonder," Unicorn commanded, his voice ringing with prophesy and importance. Lion reached into his pocket and drew out the gleaming gem. He held it high. Boggan looked over at Lion, then removed another Heart of Wonder from his pack. He

held it high. Eshu opened his shirt to reveal the Heart of Wonder hanging around his neck. Sidhe opened her palm to show everyone the Heart of Wonder lying there. Redcap lifted his cap and pulled out the Heart of Wonder. Sluagh produced the Heart of Wonder from somewhere. Satyr pulled the Heart of Wonder from a pouch inside his loincloth. Docker pushed a button on the box he was holding; a lid popped open to reveal the Heart of Wonder. Troll rolled the Heart of Wonder out of his scabbard. Everyone stared at each other in shocked silence.

They had all returned with Hearts of Wonder. Unicorn studied the faces of the contestants. He risked a quiet, sadistic chuckle, then cleared his throat and said, "It appears we have a conflict." The crowd exploded in a storm of shouts and threats and grumbles. The faeries in the glade accused one another of cheating. Anger reddened faces and teeth bared around growls of outrage. Before they could come to blows, however, Unicorn shouted, "No one has cheated!" All the faeries stopped in mid-accusation and turned to stare at Unicorn.

Unicorn explained softly, making everyone settle down to listen, "You all have the potential to find your own Hearts of Wonder. There is no single Heart of Wonder beating at the center of the world."

"But what about the contest?!" someone called from the back of the crowd—probably a redcap.

Unicorn sat down, focusing on the contestants. "The quest specifically stated that the one who found the true Heart of Wonder would win. I will hear the tales of your journeys. Speak now."

Sidhe went first and the others followed in turn. Each told a different tale, though every one of them had made promises and fought battles in the course of their adventures. The tales held glory and honor, romance and loss. They had each met the old woman once they had freed the Heart of Wonder. Their stories would entertain childlings until the end of time.

Finally, Unicorn turned his twinkling gaze upon Lion. "And you? What is your tale?"

Lion held the Heart of Wonder cupped in his hands. It pulsed with its own inner beat. He told of the deer and the river, of the monkey and the forest. He described the mole and the whale, and explained about the toad and the lake. His voice quivered as he shared the long journey through the darkness of the cave, and dropped to a whisper as he talked of Mouse's slide into the mist. He met Unicorn's gaze as he spoke of the old woman and the journey home. Finally, when done, he dropped his eyes back to Mouse and sighed.

Unicorn cocked his head and asked all the contestants, "Did you return to keep your promises?"

"My honor would not allow me to stray from my quest," rumbled Troll. "I intended to go back."

"I was in a hurry," sniffed Sidhe.

"Sssssssss," hissed Sluagh.

"My path did not take me back that way," explained Eshu.

"Fuck no," grunted Redcap.

"I have too many responsibilities of my own to clean the houses of others," whined Boggan.

"Survival of the fittest, you know?" cracked Docker.

"Mmmm-must have forgotten," murmured Satyr.

"I did," replied Lion softly, sadly, certain that all was lost. The prize would undoubtedly go to Troll or Sidhe or one of the others. He knew he had quested and lost Mouse for nothing. He had let down his kith.

The air in the glen crackled suddenly with electricity. Unicorn stood and stepped off to one side as the most exquisite creature anyone had ever seen appeared in the



glade. With long, elegant ears and perfect, heart-shaped face, she resembled the sidhe, but her beauty far outshone theirs. Her hair drifted with life around her, its spun-gold elegance as soft and light as silk. Grace flowed through her every movement and her voice, when she spoke, held the sweetest bird-song, the most soothing breeze, the clearest silver bells and the warmest sunshine all woven into one. And her eyes, those ancient eyes—they were entirely blue-black with no whites, little pieces of night-sky in which the stars shone through from eternity. Without hesitation, everyone in the glen dropped to their knees, bowed their heads, and lowered their eyes.

She Who Is Forever paused to tenderly kiss Mouse. Primrose lips painted color upon the sleeping faerie's mouth. A soft blush slowly spread to Mouse's cheeks, pushing back the monochrome pallor. Then, She Who Is Forever moved to stand before Lion. "Rise, Pooka," she sang. "Rise and accept your prize, for you are the one who has the truest Heart of Wonder."

Well, no one was more surprised than Lion himself, though no one dared even gasp or whisper. He stumbled to his feet, blinking at the ancient faerie with enraptured, golden eyes.

Smiling at Lion, She Who Is Forever held out her hand to him. "You alone kept your promises despite the loss of your love and your belief that you had won the contest. Only you." She guided Lion to stand before all of those gathered. "Look upon this faerie, all, for he has the truest and purest heart among you." A thousand eyes raised to gaze in wonder at Lion. Lion blinked back at them. He wouldn't understand until later what exactly had happened.

Slowly, She Who Is Forever leaned forward and touched a kiss to one of Lion's cheeks. "As your prize, I grant your kith the permanence of their animal hearts. Though this means nothing to you now, someday it will, and when that day comes, it will serve you well." With a sigh as sweet as honey, She Who Is Forever then bent to kiss Lion's other cheek. "I also place upon you and your kith a most solemn geas, because you have the purity of heart to carry it as no other could. In the name of Wonder and Awe, you and your kith shall be the champions of questioning, uncertainty and the unknown. You will fight the coming battle by breaking down the icy, inflexible beliefs that will threaten the world. This burden you shall carry through the dark days to come, with the knowledge that you do so for a goodly cause." A surge of heart-music filled the glade with color and light, flowing from She Who Is Forever and dancing about all the pooka gathered. It seeped into them and bound them all to the geas.

And then, She Who Is Forever pressed a gentle kiss to Lion's lips. She winked and whispered, for his ears only, "That one was for me."

Once She Who Is Forever had finished her proclamation, she left as abruptly as she had arrived. Unicorn slipped off into the woods and a quiet murmuring spread through the crowd. Mouse sat up and Lion nearly burst with joy. He crept over to her, afraid to touch her. Tears streamed down his cheeks and the first words from his mouth were: "I knew you'd wake up." And though it was the first lie ever told by a pooka, Mouse smiled and hugged Lion with all her might.





# CHAPTER ONE: EVOLUTION

*We behold the face of nature bright with gladness, we often see superabundance of food;... we do not always bear in mind, that though food may be now superabundant, it is not so at all seasons of each recurring year.*

—Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*

Pooka face the Winter of their existence. As the icy breath of Banality sends chills to their hearts and stiffens their creativity with mental rheumatism, pooka struggle to survive. Some frantically hoard their sustenance, the Glamour that feeds them and which will carry them through the Long Winter. Others prepare their burrows for hibernation, in the hopes that when Spring returns, they will awaken and rise again to continue the cycle.

Some will die. But will any endure? The Pleistocene Ice Age destroyed any number of fantastic creatures. Many mortal historians blame this cold, dark time for the extinction of some of the most glorious species to ever walk the earth. This time, the advancing glaciers threaten more insidiously and malevolently. Will anyone survive?

## Origins

### Ancient History

As early as the Paleolithic Age humans passed down lore to their young and reasoned out their own explanations for the world's mysteries. They also produced the first art and the first dreams. Deep in caves, hidden and protected, they painted animals, hoping to gain some magical control over the beasts they hunted. Their hopes and dreams produced the pooka.

In the foothills of the Pyrénées, in a cavern called Les Trois Frères, a cave painting shows a controversial figure. This figure ? a man dressed in the skin of a horse or a wolf



**MILORD AND MILADY,**

**AS PER YOUR REQUEST, I HAVE GATHERED TOGETHER THE NUMEROUS ACCOUNTS OF THE HISTORY OF THE POOKA. DESPITE MANY VARYING ACCOUNTS, I HAVE SYNTHESIZED WHAT I BELIEVE TO BE THE MOST (DARE I USE THE WORD?) TRUTHFUL AND LIKELY STORY AND NOW SEND IT TO YOU AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ESTEEMED POOKA WATCHERS SOCIETY FOR YOUR PERUSAL. I ONLY HOPE THAT THIS MAY SERVE IN SOME SMALL MEASURE TO ACQUAINT YOU WITH THE MAIN THREADS OF POOKA MYTH AND THE STORY OF THEIR ORIGINS. PLEASE REMEMBER, HOWEVER, THAT MY SOURCES FOR MOST OF THESE ACCOUNTS ARE THE POOKA THEMSELVES AND WE ALL KNOW THAT KITH'S PENCHANT FOR PREVARICATION. FOR EXAMPLE, THE POOKA CONTEND THAT THEY EXISTED IN THE AMERICAS AND MOVED AMONG THE NUNNEHI LONG BEFORE THE SUNDERING, YET NO NUNNEHI EVER CLAIMS THAT THEIR ANIMAL SPIRIT FRIENDS WERE POOKA, INSTEAD CITING QUITE DIFFERENT SOURCES FOR THEIR TOTEM SPIRITS AND OTHER ANIMAL COMPANIONS. THEREFORE, MY MOST NOBLE PATRONS, I URGE YOU TO CONSIDER THESE CLAIMS, YET TAKE THEM WITH A GRAIN OF SALT AS IT WERE. PERHAPS THE ENTIRE SALT CELLAR!**

with the antlers of a deer— is said to be a prehistoric shaman. Changeling scholars, on the other hand, say this is the first record of a pooka among human society. They state that the painting, called “The Sorcerer,” is in actuality a representation of a pooka, shown as half-man and half-stag.

By the Neolithic Age, people developed agriculture and domesticated certain animals. Agricultural surplus, helped along by ox-drawn plows, allowed humans the leisure time to dream and to aspire to more. It also freed some members of the community to become artists and craftsmen rather than hunters and farmers. Many of these early civilizations, like their ancestors before them, developed myths and stories of magic. Most of these myths featured animals. The pooka claim to have sprung from those myths, though they were not like the pooka we know today.

Vibrant and primitive creatures, they instilled fear and awe in humans. The elusive nature of these ancient faeries makes it very difficult today to surmise their actual characteristics. No pooka known has ever retained remembrance of those days and pooka are notoriously bad about keeping records or journals. Sumerian mythology, however, depicts animals as demons and monsters to be conquered. Pooka had not yet evolved to a place of reverence among these ancient peoples. Their predatory natures made them humankind's enemy, dangerous and rabid. It wasn't until much later that the dreams that created pooka began to shift into something more positive and less primitive.

## **The Kingdoms of Egypt**

One of the most famous, pooka ever to walk among humankind was Horus. A falcon pooka, Horus lived among the ancient Egyptians serving as advisor to their greatest king, Osiris. Prior to Horus' emergence, pooka had maintained a combative relationship with mortals. Horus introduced a revolutionary concept to pooka: that of working *with* humans to train them to nurture their dreams and respect all the creatures of the world.

Horus' immortality earned him the mortal title of “sky god,” whose name meant “The Distant One.” He forged a close relationship with the king Osiris and his queen Isis. Artists often depicted them as a trio, Osiris flanked by his queen on one side and the falcon-headed man, Horus, on the other. Later, other pooka joined Horus, forming a movement that not only supported Horus in his attempt to mold human civilization, but took his philosophy a bit farther. These pooka adopted a



more hands-on approach, guiding the Egyptian religion, instilling a reverence of animals, teaching of an afterlife in which animal-gods judged the dead and reminding people of the careful balance of nature. Making public appearances, like ancient televangelists, they preached a morality of dreams and respect to the people living along the Nile. They staged rituals and had artists depict them as judging souls. Even at that time, pooka were skilled manipulators.

One of those recruited to the cause, a jackal pooka named Anubis, strongly influenced the Egyptians. Although Egyptians originally killed jackals for disturbing graves, they eventually named Anubis the protector of the dead. Because the Egyptians feared and revered Anubis for his immortality and magic, they treated all jackals with greater respect and ceased killing them for fear of angering Anubis.

Anubis, along with Horus and Thoth (an ibis pooka called the god of wisdom and learning), publicly weighed the hearts of the deceased. Natural showmen, they dressed in godly attire and made a dramatic spectacle of the ritual. Others joined as well, each gaining godly status: Apis the bull-god, Khnum the ram god, Hathor the cow goddess and Sebek the crocodile god.

The Egyptian pooka-gods had their religion tested when a pharaoh named Akhenaten came to power. Akhenaten neither liked nor trusted the pooka-gods who had guided prior pharaohs with a dominating hand. He and his queen, Nefertiti, rebelled against the pooka, spreading a monotheistic philosophy that proclaimed all other Egyptian gods and goddesses to be frauds and forbade their worship.

Fortunately, Akhenaten made many mistakes. His reign was short, only 17 years, but during that time, he had himself portrayed by artists as a mortal man rather than a god in the tradition of Osiris. This hurt, rather than helped, his reputation, bringing him down off the royal pedestal to the level of the people. His doctrine of monotheism never quite impressed the Egyptians either, who saw his religion as a threat to their own chances for immortality. When Akhenaten died, his religion died with him.

Akhenaten's failure showed Horus and the other pooka-gods that their work in Egypt was complete. Their doctrines had withstood direct challenge and the people had rallied behind the old beliefs rather than rushing to embrace Akhenaten's new religion. The pantheon, hearing reports of other areas in crisis, decided to travel and spread their philosophies to more of the ancient world.

They left Egypt and split apart, taking their preaching to any they could find. More pooka joined them as time went on and soon animal cults developed strong followings throughout the world.

## Of Names and Shapes

The word "pooka" is a Gaelic corruption of the word for "changing fae" that originated in Arcadia. It is as old a word as any in the language of the fae, its origin lost in the passage of time and the encroachment of Banality. For the longest time, pooka were creatures in Arcadia, much like the unicorns and the pegasi. They inhabited the wilder areas, the forests, rivers and seas. During the Paleolithic Age in the real world, pooka underwent an evolution, as mortal dreamers began to assign them reasoning capabilities as well as the ability to dream for themselves. As their legend grew more elaborate, pooka acquired the ability to shapechange. Many humans depicted their gods as half-man, half-animal. Whole religions, like that of the Scythians, whose shamans were part medicine man, part magician, part soothsayer, and most importantly, part animal, developed around animal-gods.

These changing fae traveled throughout the known world and were called by many names in many places. Among the Celts, particularly those who settled in Ireland, the pooka acquired the name by which we know them today. The Celts also perceived them as dangerous tricksters whom it was best to propitiate (along with the other fair folk) and avoid.

## Australia

The native people of Australia have a creation myth which claims that at one time, the earth was a bare plane without features. During the "Eternal Dreamtime," many supernatural beings awoke and rose from their slumber beneath the surface of this plane. These beings had animal forms, but could also change into humans at will. From them came all life; each animal and plant, each human descended from one of these godlike shape-changers. Pooka? Perhaps. They certainly *claim* they were the dream-progenitors of the aboriginal natives.

## MILORD AND MILADY,

I MUST TAKE A MOMENT HERE TO APPEND THIS SCHOLARLY NOTE, LEST YOU STRAIN YOUR CREDIBILITY TOO FAR. PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT MUCH OF WHAT IS SAID IN THIS EARLY PART OF THEIR HISTORY MAY BE THE POOKA'S OWN CREATION MYTH. IT MIGHT BE THE IMAGININGS OF A KITH WHO WISH FOR MORE RESPECT AMONG THEIR PEERS AND THUS INVENT A GRAND AND GLORIOUS PAST COMMENSURATE WITH (IF NOT EXCEEDING) THAT OF THE SIDHE. WHETHER THEY WERE EVER ACTUALLY CONSIDERED GODS I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO PROVE OR DISPROVE. IT THUS REMAINS OPEN TO DEBATE.

THOUGH THE POOKA HAVE EVER BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH EUROPEAN DREAMS, THEY MIGHT HAVE ALSO APPEARED ELSEWHERE. WE KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE CELTS WERE A WIDELY TRAVELED TRIBE, AND IT IS THEIR INTERPRETATION OF THE POOKA THAT IS BEST KNOWN. STILL, THE CELTS THEMSELVES NEVER CLAIMED THE POOKA WERE GODS. WE KNOW THAT THE SATYRS (FOR EXAMPLE) WERE CERTAINLY GIVEN GODLIKE STATUS BY THE GREEKS, FOR THE NAME HAS COME DOWN TO US UNCHANGED. PERHAPS THE POOKA WERE ACCORDED SIMILAR STATUS, BUT THEIR NAME AND IMAGE HAVE CHANGED OVER THE ENSUING CENTURIES, MAKING AN APPARENT MOCKERY OF THEIR CLAIMS.

I THEREFORE OFFER WHAT I AM TOLD, BE IT CREATIVE FANCY OR OUTRIGHT LIE. HOWEVER, I BEG YOUR INDULGENCE LONG ENOUGH TO ASK, COULD IT BE POSSIBLE? THE POOKA CERTAINLY INSIST THAT IT HAPPENED THIS WAY, AND WHO AM I TO INTERFERE IN A GOOD STORY?

YOURS TRULY,

VERACITY HONOR WORD  
CHRONICLER

# Endangered Species

*In the jungle, animals know everything.*

— Rainforest proverb

## The Sundering

Pooka, it would seem, traveled nearly as much as the eshu, spreading their own particular brand of dream-philosophy. Hints appear in the mythologies of India, China, Africa and North America, though whether these were pooka manifestations or other sorts of animal companion spirits remains a mystery (at least to everyone but the pooka). No culture went untouched by their presence, just as no culture could avoid the influence of animals upon their development. Pooka have always worked at odds against the advancement of human civilization, viewing the cities and farmlands as an encroachment upon their territory. Throughout the ages, pooka have responded to this in a variety of ways, evolving in a one-step-forward, two-step-back process from enemy to advisor to guide and finally to a complicated combination of all previous stages.

For millennia (or so they say), the pooka were gods. They enjoyed respect and instilled fear in their enemies as well as their worshipers. Then monotheistic religion and rational thought began to supersede their influence. Science replaced myth in explaining the world's mysteries. Organized religion swallowed up the animal cults and replaced ancient beliefs with more humanocentric dogma. Early Christians had the audacity and military strength to force their new religion upon people who had worshipped the same gods for a hundred generations. As they spread their doctrines that spoke of a god that resembled man and denounced the worship of idols, they changed the pooka image from that of a benevolent and natural deity into that of a demon whose only goal was the temptation and undermining of mortals. Pooka had to go underground.

Christianity crusaded north and east, gradually pushing out the pooka and sending them fleeing with their tails between their legs. Like animals in the path of a raging forest fire, pooka scattered and ran for their very lives. Pooka continued to protest the crush of civilization's footprint upon nature's domain, but more quietly and while looking over their shoulders. Some battled in

Europe and the East, too stubborn to retreat even when defeat seemed inevitable. Others fled to the wilder parts of the world, away from the stone cages, both physical and mental, that humankind was building.

## The Americas

Like many other fae, the pooka fled from the Banality released by the Sundering. Long before the Europeans discovered the far off land to the west, pooka traveled to the Americas and came into contact with the native people there. Nearly every one of these ancient cultures, especially those that rose to importance, had gods that they painted or carved as a mix of human and animal. Many of these gods could transform into either purely animal or purely human form.

In the ruins of Teotihuacán, the spiritual metropolis of Mexico at its peak in the 5th century C. E., a temple bears the image of Quetzalcóatl, the Feathered Serpent. Changeling historians believe that he was a pooka. In his human form, he was tall, fair-skinned and bearded. Myths about him actually indicate that he was a prince among the people of Teotihuacán, one who kept aloof from his subjects, refused to have mirrors in his palace, and who had a distaste for human sacrifice. The myths claim that when Quetzalcóatl took to the sea again, traveling toward the East from which he had come, he promised that someday he would return. Thus he birthed the myth of the tall, pale god from the eastern seas that opened the door to the Americas for the Spanish invasion a millennium later.

Both the Aztecs and Mayans believed that every human had an animal counterpart. The animal and the person were linked so strongly that whatever happened to the counterpart happened to the person as well. Thus, harming or healing the animal counterpart gave the same result to the individual. The human and his animal affinity shared the same destiny. Thus the pooka were protected for a little while, but they could not hide from the rising wave of Banality that threatened to sweep across the ocean and drown them in the flood that had already caused many fae to abandon the world.

Disbelief and loss of respect for things of the spirit created more and more Banality in the world. Though some fae worked to keep dreams alive, they could not hold back the tide of despair caused by the Black Death. The Shattering had begun and even the far lands of the west buckled under its crushing weight.

## The Shattering

The gateways to Arcadia began to snap shut and the mortal world grew more and more entrenched in reason. Pooka began to realize the futility of facing the enemy head-on. Downhearted and defeated, many pooka abandoned the fight, albeit temporarily, when Silver's Gate, the last trod to Arcadia, closed. They acceded to the changeling way taken on by the fae who remained in the world.

Many others fled, burrowing deep into pockets of the Near Dreaming. Not all of them left, but a large number did. The sudden departure of a majority of pooka caused many to believe they had been lost forever. This sent ripples of worry through the changeling community and saw the birth of the first pooka conspiracy theories. During the year following the loss of Silver's Gate, pooka offered sanctuary to their fellows. Many had dug holes in

the Near Dreaming, creating hideaways. Their pack mentality kicked in and, as more and more pooka disappeared, others hurried to follow.

## Invasion and the Advance of "Civilization"

In the 16th century, the white man came to the Americas with his stomping boots, his enslaved horses, his superior attitude and his religion. Some pooka arrived with them, moving from the cesspools of Europe to a new land with as many hopes and dreams as their human counterparts. Other pooka fought alongside the natives and Nunnehi, trying to slow the thundering advance of the white man. Over the next centuries, they watched in horror as native peoples were driven from their lands and imprisoned, treated like domesticated animals. They fought viciously as the invaders broke the spirits of these natural, proud people.

### Dream-Burrows

Some pooka tried to ride out the Interregnum, but with the advance of the Industrial Revolution and the loss of forests and meadows, the polluting of rivers and lakes, and the introduction of mechanical flying machines to the air, others lost heart and skulked away as well. The entire process took several decades, but by the end of it many of the world's pooka had jumped ship. Nestled away in their Dream-burrows, the pooka hibernated or created extensive reproductions of Arcadian society. Only a few stayed in the mortal realm. This lasted until the Resurgence.

Of those remaining in the mortal world, the majority were cat, dog, rabbit and rat pooka. These faeries, either too independent, too attached to their mortal families or too territorial to leave, became the norm and over time, many changelings forgot that other types of affinities existed. As the world changed, people's dreams changed, and thus, so did pooka. This most strongly affected those faeries that had chosen to remain in the mortal realm. They had daily contact with the ever-more urban dreams of humankind.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, as humans made the world smaller and easier to navigate, and molded it to their own selfish desires, earth-bound pooka evolved too. Vehicles went from buggies to crank-start models to sports cars that could accelerate to 60 miles per hour in a matter of seconds. The skies filled with airplanes, then jets. Human population exploded and nature took a hard hit. Pooka found themselves surrounded by concrete and fences. They adapted or died.

Although the Pooka Exodus, as some have called the evacuation of so many pooka from the mortal realm, could easily be considered an act of cowardice, the truth is much more complicated. More than any other kith, pooka felt the bite of advancing technology. Mortal machines and constructions stabbed directly to their hearts: the forests, the fields, the rivers, the seas and the air. It worked in absolute opposition to animals, subjugating them and relegating them to last place in both myth and reality. Suddenly animals were nothing more than expendable nuisances. Their dead bodies became trophies to hang on the walls. Mortals had lost the wonder they had once felt with regard to animals.

The exodus of the pooka occurred so suddenly, so secretively, and lasted for so long that many changeling scholars speculated that the creatures had died out. The mysterious nature of it intrigued many faeries to the point of obsession. Others found it terrifying and wondered if they would be the next to disappear. Another theory, that pooka had found a way to return to Arcadia and not bothered to share it, added to growing resentment against the pooka.

# Extinction

*Hare today; gone tomorrow. Anyone want to comment on next week?*

— from the Pooka “Jokebook”

## The Years of Suffering

The Industrial Revolution began in the British Isles in the mid-18th century and had far-reaching influence on human dreams. By the mid-19th century, industry’s greedy fingers had spread as far as the Americas. For another century, it escalated, technology developing faster than human morality and understanding of the monsters they were creating. Like careless children at Christmas, mortals tossed their wrapping paper wherever it landed, dug up their own backyards in order to build their Lego-log houses and wielded their cap-guns without considering who might get hurt.

Pooka look back on this time and call it the Years of Suffering; two whole centuries during which humans raped their environment for personal gain. Shortsighted and ignorant, they took from the earth without mercy and gave very little back. Humans had tasted the intoxicating cocktail of technology and wealth. Their dreams reflected this and they created expressions like, “The American Dream.”

## Groundhog Day

The winds of change blew across the world in the 1960s and through the next two decades. People woke up, looked around and began to see with their own eyes what they had done to their world. Where had all the animals gone? What had happened to the fresh air and the clear rivers? Why were so many people dead? They poked their heads up out of their ignorance and saw their own shadows, yes, but not all ducked back inside. They climbed up and out, raising their voices in protest. Up to that point, people had rallied with rabid nationalism behind the wars propagated by their governments.

Vietnam was the first notable exception to that rule. The freethinkers of the time, the ground hogs that dared to speak up, can easily claim credit for the fact that *only* two million people died in Vietnam. People learned, via the Vietnam War, that their voices *could* count.

To some extent, this newfound power went to people’s heads, but this was not necessarily a bad thing. Everyone

wanted a cause to champion. In the 1960s, environmental groups became a fad and this laid the foundation for those that would survive to actually have a very positive effect on the world.

## The Resurgence Begins

Glamour surged. Dreams turned to freedom and equality. African Americans and women made great strides toward loosening the suffocating bonds of prejudice and tradition. A century earlier, land had been free and success had meant financial and political power. In the 1960s, love was free and success meant you’d found yourself. Even science, which had for so long been the bane of changelings, became productive and added to the world’s Glamour. With the moon landing, people’s dreams expanded and they began to imagine things they had never before thought possible.

As Banality waned and Glamour rose in the mortal realm, so too did Glamour fill the pooka Dream-burrows. This sparked Bedlam among those pooka hidden there — too much Glamour, too quickly — which in turn caused inter-changeling wars and many pooka deaths in the Dream-burrows. The pooka that died reincarnated back into the mortal realm. An influx of pooka returned to the world. The first to come were those less capable of protecting themselves from the predators living in the Near Dreaming: the mouse, cat, dog, bird, and rabbit pooka. They had fallen to the teeth and claws of the more dangerous members of their kith. Over the course of the next several decades, the others filtered slowly back as well, reborn into the mortal realm. Few returned with any memory of their time spent burrowed away from the cold, cruel world.

## Reintroduction

As pooka re-emerged into the mortal realm, this gradual process fed imaginations and added fuel to the conspiracy theories first developed when the pooka ran away during the Shattering. Where had the pooka gone? Why were they returning now and in such large numbers? Imagine the disgruntlement of those changeling scholars who thought they might finally discover the truth, only to realize that the pooka had no memory of past lives — or said they didn’t.



## The Accordance War

Pooka played a large role in the Accordance War. Pooka outrage at the slaughter on the Night of Iron Knives exploded. Humans had hunted and killed pooka, but never before had a changeling enemy done so with such premeditated brutality. It hit pooka hard and they banded together to rise up against their oppressors. Clever and intelligent, pooka worked together and their pack mentality lent them strength and cohesion. Those who could actively fight did so with no holds barred. Teeth and claws, sword and mace drew blood without mercy. Those too weak or small to fight, scouted and spied.

Many pooka became legendary for their bravery and contributions to the war effort. Their ability to shape-shift into small animals made them invaluable. Mice pooka crept into the freeholds of the enemy and reported back what they heard. Cat pooka sat unnoticed on rooftops and in trees, watching and listening. Dog pooka barked the alarm and bird pooka surveyed troop movements from overhead. For the first time, the other kith realized what these animalistic faeries could accomplish. It instilled a new respect for them among the Kithain. It seems a pity that so few of them remember this today.

## Peace

The end of the war brought no pleasure to the pooka in and of itself. For many, the war had served as a catharsis, a chance to prove their worth and to exorcise some of the rage they had carried with them from the beginning of time. At first, pooka couldn't find it in their hearts to trust David. When he called for peace talks, they almost refused to go. But one particular pooka stood up and offered himself as a sacrifice. His name, Martin Long-Claw, will forever be revered among his kith. A bear pooka, Martin believed that he was embarking on a suicide mission. He felt certain that the High King was attempting another trick, like that which resulted in so many commoner deaths on the Night of Iron Knives. However, he also knew that if he died, he would be martyred and his fellow pooka would turn savage on the ones who caused his death.

To Martin's surprise, no such thing occurred. High King David proved sincere and the talks which resulted shocked him silent. Here was the leader of the hunters acknowledging that commoners had a valid claim to

## Frederick the Brave

During the Accordance War, many pooka earned recognition for their bravery and self-sacrifice, though none became quite as famous as Frederick, a mouse pooka. Near the end of the war, the sidhe had learned to guard their meetings against espionage and eavesdropping, by choosing sites either so completely open or so completely enclosed that no pooka could creep close enough to overhear their plotting. Frederick, however, found a dangerous solution to that. He would shift into his mouse mien and wait near the location of the meeting. As soon as a lady or lord passed by with a flowing cape or gown, he would leap forward and nestle himself in the trailing folds of cloth. In this way, he managed to sneak into many important enemy conclaves.

One night, Frederick clung to the cloak of Lord Peregrine as he traveled to several different meetings throughout Boston. The ride proved harrowing. The Lord rode his horse between locations. Frederick clutched desperately to the cloak as it whipped in the wind. By the end of the night, his little claws were bloodied from the effort and he suffered severe nausea. When it had all finally come to an end, Frederick stumbled off the cloak and waved forth his packmates, who had followed along the whole way and waited outside as Frederick gathered his information. He relayed to them what he had learned. Unfortunately, as Frederick turned to go home, dizzy and ill, he wandered out in front of the Lord's horse. It spooked and stepped on him.



equality among the changeling races. The words of the king that night rang with truth, a truth that Martin took back to the members of his kith. He shared David's dream with all the other pooka at a gathering in New Orleans. Three whole days and nights of deliberation followed, with Martin championing the King's cause. His voice relayed hope and wonderment at the possibility for peace. In his speeches, he told of how the High King had talked of respect and honor. He reminded his fellow pooka that leaders may be born into the position, but that they did not stay there unless they could prove their worth, fairness and strength. At the end, he announced that he supported the High King and asked that his kith do the same. With tears in his eyes, he tamed the anger and sorrow that kept his audience from trusting, and when the cheer went up to support his proposal, he knew that the time had come for pooka to take their rightful place in changeling society.

It remains to be seen which side (if any) the pooka choose to support now that High King David has disappeared. Some already advocate joining the Shadow Court since they fear what the nobles may do in a war to claim the throne. Others say that the Seelie are the only real friends the pooka have. Many whisper that the pooka *have* no friends beyond themselves and urge a return to the Dream-burrows before it's too late. Almost all of them agree, however, that in any conflict, the ones most likely to be overlooked and to suffer are the pooka. This time the more common may band together against such treatment with the assurance that their more exotic kin will kick butt right alongside them.

## Stomping Stereotypes

Pooka have had to evolve in order to survive in the modern world. Primal instincts hinder them more than help, in most situations. The wilderness continues to shrink with the advance of human urbanization, and yet pooka continue the fight, supporting conservation and awareness. Their methods have had to change to remain effective, molding to the media, the financial institutions and the governments of today. As the other kith learn about the true motivations and speculate on the past of the pooka, their respect for these enigmatic changelings has grown. Whereas before, lies and pranks forged pooka reputations, more recently the efforts toward environmental reconstruction and human education have earned them a place of distinction among the Kithain—to an extent.

## Meanwhile. Back at the Ranch...

Many different Dream-burrows house diverse pooka in varying numbers. Isolated from one another, they have each evolved in their own special way. The burrows range in size from small havens for single families of rabbit pooka, to fantastic forests of varying species. Each has its own unique flavor and landscape, depending on the changeling or changelings that dreamed it into being. Many still exist, hidden and thriving, even after all this time.

Life in these pockets of the Near-Dreaming has never been and still isn't idyllic. The faeries that lived and continue to live there have many problems, from political conflicts among themselves to attacks dealt by raging chimera. Mini-wars have broken out between factions, Seelie and Unseelie often pitting themselves against one another to ease their boredom. Complicated political structures have developed, mirroring the governments of modern mortal society, mimicking the feudal system of Arcadia, or combining both. In most of these places, the changelings continue to embrace the Escheat, though not everywhere. Some have devolved into chaotic, primitive societies where might makes right and death lurks behind every tree.

As diverse as the Dream-burrows are, it's not surprising that each developed with its own laws and etiquette. Pooka make up the majority of the population of these havens, though some allow other changelings into the mix. Others refuse any kith besides pooka, and a few accept only those changelings with the same animal affinity as the faerie Dreamer of the realm.

Glamour collects in these pooka havens. It has built up over the decades to the point where some have had their entire populations fall into Bedlam. These realms are extremely dangerous to the poor trod-traveler that accidentally stumbles into them. Few changelings ever leave their burrows by choice. They fear what they will find, literally terrified of stumbling into a giant sea of Banality. Because of this, the trods leading to these realms have faded, making it difficult to find them from the outside.

## An Accounting of the Burrows

So many Dream-burrows popped up during the Shattering that no one could ever hope to count them all. As pooka dug into the Near-Dreaming to hide, they created their own little worlds. The list below describes a few that have found their way into modern changeling lore.

### The Forest Beyond Forever

A frightening place of giant trees and grasping undergrowth, the Forest Beyond Forever acquired its name because of the primal nature of its Bedlam-suffering pooka. The faeries living there have reverted to their instinctual animal personalities, living as they did at the beginning of time when the only law was survival of the fittest. Though they still maintain their cunning and language, they turn these abilities toward establishing territory, by whatever means necessary. They run in rabid packs and wars break out often. Living like wild children from the *Lord of the Flies*, they sleep in the trees, in caves and in lean-tos. They eat berries and herbs, and even sometimes cannibalize other pooka, if it's in their nature. Their mating mimics the practices of their affinities, sometimes brutal, often animalistic.

### The Depths

A complex conglomeration of caverns, this Dream-burrow attracted subterranean pooka. Bat, rat, snake and mole pooka are predominant here. They have developed a semi-civilized society in which each affinity has its own cavern. Dark and damp, the caverns exude a spooky atmosphere that unnerves those who accidentally, or purposefully, wander into them. In these natural halls, the snake pooka are the predators, the monsters that lurk in wait for the unwary to pass nearby. Some of these cannibalistic, snake pooka have grown quite large in their animal mien.

### Silver Valley

Silver Valley lies in a bowl of mountains that rise up into the clouds, comprised of forest, field, and a silvery river for which it is named. Most of the pooka here, of all affinities, live in harmony. They have established a court system that mirrors Arcadia. In order to maintain this idyllic paradise, they take extreme measures when dealing with anyone who shows signs of Bedlam. Unfortunately, they have grown almost paranoid about it and anyone who does anything even remotely strange becomes the target of persecution. Eventually, the citizens capture the offending faerie and stone her to death in the Town Square. The pooka there behave extremely well, fearful of speaking out against the status quo. In many ways, they have created their own Banality. The cleverer pooka use this to their advantage, setting up their enemies to take a fall for Bedlam-esque behavior.

The return of more exotic pooka from the Dream-burrows to the mortal realm has caused quite a stir. Some claim that these faeries are entirely new species and that this portends well for the world. New faeries! Often, changeling courts welcome these strange beings with open arms, their curiosity and increased optimism inspiring congeniality. Over the years since the Resurgence, this wide-eyed wonder has dropped off some, though not entirely. If nothing else, the other kith are very happy to

see that not all pooka are bouncy, prank loving, annoying ne'er-do-wells.

With the re-emergence of exotic affinities among the pooka, including the rare insect pooka, other faeries have had their stereotypes shattered. Not all pooka, it would seem, are so easily categorized. The sense of wonder and awe which results from the mere existence of these strange and fantastic changelings adds to the strength of the Dreaming.

**MY DEAR PATRONS,**

**I SINCERELY HOPE THAT THIS ACCOUNT PROVES OF SOME USE TO YOU IN YOUR STUDIES. THOUGH WE HAVE NEVER MET, LET ME ASSURE YOU OF MY GOODWILL AND GRATEFULNESS FOR THIS CHANCE TO SERVE SUCH AUGUST NOBLES AS YOURSELVES. IF THERE IS ANY DETAIL YOU WISH ME TO ELUCIDATE FURTHER, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL I AM EVER AT YOUR SERVICE**

**MOST HUMBLY, I SUBMIT THIS FOR YOUR RECORDS.**

**YOURS TRULY,**

**VERACITY HONORWORD**

**CHRONICLER**

**SO, SAFFRON  
HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY AS A CAT WITH ITS  
FEET IN A BOILING KETTLE WITH MY HISTORI-  
CAL RENDERING FOR THE ILLUSTRIOUS DUKE  
AND DUCHESS! HERE'S HOPING I'LL KEEP THEM  
GUESSING. THINK THEY'LL FIGURE OUT MY KITH?  
SEE YOU AT THE GATHERING ON TUESDAY.  
RACI**





## CHAPTER TWO: DIVERSITY

### The Animal in Us All

... so there he stood on the edge of Forever, with his sword in one hand and the head of Calicus in the other. His mane blew in the wind and he lifted his face to roar at the moon. All the creatures of the forest responded with their own special songs, and he raised his sword on high... As the night drew in to cloak him, he called to the wind, "I am the King of Beasts! And I will eat the heart of the world before I am sated."

—The Legend of Lion, as told by Sorema, wren pooka

What some people call chaos, others call variety or diversity. Pooka come in all shapes and sizes. Half-humanoid and half-animal, they live in mortal bodies like the other kith, but can also shift into the forms of their particular animals. They are said to have an *affinity* with the animal side of themselves.

One could argue that pooka are the oldest of the faerie kith. Some even claim that pooka predate the *sidhe* — though this is extremely difficult to prove, considering the timeless nature of Arcadia. They certainly *claim* to have the longest history in the mortal realm.

Pooka have an ability no other kith has: they can shape-change even in their mortal guise. When a pooka shifts into his animal form, he does it so completely that he becomes that animal to mortal eyes as well as to faerie eyes. The power implied in this ability befuddles many changelings who prefer to think of pooka as useless, impotent troublemakers. Pooka take it in stride. It's just how it's always been.

The grand majority of pooka have affinities with *common* animals— cats, dogs, squirrels, rabbits, or mice—that tend to reproduce in large quantities, flooding the market, so to speak, with their own species. In recent years, however, more and more pooka with rare affinities have rejoined changeling society. Many of these faeries contradict the stereotype of silly, prankster pooka created by the more common affinities. Some display a calm beauty unusual in their kith. Others could scare the pants off a troll. It's important to keep in mind when trying to figure out pooka, that no two are exactly alike.



Their personalities tend to mirror those of their animal affinities, though this is less of a rule than a guideline.

Being the enigmatic changelings that they are, pooka have almost managed to avoid classification entirely. Considering the fact that it has only been 30 years since the Resurgence, it shouldn't surprise anyone that the information on pooka has remained scarce, if not downright incorrect. Add to that their own spread of false facts about themselves and it becomes difficult to know *what* to believe. Diversity plus mistruth plus scarcity equals "What the hell is that?!"

## Common Household Pooka

So what about those cat, dog, squirrel, rabbit or mice pooka? Are they all sweet, cuddly, fuzzy, funny, silly ne'er-do-wells? Ever heard the story of the child mauled by the neighbor's dog? Ever have to help a mailman who had a squirrel bite him? Many false stereotypes develop regarding pooka. As more information about this enigmatic kith becomes known, their reputation has shifted to the darker, more frightening aspect it had during the Mythic Age or even earlier times. Some cynical changelings dare to suggest that pooka have purposely misled their fellow faeries in an attempt to get close—so they can go for the throat.

Why is it that the first pooka to emerge from their hiding places were those of the cute and fuzzy variety? Maybe all those playful little monsters that so regularly annoy the trolls (and every other kith) had a hard time staying away from mortals. Maybe they got lonely. Maybe with their happy-go-lucky attitudes, they didn't consider the dangers of returning.

Or maybe they were simply the first to get killed in the Dream-burrows. Considering the way the faeries living in these pockets of the Near Dreaming courted Bedlam, the favorite pastime for the more irritable, deadly pooka could easily have become bopping little bunny Fu-Fu on the head. And poof, Fu-Fu finds himself reincarnated back into the mortal realm where he can happily annoy those changelings living there.

Other theories exist as well. If one faction among the changeling conspiracy theorists is to be believed, pooka have instigated a complex and malevolent plot. Did the pooka send out the cute, annoying members of their kith

as cannon fodder, testing the waters to see if it's safe for all to return? Were these adorable little fuzzballs scouts sent to deceive the other changelings into a false sense of security in advance of a pooka invasion and overthrow of the nobility? What's the truth? The pooka, as usual, aren't saying.

Most other changelings fail to realize there is far more to the pooka than is apparent at first. Much of this knowledge has been lost in the Mists and forgotten even by the pooka themselves, but it still affects their behavior and runs in their blood like the primal rivers that flow deep beneath the surface of the land. Hints of it reveal themselves as the more exotic pooka reincarnate back into the mortal realm, completely baffling and frightening those changelings who bought into the pooka-pet craze.

## Uncommon Pooka

Among uncommon pooka affinities, forest animals comprise a relatively large percentage of the population. The so-called "unassertive" animals, as expected, tend to be the most common, including beavers, skunks, squirrels, deer and chipmunks. These animals sit low on the food chain, more prey than predator. Most are herbivores or insectivores. Certain dangerous species also belong on this list: bears, moose, wolves, wild dogs, and mountain lions.

## Exotic Pooka

Over the past ten years, some very odd pooka have begun to surface. Every country in the world has its own myths regarding the role of animals. Not all pooka come from the Americas or Europe. Scholars have documented pooka with affinities that range from camels to jaguars, cobras to zebras, and yaks to penguins. Though these types of pooka are extremely rare and very surprising, they do exist.

This type of pooka tends to be more dangerous than those who have citified affinities. The wild runs more freely in their blood. Most don't fit well in cities, though some have learned to adapt. If for no other reason, most of these pooka avoid cities because they put themselves in extreme danger when they shift into their animal affinity. Imagine the reaction of the mortal populace if a crocodile or lion were spotted in its apartment or roaming the streets. Most people would, at best, call the authori-

ties and, at worst, shoot on sight. Although it doesn't hurt pooka to remain in their humanoid form indefinitely, they grow stir-crazy and irritable if they don't indulge their affinity from time to time. Many find relief from this by taking regular trips into the countryside for weekends of slithering, ranging, animalistic relaxation.

Those pooka whose animals risk extinction walk a very fine line. It has been noted that once an animal disappears from the world, the pooka related to it gradually disappear as well. Though some pooka have affinities with animals already extinct, they fear that next time around, they won't reincarnate and will disappear as well. These changelings feel the loss of the species like a never-healing wound and mourn that loss throughout their limited existence. No one knows if they can reincarnate as a more common type of pooka or if these faerie souls will be lost forever upon the death of their mortal bodies.

## Insect Pooka

Alien creatures, these strange changelings have only recently begun to appear. Creepy and foreign, insect pooka have stepped from the Dreaming to put a giant, red-hot monkey-wrench in the stereotypes about their kith. Many courts welcome the more graceful of these faeries — the butterfly and moth pooka — with open arms. Others openly reject those that inspire disgust or fear.

Like other pooka, the insect pooka reincarnate into mortal bodies and grow up in human society. They have a Chrysalis just like all other commoner kith. The only difference is that when they shift into their affinity, they become creepy-crawlies. In their faerie guise, insect pooka have features that reflect their affinity. Butterfly pooka may have multi-colored hair, tattoo-like skin coloration, or even antennae. Spider pooka may have extremely odd eyes, course skin, or disturbing voiles. Whatever the case,



it becomes immediately apparent that these beings differ from the standard pooka.

## Nature's Call: A Pooka Primer

*It was summer, and the cornfields were yellow, and the oats were green; the hay had been put up in stacks in the green meadows, and the stork went about on his long red legs, and chattered Egyptian, for this was the language he had learned from his good mother.*

—Hans Christian Anderson, *The Ugly Duckling*

The odd nature of pooka raises many questions. Their diversity makes it difficult to classify them. Each pooka is an individual and each has its own quirks, strengths and weaknesses. Certain aspects of their personalities thread through them all, but even these differ in their manifestation and expression. As more and more pooka emerge from the Dream-Burrows, the other changelings are discovering that, contrary to popular belief, pooka are the most difficult of the kith to stereotype.

### Rebirth

Despite what some changelings propose, all pooka reincarnate in human bodies, not animal. They spend the first part of their lives as human children, their faerie souls sleeping deep in the child's subconscious. In this respect, they resemble all other commoner kith.

From birth to death, pooka never escape the influence of their animal affinities. Even as mortal children, pre-Chrysalis, they show personality quirks which resemble the natures of their animals. Many even end up with nicknames such as Kitty, Bear, Mouse, Animal, or Wolf. The sleeping faerie soul works its magic upon the growing mortal vessel. The human body begins to acquire features that relate directly to the appropriate animal. None are obviously inhuman. For example, a deer pooka's mortal body may have large, brown eyes. A snake pooka may end up with an extremely thin and tall frame. The elephant pooka may grow into a big-boned, even portly, human. Hair, eyes, body-type and personality can directly reflect a pooka's animal affinity.

## Chrysalis

Most changelings experience their Chrysalis either in late childhood or somewhere in their early teens, near the onset of puberty. Others may not emerge from their mortal cocoon until adulthood. Often, a traumatic experience will trigger it, though sometimes a purely joyful event will. Every Chrysalis is unique in both the changeling's reaction to it and in the circumstance of it.

Pooka face a particularly interesting Chrysalis, because they usually learn immediately that they can shift into the form of an animal. Sometimes a Chrysalis will result when the child instinctually retreats into his animal guise in order to escape physical danger or emotional trauma. Though this doesn't automatically trigger the Chrysalis, it often does. Some pre-Chrysalis Kithain shift to avoid life's hurts and black out during it, so that they don't remember it happening. This is rare, and usually only happens once or twice before the faerie soul asserts itself and the real Chrysalis happens. This type of event puts the child at great risk. Although her subconscious won't allow her to shift in front of onlookers, once she begins to roam in her animal guise, she does so without the caution that her mentor can teach her once she enters fosterage. Running purely on instinct at these times, she may roam far from home and wake up lost and confused. Childling pooka are extremely vulnerable.

Not all pooka experience a traumatic Chrysalis. Some get lucky and a mentor finds them before the dramatic moment. All changelings prefer this method. Some go out of their way to force a childling to Chrysalis before her time to make sure it occurs in a controlled environment. They do this by enchanting the child with an influx of Glamour. Unfortunately, this method does not always work, and pre-Chrysalis faeries often evade detection.

### Shapeshifting

Pooka don't need to learn how to shapeshift. The knowledge comes instinctively with the Chrysalis. However, there are certain aspects of shapeshifting that the changeling may have to learn the hard way. One of the most embarrassing is the fact that while the pooka's voile and chimerical items shift with him, no other items or clothing will. This means that the pooka's human clothing and any non-chimerical items — even treasures not specifically created to do so — are left lying on the ground beside the pooka. This explains, perhaps, a pooka's unwillingness to burden himself with *things*.

## Advice to the Storyteller on Character Creation

When a player creates a pooka character, many factors play into the choices that player makes. You, the Storyteller, should guide your players in making these choices, based on the pooka's animal affinity. Because of the variety of affinities possible, every pooka character will be unique. Many Merits, Flaws, and Abilities exist which mimic specific abilities that the pooka might have, such as enhanced senses or perfect balance. Your player may purchase special attacks, such as large claws or tail swipes, with creation points or you may choose to give them freely. Furthermore, you can customize established Merits and Flaws to fit the situation.

## Animal Statistics

Every pooka has an animal mien with which she will eventually get into trouble. For this reason, it's important to establish, in advance, what that animal's statistics look like. In her animal mien, the pooka has either greater or lesser Attributes than she does in her faerie mien. You can record these numbers on the pooka's character sheet, following her regular statistics.

Because every animal has its own unique qualities, strengths and weaknesses, and because there are so very many different animals in the world, an attempt to catalog them would be pointless. When you are creating your pooka, you should work closely with your Storyteller to write statistics for your character's animal form consistent with the game balance your Storyteller has established.

## Physical Attributes

An animal's size often determines its Physical Attributes. Keep in mind, however, that each animal is unique and you'll find exceptions to every rule. For

example, while a boa constrictor has immense strength, it would not necessarily be considered a large animal. Stamina, a much more complex Attribute, should never drop below the pooka's own score. For although one would think that a bird would have less Stamina than a faerie, it has supernatural qualities because it is a faerie in a different guise. In some instances, however, the animal mien will have a higher Stamina than the faerie mien. On the other hand, a pooka's Dexterity could vary greatly between forms, either adding dots or removing them, based on the affinity. Use your best judgment and follow your Storyteller's guidelines.

## Social Attributes

An animal's Manipulation total mirrors that of the pooka, however her Charisma and Appearance totals may differ between forms. A particularly frightening animal Appearance will affect any Charisma rolls and vice-versa. You should work with your Storyteller to determine what these scores are. Whereas a pooka may have only two dots in Charisma when she is in her faerie mien, she may have four dots in it if her animal affinity is an adorable puppy. By the same token, even if the pooka has four dots in Appearance when in her faerie mien, it's ridiculous to imagine a spider with that many. The animal mien's score reflects the change in appearance via lower scores.

## Mental Attributes

When in her animal mien, a pooka's Mental Attributes do not change from what they are in her faerie mien. Any special benefits such as enhanced hearing or sight, which could affect Perception, should be purchased as Merits and these then extend to the pooka in her human guise. Pooka have access to their full brain capacity and memories in their animal miens, so neither their Intelligence nor their Wits change.

## Abilities

Many of a pooka's Abilities become practically useless when the faerie changes shape. For example, Firearms rarely does the pooka any good in her animal mien. However, many Abilities remain constant and useful. Still others might become enhanced with the shift into animal form. For the most part, a pooka's Knowledges don't change. Neither do her Skills, with the possible exception of Stealth, which could increase or decrease,



dependent upon the nature of the affinity. The Storyteller should use her discretion when determining an animal's Stealth score. Tiny animals may have as many as ten dots in Stealth, whereas an elephant would have none. A pooka's Talents will more than likely change in animal form, with the exception of Empathy, Kenning, Persuasion, and Streetwise. These four remain constant (although the pooka may have a difficult time persuading someone she can't talk to).

### Cantrips

Pooka may cast cantrips as usual when in the mien of their animal affinity; their bunks, however, obviously have a completely different flavor. Rather than recite poetry, the pooka may chase her own tail around and around ten times, or she may sit up and do an odd sort of dance. Whatever the bunk, the Storyteller must determine what level it is and whether or not it is appropriate. In addition, pooka spend Glamour as normal, and acquire Banality just as easily.

### Animal Attacks

Animals have any number of ways they can do damage to another creature. To list just a few, they bite, claw, sting, butt, trample, kick, squeeze and crush. All of these attacks cause standard, non-chimerical damage. Their success is determined by a roll of Dexterity + Brawl (difficulty 6). Determine the damage resulting from the attack by rolling the animal mien's Strength (difficulty 6) and subtract any successes the victim gets on a Stamina roll (difficulty 6). This is done exactly as per the standard hand-to-hand combat rules.

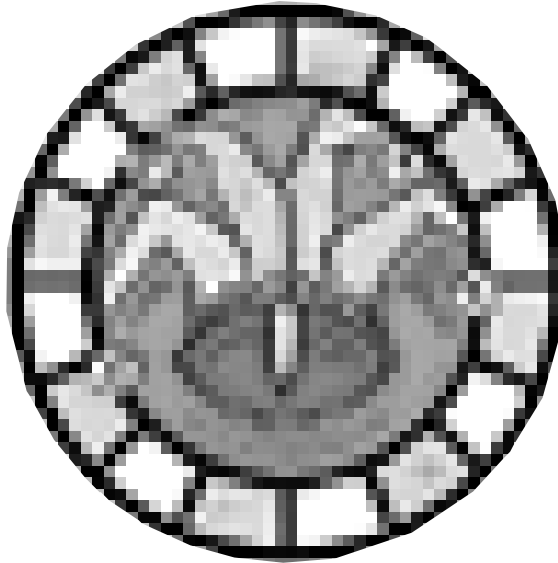
Some animals, however, have the ability to introduce venom to their victims. Not all venomous creatures actually kill with their bites or stings. Some, like bees and certain spiders, cause only a single wound level unless the victim has an allergy to that poison. Others may cause serious illness and possibly death.

## Venom

For the sake of simplicity, the following rule is suggested when dealing with a potentially fatal venom. Although different creatures have venom of different potencies, this rule is offered as a guideline for the Storyteller to use in determining the wound potential of a particular creature's venom.

A pooka with a venom attack has 4 venom damage dice. When the player rolls a successful attack, she not only rolls her standard Strength damage dice, but she also begins to roll her venom damage dice. Over time, she rolls a total of four times, each time reducing the number of dice she rolls by one. One roll is made every half hour of in-game time that passes. The victim reduces the damage each time with a Stamina soak roll, like any other type of damage. Unless the victim receives aid, the damage accumulates over this two-hour period, with the potential for death ever present. This applies only to venom that is potentially fatal, such as that of the rattlesnake, the black widow spider, or the scorpion.

It is highly recommended that the Storyteller require the player to take the Venomous Attack Merit in order to use a venom attack during play (see p 88). Few pooka should have venom this strong.





## The Guide to Pooka Affinities

The following list doesn't even approach completion. It lists some examples of the different animal affinities. These are intended as a guideline and do not represent all possible affinities in the specific categories. Your Storyteller may require you to spend a number of freebie points equal to the rarity factor of the animal affinity you choose in order to play any animal affinity with a rarity factor greater than one.

**Rarity Factor (RF):** 1-5, where 1 is the most common and 5 is extremely rare

### Common

- **Birds** (RF-1): sparrow, crow, pigeon, duck, robin, turkey, chicken, seagull, canary
- **Burrowers** (RF-1): mole, shrew, hedgehog, ground hog, badger
- **Farm Animals** (RF-1): pig, sheep, goat, cow, horse
- **Fish** (RF-1): catfish, perch, goldfish, lionfish, clownfish, bass, salmon, tuna, bluegill, tetra, anchovy
- **Housecat** (RF-0): Persian, Siamese, Cornish rex, calico wirehair, classic tabby, American curl, British shorthair, Manx, Japanese bob tail, Egyptian mau, sphinx, Balinese blue point, Turkish angora
- **Housedog** (RF-0): dachshund, mutt, boxer, beagle, terrier, Chihuahua, German shepherd, rottweiler, Labrador retriever, Doberman pinscher, Egyptian greyhound, Pekinese, Yorkshire terrier, pug, foxhound, cocker spaniel, collie, bloodhound, Old English sheepdog
- **Small Mammals** (RF-0): mouse, rat, squirrel, chipmunk, skunk, raccoon, hamster, gerbil
- **Other** (RF-1): crab, crayfish, lobster, king crab

### Uncommon

- **Birds** (RF-2): penguin, peacock, cardinal, blue jay, splendid fairy wren, geese, pelican, kingfisher, warbler
- **Fish** (RF-2): pantherfish, blue tang, filefish, sea bass, angelfish, rock beauty, Spanish hogfish, lookdown, moonfish, short big-eye, yellowbelly hamlet, scrawled cowfish, rainbow parrotfish, queen triggerfish, silver king tarpon, puffer fish, African pompano, red hind, piranha, mudskipper
- **Large Mammals** (RF-2): moose, deer, mountain goat, bear, musk ox, chamois, ibex
- **Reptiles** (RF-2): turtle, tortoise, lizard, toad, common frog, salamander, newt, mudpuppy, iguana
- **Small Mammals** (RF-2): chimpanzee, slender loris, koala, fox, otter, beaver, hedgehog, porcupine, spider monkey, tapir, lemming, vole, meercat, muskrat, armadillo, bat
- **Snakes** (RF-2): copperhead, rattler, coral, garden, grass snake

## Exotic

- **Birds** (RF-3): golden eagle, owl, scarlet macaw, great argus pheasant, green-backed heron, Andean condor, harlequin duck, green woodpecker, wandering albatross, sparrowhawk, ostrich, vulture, toucan, parrot, falcon
- **Fish** (RF-3): hammerhead shark, bonnethead shark, Atlantic sturgeon, electric eel, barracuda, lemon shark, swordfish
- **Large Mammals** (RF-4): giraffe, elephant, zebra, okapi, kangaroo, humpback whale, dolphin, manatee, sea lion, gorilla, orangutan, wolf, bighorn sheep, camel, elk, polar bear, reindeer, caribou, cougar, jaguar, panther, mountain lion, lion, tiger, leopard
- **Reptiles** (RF-3): chameleon, thorny devil, frilled lizard, gecko
- **Small Mammals** (RF-4): rhesus monkey, wombat, wart hog, flying squirrel, platypus, baboon, steenbok, dik-dik, anteater, spotted cus-cus
- **Snakes** (RF-4): cobra, boa constrictor, asp, viper, adder

## Endangered

- **Birds** (RF-5): king bird of paradise, Atlantic puffin, secretary bird, kea, superb lyrebird, whale-headed stork, whooping crane, flamingo, bald eagle, hoatzin, yellow-bellied sapsucker, quetzal, great crested grebe, dodo, moas, passenger pigeon, tragopan pheasant, kiwi, ibis, cassowary, emu, booby, bluebird, hummingbird
- **Fish** (RF-5): sea horse, octopus, snaggle tooth fish, viper fish, great white shark
- **Large Mammals** (RF-5): panda, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, narwhal, killer whale, blue whale, sperm whale, walrus, vicuña, springbok antelope, pronghorn antelope
- **Reptiles** (RF-5): crocodile, alligator
- **Small Mammals** (RF-5): Tasmanian devil, uakari monkey, lemur, bandicoot, aye-aye

## Insects

- **Butterflies** (RF-5): monarch, charaxes, pearly eye, mechanitis mimic, Nickerl's fritillary, mountain argus, swallowtail, owl butterfly, glorious begum, peacock royal, American painted lady, common map, blue diadem, morpho, cethosia cyane, Rajah Brook's birdwing, common red flash, 88 butterfly, golden kaiser-i-hind, black-veined white, common bluebottle
- **Spiders** (RF-5): black widow, brown recluse, tarantula, daddy-long-legs, zebra spider, water spider, mygale, cross spider, scorpion
- **Other** (RF-5): wasp, common house fly, horse fly, termite, stag beetle, bumble bee, dragonfly, mantis, mosquito, flea, ladybug, moth, ant, earthworm



# CHAPTER THREE: LOVE, LIES AND LOSSES

*When my love swears that she is made of truth,  
I do believe her, though I know she lies.*  
— William Shakespeare, Sonnets

So often, changelings discount pooka as shallow, but this is far from the truth. Pooka emotions run deep and dark. Scratching the surface of the pooka psyche reveals the face he shows to the world, a lie. In order to truly understand him, one must peel away the layers, the masks, and burrow through it all to where his heart beats with rabbitry flutterings.

## Breaking Hearts

*Ever wonder why clowns make some babies cry? Why they frighten some children? Ever wonder? Huh?! Call me that again and you'll find out.*

—Jeremiah of Graymere Glen, Pooka

The clown stands in the center ring, eyes drawn wide and bright with kohl. He has masked his flush with white-face and smeared his mouth into an upward tilt

with scarlet paint. Yet, as the saying goes, inside he cries. Not all pooka are clowns, but all pooka hurt and hide it. Some shield their pain behind bravado and bullying. Others cover their torment with flowery poetry. Still others disguise their angst with overabundant optimism and proclamations of joy.

Grrrrrrr...

The Sundering struck pooka with a hurt worse than cold iron. They, so akin to animals, became the victims of the modern age. Hunted, slaughtered, caged — these changelings and the animals from which their myth sprang found that humans had relegated them to the standing of secondary, disposable creatures. Nature's harmony became imbalanced as humans climbed to the top of the heap without a care for those they trampled.



Imagine the pain the pooka feel as they watch their animal cousins hunted to extinction and pass people on the streets wearing the skins of their friends. Imagine the hopes they had for humankind early on and their disappointment as the world turned sour and Man chose greed and domination over nurturing and equality. How can anyone doubt for a moment that pooka don't carry a deep and bloody wound in their hearts?

Mistrust of humans? It's unimaginable, isn't it, that a pooka might mistrust humans? After all, they only bludgeon baby seals and shoot elephants for their tusks. It's no big deal, is it, that humans test chemicals in the eyes of puppies and inject monkeys with drugs that make their muscles contract for hours before they finally die?

Is it unfair to say that the advance of civilization has hurt the pooka more than the other kith? Sidhe whine about the loss of their grand palaces and courtly lifestyles. Trolls grumble about the decay of honor and glory. Satyrs whimper at the effect society's morals have had on human sexuality and freedom. Nockers bemoan the unimaginative technology of the modern age. Redcaps struggle in a society where "politically correct" is a revered concept. Boggans miss the creativity of home-making in a time when people prefer microwaves and pre-packaged dinners to ovens and the smell of rising dough. Eshu shake their heads at the homogenization of cities and transportation, the lack of migrating tribes and wanderingspirit. Sluagh whisper among themselves about the... well, no one really knows what the sluagh whisper, but it surely cannot compare to the herding, hunting, torture and extinction of whole branches of the pooka's extended family.

Considering the sorrow that pooka carry in their breasts, it's no wonder they have to hide it. It's a testimony to their inner strength and to their dedication to the Dreaming that they manage to maintain relatively positive outlooks. Those pooka who give in to their bitterness don't last long. They go on enraged rampages against mortals or fall into their addictions to forget. Like all the other faeries, pooka walk a very fine line between Bedlam and Undoing. Banality alone keeps them from giving in. A pooka in Bedlam crosses the boundary and becomes a victim of his own hatred and pain. A pooka in the Mists comes to believe his own lies.

## Baaa-Bark-Honk-Howl-Crow-Cockadoodledoo!

Just like humans, each pooka has his own way of dealing with the emotions inside him. Unique experiences form their likes, dislikes, hopes, fears, needs and desires. Pooka Legacies vary as much as those of any other kith, both among the Seelie and the Unseelie. An infinite number of shades of gray tint pooka personalities. With a kith as diverse as this one, it has proven impossible to categorize them in any but the most stereotypical manner. Others see them as the clowns and pranksters of faerie kind. Many pooka seem to find acceptance and release in that role, relinquishing their sorrow and embracing humor and cheer rather than horror. Others cannot, and the rest of the fae have only begun to see beyond the jester's cap to the being within.

### Denial

The most telling aspect of a pooka's personality answers the question: How does he deal with his pain? Most laugh. They laugh to keep from crying. They hide behind their clown-faces in the hope that if they act it, they will perhaps begin to believe it and it will eventually become truth—they will find happiness again. Contrary to popular opinion, pooka don't raise spirits with entirely unselfish goals. The sadness of those around them reminds them of their own malaise.

### Bravado

Why does anyone ever pretend to be stronger, smarter or braver than they really are? To hide their weaknesses from others, of course, or perhaps so they themselves don't have to face these shortcomings. Heroes and bullies both have more than their fair share of bravado. These pooka lie to themselves and others when they insist that they feel no pain and that nothing bothers them. They smirk in the face of insults, pretending they know better. Sticks and stones may break their bones, but names will never hurt them? Inside, they're bleeding.

### Irresponsibility

"Why?" A more infamous pooka question has never been known, with the possible exception of "Why not?" Traditionally, with adulthood comes responsibility. Everyone has to pay their bills, pay their taxes, attend meetings, dress appropriately, shower regularly, and fol-

low the law. How mundane. Whether it's a conscious or unconscious philosophy, some pooka reject responsibility. Many just don't understand why all this is necessary. Others choose not to abide by societal rules because they oppose everything for which society stands.

### Deviance

The typical stereotype equates pooka with mischievous childlings. Not all of these faeries, however, are childlings. The playful cub grows into a ravenous tiger; The cute pup becomes a snarling wolf, and the wobbly-legged fawn develops into a horned buck. As they mature, pooka discover physical pleasure and other bohemian distractions. Some seek shelter from their pain in deviance. Casanovas may hide from their emotions in promiscuity and sexual experimentation. Alcoholic pooka drink to forget and to find an artificial happiness they can't acquire naturally.

### Cruelty

Nobody likes to suffer alone. These pooka want to share the wealth with everyone. They may not do it consciously, but some secret part of them wants to make sure everyone else suffers as much as they do. They may never actually physically harm anyone, but their caustic remarks and sarcastic commentaries cut deep.

### Suicidal Heroics

Caution? What's that? Many pooka believe they have nothing left to lose and throw themselves into dangerous situations without forethought or care for their own safety. These faeries are always the ones at the front of an assault. They leap into battle with abandon and fight as if they had nothing to fear. Some of the most famous pooka warriors acquired their reputations because their lack of caution was perceived as bravery. Almost all of them died horrible deaths.

## Listening Hearts

*Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough. Not only have I found that when I talk to the little flower or to the little peanut they will give up their secrets, but I have found that when I silently commune with people they give up their secrets also — if you love them enough.*

— George Washington Carver

The social interactions of pooka are no different from anyone else's. Pooka have friends. They love. They

hate. Some pooka band together and join oathcircles. Others prefer to travel their path alone. Just as each animal in the great kingdom has different social needs and habits, so does each pooka.

Born and raised human, with the innate instincts of their affinities, pooka balance somewhere between human and animal in everything they do. Never quite entirely animal, they can't escape the morals and habits taught to them as mortal children. Their higher intelligence, compared to the animals of their affinities, lifts them to a different plane. Their human experiences temper their bestial natures, and vice versa. It sets them somewhere on the line between the two. Conflict arises when they have to fight down their instincts because they know certain behaviors are socially unacceptable.

## The Pack Mentality

A pack of wolves, a gaggle of geese, a pride of lions—many pooka have a strong pack mentality. Some need a group affiliation so badly that they become deeply depressed when they find themselves alone or in a new place. For these pooka, family is everything. They guard their birth family with an almost obsessive protectiveness.

Pooka of this sort, who find themselves abandoned, rejected or otherwise stranded without a pack, will often attach themselves to the nearest group that will take them. Like teenagers who just want to belong, pooka may not always choose their friends wisely. Many changeling enemies, who know and understand this aspect of pooka make-up, take advantage of it to convert pooka to their side. Isolate a pack pooka, take away his family and friends, then step in and offer to let him become part of a new pack. Faced with no other option, many pooka can't resist.

## The Leader

Every pack, oathcircle or family must have a leader, the strongest and wisest of the group. Pooka greatly appreciate and respect a competent leader. By the same token, they find it particularly difficult to look up to anyone who shows weakness, cowardice or ignorance. Like the animals from which their myth sprang, pooka have an instinctual understanding of the importance of culling. If the leader is weak, they mercilessly bombard him with tests and challenges. In pooka minds, inept nobles contradict the natural order of things. These animalistic faeries look at mundane society filled with its

unworthy leaders and compare this with changeling society. As a result, they conclude that incompetent leadership is banal.

Pooka are rarely stupid, despite what the other kith think, and they often have a knack for subtlety. Once a leader has let his pack down one too many times, the pooka makes the other changeling's job as difficult as possible. Some use cunning and subterfuge, others out-and-out rebel. Often, a pooka's ousting from a pack results from this type of conflict. In nature, the young challenge their leaders and failure can sometimes mean banishment or even death. Pooka understand this. It's the way of things. If the pooka fails and is exiled, he goes and doesn't return, finding another pack elsewhere that will accept him. He bears no grudge against the leader that bested him because he knows he obviously misjudged and challenged a stronger opponent.

Some pooka have a deep-seated need to become pack leaders themselves. Those affiliated with lions and other such royal species live with the goal of eventually taking charge of the pack or motley. This doesn't usually sit very well with the motley's sidhe. And, of course, it's the inept sidhe that piss and moan the most about giving up their authority, even if the pooka in question would rule more fairly, wisely and courageously. For this reason, the natural leaders of this kith tend to avoid sidhe like the plague. Their pride, and senses of honor and duty, will not allow them to sit idly by while a simpering noble rests on laurels he himself has not earned. Fortunately, when a pooka does take charge, he usually lives up to his duties. He molds himself to his own vision of what a leader should be and pooka hold their leaders to very high standards.

## The Follower

There are the lions... and then there are the sheep. Some pooka content themselves with following the herd. In the extreme, these faeries change their beliefs, values and outlooks to fit the pack with which they are currently running. Conformists, tend to blend. Of course, this occurs in varying degrees. Some simply abide by the leader's rules out of respect and an innate sense of their lesser station. Others prove unwilling or unable to take responsibility and make decisions on their own. The leader says, "Jump," and they ask, "How high?" Still others take a more philosophical approach, believing that rebellion undermines the structure as a whole. Many

ideological reasons exist among pooka for simply following the herd and not questioning authority.

This type of pooka can either help or hinder the pack, depending on the situation. Imagine having a subject whose loyalty has no bounds... but who follows the leader everywhere, on his heels, asking if there's anything he can do to be of service. Imagine having a supporter that never questions authority and never argues... but who begins to dress like and act like the leader with an almost obsessive admiration that verges on stalking.

## The Loner Mentality

Many animals lead solitary lives. These creatures come together only long enough to mate and to raise their young. Fortunately, the pack mentality of humans tempers the pooka's desire to live alone. Few people can survive true isolation without going insane. However, many pooka have animal affinities that dictate more reclusive lifestyles.

Close friendships don't come easily to loners. Whether it's for their own protection or out of an intense need for privacy, these changelings always keep a part of themselves separate and unrevealed. Many have secret sanctums to which they retreat when the press of bodies becomes too cloying. Rarely do they enter into oathcircles except with the understanding that it's a practical decision and not an emotional one. Though they take Oaths of Fealty, they serve their lords as independents and never truly consider themselves part of the team.

## The Traveler

Migration among animals manifests in pooka as a driving desire to travel. Those who have affinities with creatures that migrate find themselves looking toward the horizon with envy. They yearn for warmer climates, sun-drenched beaches or forested mountains. Although in some cases, this innate urge surfaces with the changing of the seasons, in others it occurs only every couple of years. Usually a vacation or walk-about soothes the ache and the pooka returns home again without having to actually purchase both a summer and a winter residence.

This need to travel gives these pooka something in common with the eshu. Many of them never do settle down permanently, but wander throughout their lives,

drawn by their wanderlust to visit exotic places. Sometimes small groups of pooka voyage together for mutual protection and companionship.

## The Watcher

"I like to watch." For some pooka, this is their mantra. Unfortunately, it doesn't always have the sexy connotation one would like. Artists often depict animals in tapestries and paintings as watching from the edge of the forest, from tree boughs, or from their dark nooks and crannies. Many pooka exhibit this behavior, some out of curiosity, some out of a need to understand, and others simply out of a desire to be a part of the activity without actually participating. Staying on the sidelines (watching the game, not playing it), these changelings learn many things about their fellow faeries. Like the sluagh, they may collect loads of information and secrets. Still, they remain on the outside looking in, present, but not part of the action.

The other kith treat pooka like errant children, believing that pooka are ignorant, innocent and unworthy of attention. They speak more freely in front of the pooka, just like they never think twice about gossiping in front of the family pet or even in front of the children, revealing opinions that they would never state in front of a sidhe or, Dán forbid, a sluagh.

## Empathy and Ear-Tugging

The most sympathetic listeners experience their own hours of darkness and understand the pain of those around them. Pooka who acutely feel the Dreaming's suffering know all about pain. This explains why changelings often seek pooka out when they want to spill their guts or cry on someone's shoulder. Other factors also play a role in why other changelings trust the pooka with their secrets. Why do others share their innermost feelings, fears and thoughts with pooka?

Pooka guard their own private thoughts so well, that many other changelings assume that these enigmatic faeries will be less likely to reveal anything told to them. Everyone also knows how changeling society discounts the words of a pooka. Many changelings think, "I have to tell someone! I'll tell the pooka. If he does betray my secret, no one will believe him."



On a more subconscious level, faeries and humans alike sense the pooka's pain and thus are drawn to them when their own pain becomes too heavy a burden to bear alone. They instinctively turn to the pooka for a sympathetic ear, intuiting that the pooka will understand. This does not mean, however, that the pooka *will* understand, but they don't know that.

Pooka adore it when someone comes to them to spill their guts. With the savvy of a psychologist, they know all the right buttons to push to get the secret doors to open and reveal hidden dreams and fears. Whether it's just sitting quietly and patiently while the person opens up, or whether it's asking all the right questions, pooka have a knack for delving into psyches and drawing out information.

## Lying Hearts

*O what a tangled web we weave,  
When first we practice to deceive!*

— Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion*

Everyone knows that pooka lie. The questions are, "How much?" and "Why?" When you have a kith that rarely tells the truth, it becomes difficult to know *what* to believe. This handicaps the pooka. When a pooka wants to tell the truth, he often finds that no one believes him. The situation gets very complicated, very quickly. Imagine the following scenario:

**Sidhe Lord:** "Pooka, did you steal my cloak?"

**Pooka** [telling the truth, because this is important]: "No, milord."

**Sidhe Lord:** "So you *did* steal my cloak?"

**Pooka** [lying because the Sidhe Lord assumes he's lying]: "Yes, milord."

**Sidhe Lord** [getting frustrated]: "Well, which is it?"

Many other faeries view pooka as more trouble than they're worth. Conversing with them usually ends in aggravation. Some have come to call pooka speech, "Pooka-ese." Just like any other language, this one has many dialects. Not all pooka lie outright every time they open their mouths, despite what the other changelings think. Pooka have the ability to tell the truth and to lie in varying degrees. Subterfuge often replaces the outright lie.

## The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

Are pooka doing more than telling lies? Are they actually *living the lie*? Some changeling scholars suspect that pooka falsehoods go deeper than their language. What if everything known about the pooka was a well-constructed lie? What if their entire demeanor, as perceived by the other changelings, were nothing more than a deliberate masquerade? Is it any wonder that the pooka present a puzzle so fascinating that there are those who devote their lives to solving it?

In order to understand the pooka, one must remember three important factors of their personalities. First and foremost, they are defined by their affinity. Second, they watch much more than they participate. Their mythology has woven this into the very fiber of their beings. And third, they lie, but to what extent?

Ever since the Resurgence when pooka began to re-emerge from their burrows, they have had a reputation for pranking, silliness, shallowness and happy-go-lucky attitudes. They themselves have done nothing to discourage this reputation, but rather have done all in their power to encourage it. Why would they do this? What has it gained them?

Other changelings, both noble and commoner alike, tend to overlook pooka because they can't do anything but laugh and prank. Why ask a pooka a question and have to wade through the irritation of figuring out Pooka-ese, when someone else may have the same answer and give it in a straightforward manner?

Many pooka actively feed the belief that they are useless. They have a cunning and determination that completely belies their reputation. Their goals show long-term vision. If changeling perceptions of pooka have no foundation in truth, then the implications of what *must be true* are mind-boggling and unsettling.

## Pooka-ese

The pooka tendency to lie has developed into a language all its own, and yet, it is a language with many dialects and nuances. Subtle differences between personalities direct the many ways that pooka express themselves. They have mastered the art of subterfuge and created individual means of never giving a straight answer. Despite what most changelings think, pooka can be

## To Tell the Truth

Pooka characters must make a Will-power roll (difficulty 8) to tell the *whole truth*. This does not mean that they cannot slide *some* truth into the mix of lies. They maintain a goal, subconscious though it is at times, of misleading and misdirecting their listener. This makes playing a pooka quite challenging for most players. As a matter of fact, it could easily be argued that the pooka kith is the most difficult to play for this very reason.

A pooka can tell the *whole truth* for five minutes per success on the player's Will-power roll. If she gets no successes, then the status quo remains. If she botches, on the other hand, she must make a directed effort to tell either believable lies and have her listener accept them as truth, or to tell unbelievable truth and have the listener disregard it as false. The storyteller can help to guide the pooka's player in what she must attempt to make her listener believe or disbelieve.

very cunning, even Machiavellian in their lies and diversions. They use a variety of methods to avoid answering a question honestly, combining different approaches in a complicated dance of communication that leaves their fellow faeries unsure of what's true or false.

Rarely is every word that comes out of a pooka's mouth directly in opposition to the truth. Instead, they confuse things and toss falsehoods in with the truth so that their listener never knows exactly *what* to believe. They give half-truths and skirt the precipice of veracity without actually stepping into either a completely black or an entirely white realm.

Pooka have an innate urge to avoid scrutiny and to keep their innermost truths out of the limelight. Most importantly, pooka hate being the target of interrogation. When asked a direct question, they instinctively avoid it. No pooka uses only one dialect of Pooka-ese, but combines them all and chooses the tactic that best suits the moment.

## Enigmas

One tactic pooka use never have to commit to a definite answer involves asking questions. It's the "Old Man on the Mountain" technique. When asked a question, they answer with a question. This method frustrates the other faeries as much, if not more, than any other. It especially irritates the sidhe, who often view this as insubordination. Imagine the following scenario:

**Sidhe Lord:** "Pooka, did you steal my cloak?"

**Pooka:** "Why would I do that?"

**Sidhe Lord:** "Maybe because you wanted to *anger* me?"

**Pooka:** "Do you *really* think that *I* would steal your cloak?"

**Sidhe Lord:** [now unsure] "I don't know. That's what I'm trying to figure out."

**Pooka:** [shrugging] "Well, why don't you ask the redcap?"

**Redcap:** [guilty] "Hey! I don't know anything about it! You going to listen to him? He's just a pooka!"

## Evasions

Subtlety is the pooka's ace up the sleeve. Master conversationalists and manipulators, they divert attention from themselves with a wave of the hand. This rarely fails for them and only under the most directed scrutiny do they find it difficult to evade an issue or question. Pooka use cunning and slyness to redirect the conversation away from themselves and onto a different topic. They'll change the subject, beat around the bush, and never answer directly, as in the following example:

**Sidhe Lord:** "Pooka, did you steal my cloak?"

**Pooka:** [leaning forward to brush the sidhe's sleeve] "Milord, you have a bit of lint stuck to your coat."

**Sidhe Lord:** [looking down] "Oh, thank you."

**Pooka:** [walking away] "You're welcome, milord."

**Sidhe Lord:** [blinking] "Wait a minute! You didn't answer my question. Did you steal the cloak?"

**Pooka:** [looking back] "The one Lady Serella made for you? That reminds me. I saw her the other day and she said such kind things about you."

**Sidhe Lord:** [pleased] "She did? What did she say?"

## Stalling

Pooka often put off giving the answer until it becomes painful for the listener to wait or until the listener can't stick around for the moment when the answer is finally revealed. To accomplish this, pooka start telling the story of exactly what happened, but far in advance of the moment when the event in question occurred.

**Sidhe Lord:** "Pooka, did you steal my cloak?"

**Pooka:** [rubbing his chin] "Well, milord, it happened like this. When I was just a little cub, I had a friend who used to love picking on me. His name was Boo. Boo had an inferiority complex that caused him to bully anyone he thought was weaker, just so he could show that he was so tough. Did I mention that Boo was a redcap?"

**Sidhe Lord:** [nodding] "Right. Okay. Get to the point."

**Pooka:** [holding up his hand] "Okay, I'm getting there. So, anyway, one day Boo and I were playing in the backyard at my place... [insert rambling, detailed story] So anyway, me and Boo, we decided to climb the tree so we could see the baby birds, right?"

**Sidhe Lord:** [sighing in irritation] "Pooka, just answer my question. Did you steal the cloak?"

**Sluagh:** [whispering] "Lord. You have a visitor."

**Sidhe Lord:** [shaking his head in resignation] "I'll be right there."

**Pooka:** [grinning] "We'll finish the story later, milord. It's really a very good one."

## Lickspittles

It's amazing how people will hear what they want to hear and accept as truth anything that strokes their egos. Some people call this dialect of Pooka-ese, "sucking up," but pooka see it in a different light. They bring a hint of blush, a flattered smile, or a boost of self-confidence to their listener. Pooka hold to the theory that the best way to lie successfully is to tell people what they want to hear.

**Sidhe Lord:** "Pooka, did you steal my cloak?"

**Pooka:** [smiling] "Milord, you know that I respect you. How could I ever do anything so low to a person of your grace, wisdom and nobility?"

**Sidhe Lord:** [beaming] "Oh, okay. I didn't think you did. I just wanted to make sure. Thank you."

**Pooka:** [walking away] "You're welcome, milord."

**Redcap:** [smirking] "Can you believe the bullshit flying around in here?"

**Sidhe Lord:** [turning on the redcap with a noble frown] "You think that's bullshit? Would you care to explain that, commoner?"

**Redcap:** [frowning deeply] "No! That's not what I meant! What I meant was... um... Fuck."

## Lawyering

Pooka get accused of things that no one would ever dare accuse a troll or sidhe or other kith of doing. Pooka sometimes use noble manners to avoid responding to the accusation. Sidhe especially have court etiquette in their blood and often a reminder is enough to get the sidhe to back down. This requires careful wording, however, so that the sidhe does not feel publicly humiliated. This tactic is best used in private.

**Sidhe Lord:** "Pooka, did you steal my cloak?"

**Pooka:** [frowning] "Milord, I take personal offense that you would accuse me of such a thing."

**Sidhe Lord:** [unsure] "Well, I'm not *accusing* you, *per se*. I'm just asking."

**Pooka:** [shaking his head] "I am innocent until proven guilty. I will, of course, make myself available for interrogation and torture when you decide to pursue a more formal investigation."

**Redcap:** [grinning] "Can I torture him?"

**Sidhe Lord:** [frowning at the redcap] "You may *not*!"

**Redcap:** [sulking] "Damn."

## Scandals

Pooka learn many secrets in their dealings with the other kith. Many pooka are not above using these secrets to their advantage. If the situation calls for a bit of subtle blackmail, they won't pull any punches. Most pooka resort to this only when all else has failed and the situation has become desperate. Blackmail is a dangerous game and they realize it.

**Sidhe Lord:** [for the eighth time] "Pooka, did you steal my cloak?"

**Pooka:** [thinking] "Milord, did you say whether you're referring to the cloak that Lady Serella made for you with her loving hands?"

**Sidhe Lord:** [nods, frustrated] "Yes. That's the one. Did you steal it?"

**Pooka:** [scratching his head] "I wonder, milord, did you ever get that satyr brew stain out of it?"

**Sidhe Lord:** [worried] "You know about that?"

**Redcap:** [snickering] "Satyr brew?"

**Sidhe Lord:** [frowning at the redcap] "You may go, pooka. What happened that afternoon... is over and done. Do you understand?"

**Pooka:** [bowing] "Oh yes, milord. I understand *perfectly*."

### The Sidhe's Cloak

Who stole the sidhe lord's cloak? Although he refused to ever give a solid response to the question of whether he stole it or not, the pooka offered the sidhe lord several clues as to who did. Anyone who speaks Pooka-ese will see in two of the above examples that it was the redcap who stole the cloak. Pooka rarely say things randomly. Pooka-ese doesn't state the complete opposite of the truth. For example, the pooka did not reply, "Yes, milord, I stole the cloak and the redcap is completely innocent." That's too easy. It makes Pooka-ese too obviously translatable. Anyone who knows the pooka's propensity to speak in this manner immediately knows the truth. That contradicts their very natures. The pooka might as well just say, "No, milord, I didn't steal the cloak. The redcap did."

## Of Tails and Tales

Just like everyone else, pooka have conversations which don't involve direct questions. Though most pooka tend to be relatively taciturn, not all of them can keep their mouths shut for long. This varies, depending upon the pooka's animal affinity. Talkative animals do exist. Pooka-ese doesn't apply only to answering questions. In their every interaction, pooka twist, falsify and exaggerate the facts. Most of the time, they just listen and ask lots of questions, but sometimes they want to tell a story or

relay a philosophy. The listener can expect to be entertained when a pooka gets in a talkative mood.

## Fairytales

Pooka have a knack for exaggeration. One dialect of Pooka-ese involves embellishing the truth with grandiose magnification of the facts. Every statement becomes a hyperbole, full of mostly bullshit. This type of Pooka-ese entertains other changelings, but is rarely taken seriously. When the tale of how the troll saved his oathcircle a long walk by waving down a taxi becomes an extravagant tapestry of knightly honor and courage against the great yellow dragon on 5th Street, everyone chuckles and shakes their head without paying much attention. The truth lurks somewhere in there, but the pooka, in his telling, turns the story into something quite magical... and not quite true.

## Devil's Advocate

Pooka love to play Devil's Advocate. Accomplished in word-play and debate, they can take the position opposite what they truly believe and argue it as if it were their most holy standard. They don't do this for any particular reason; it's just who they are. This does, however, produce some interesting conversations and usually everyone involved comes away from the discussion having learned something.

## Advice to the Lovelorn

Just like everyone else, pooka have their own motivations and priorities. When changelings or mortals come to the pooka to spill their guts, they often want advice to go along with it. Not surprisingly, the pooka's own interest in the situation and his sense of honor bears heavily upon his response. In situations where a pooka specifically *wants* to help the listener, he will often put forth that concerted effort to tell the truth, though this has backfired many times when the listener assumed the pooka was lying and therefore did the exact opposite of his advice. Pooka have discovered that the more effective method of helping involves asking questions that guide the listener to discover the correct conclusion on her own.

## Emergencies

Even Lassie could communicate her needs to her owners in a pinch. Pooka can do the same. Commands and requests come easily to pooka, without the need to temper them with lies. A simple, “Come with me,” “Leave me alone,” or “Get Lord Folderol!” doesn’t need to be twisted. This testifies to the fact that not *every* word out of a pooka’s mouth must be a falsehood. With these commands or requests, the pooka takes no stand, doesn’t reveal anything about himself and isn’t sharing information. He’s just giving an uncomplicated order. If the request gets much more complicated than the examples above, the pooka faces more of a challenge.

### Pooka and Promises

Changelings view oaths as the most sacred events in their lives. The Dreaming itself binds them to their oaths and imposes severe consequences for a broken oath. Because of this, pooka may take oaths normally like any other changeling. The Dreaming lifts all restrictions on them for lying when pooka pronounce the words of the oath. The oath comes out shining and true. Perhaps this explains why pooka take oaths so very seriously.

## Beating Hearts

*Love is an alliance of friendship and animalism; if the former predominates it is passion exalted and refined; if the latter, gross and sensual.*

— C. C. Colton

Romance. Aaaahh!. Everyone, or most everyone, loves romance. Some just love sex, but one could easily argue that the two are inseparable. Changelings, as a general rule, view sex and love with much broader definitions than do most mortals. They — especially the sidhe — originally come from a place where AIDs and

other sexually transmitted diseases never existed. This does not change the fact that in this lifetime they have grown up in an era where these things *are* an issue. The fear these diseases invoke can inhibit changelings just as much as it inhibits some mortals. On the other hand, the one thing that few changelings suffer is a moralistic approach to any kind of sex. Specifically, they hold that anyone who preaches a banal philosophy in which sex or love is *bad* when it strays from the standard missionary position between altar-married spouses is full of shit. How could any kind of love be bad?

Most changelings agree, however, that sex *must* be by consent. The Kithain view sex and love as an intimate sharing. Although rapists exist among the Kithain, especially among ravaging Unseelie, most faeries agree that this is a horrendous crime and do not condone it. Furthermore, they find the concept of sexually abusing children utterly disgusting. Few things in this world take away a child’s awe and wonder faster than sexual abuse. How could there be a more offensive crime than to turn a child into a cowering, fearful, guilt-ridden victim? Nightmares plague these children, but their nightmares do not enforce the Dreaming, they enforce Banality. Sexual abuse draws children into adulthood before their time, encourages homophobia and embeds a fear of sex in them. Many victims of abuse have suppressed the memories of large portions of their childhood. How could that ever be a good thing? It can’t. It isn’t.

## Licking, Sucking, Biting and Clawing

*Love is the answer, but while you are waiting for the answer, sex raises some pretty good questions.*

— Woody Allen

To some extent, a pooka’s animal affinity influences his sexual and romantic habits. This brings to mind some interesting images, *n’est-ce pas*? Certain species have mating rituals, dances that in nature draw their mates to them. This does not mean that pooka strut around the bedroom in a figure-eight pattern, flapping their arms and making throaty noises. (Though, if that’s what turns them on, why not?) This does mean, however, that some pooka will approach love and sex with very definite patterns or rituals that matter to them.

One of the things that distinguishes humans from animals is that humanity is one of the only species that has sex for fun. Animals do it for procreation. Their sex drives are a function of evolution with continuation of the species as the goal. Although some people would argue the opposite, the common theory is that animal sex is a function of physical urges alone, whereas the human — and faerie — sex drive often results from emotional or mental needs. As the link between animal and human, pooka sometimes suffer from periods of “heat” in which their physical urges become quite strong and nearly impossible to ignore. However, they cannot escape their minds and hearts. A pooka in heat doesn’t necessarily slather after sex, but may express it by temporarily falling deeply “in love” with the first exquisite creature that catches his or her eye. Unfortunately once the pooka has consummated the relationship, thus satisfying his heat, he may fall just as quickly out of love... or not.

### The Seduction

Sexy pooka? That’s a joke, right? No. Very few pooka play the jester dressed in primary colors with bells around their necks. As varied as any other kith, pooka definitely have their moments. Sleek and graceful, or muscled and assertive, pooka often reek of sexuality. The term “animal sex” didn’t acquire the connotations it has because animal sex is boring or lackluster — quite the contrary. While certain pooka personalities may dictate a shy approach to seduction, few maintain that shyness once the actual act is in progress. How could they when their own animal passions rear their snarling heads with such base instincts to drive them?

Some pooka approach seduction as a game or battle to be won. They seduce in an attempt to impose their dominance, or impose their dominance in an attempt to seduce. These lovers tend to be assertive at best and sometimes outright aggressive. This doesn’t always go over well, though some people welcome the discarding of social ritual and prefer this more direct expression of desire and need.

### The Romance

Some pooka stalk their prospective mates, while others woo them with gentle words and caressing touches.

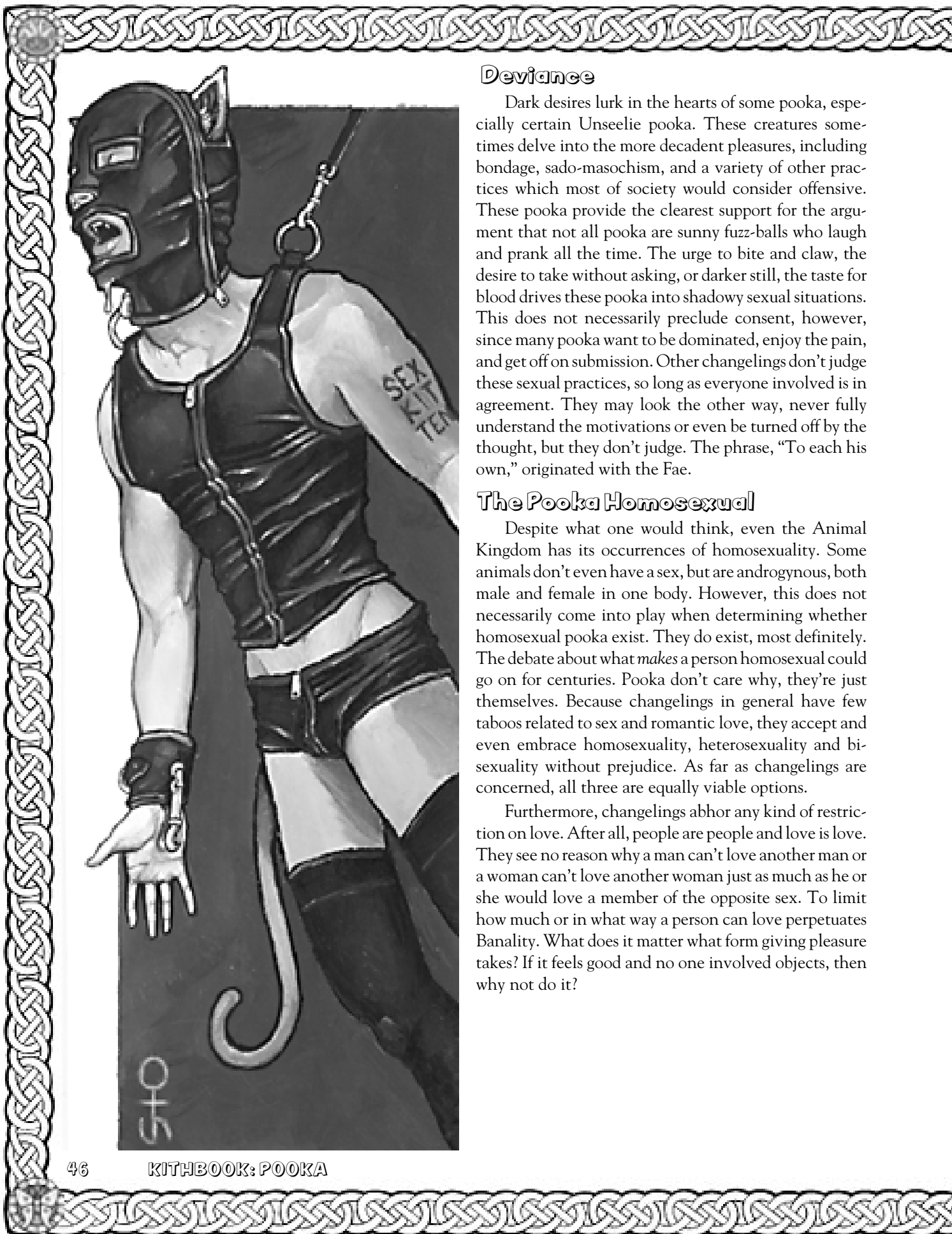
It doesn’t take a lot to imagine that some of the world’s most famous lovers were pooka. Sidhe and satyrs don’t have exclusive rights to poetry and roses. Pooka, as changelings, have hearts just as vulnerable and just as romantic as any other faerie. In truth, their propensity for exaggeration often makes these faeries some of the most demonstrative lovers among changelings. They use extravagant gestures to express their love. Billboards, graffiti, roaming violinists hired to interrupt board meetings, and the delivery of kiss-o-grams, strip-o-grams and gigantic bouquets of flowers often accompany a pooka’s proclamations of love.

### The Commitment

Many animals mate for life and wouldn’t it be nice if changeling love were that simple? Unfortunately, like humans, pooka rarely find such a long-term relationship. Many don’t want that kind of perpetual commitment. As with any human or changeling, individual personalities, situations, and challenges dictate the outcome of a relationship. Still, many pooka have a proclivity to want to settle down and raise children. They yearn for a cozy home, a den where they know they are safe, warm and loved, or they crave a partner who will stand beside them and support them in all endeavors. Despite what some of the more cavalier changelings proclaim, this lifestyle is not banal. Just ask any boggan.

### The Roles of the Sexes

In the Animal Kingdom, the males and females of certain species take specific roles in the raising of offspring, in providing for their families, in discipline and in leadership. For some, the male takes the dominant role while the female takes the submissive role. In others, this is reversed. Although this can manifest in pooka as male or female chauvinism, the fact that pooka grow to maturity in mortal society and have more complicated brain functions than animals, allows them to overcome these urges. There do exist, however, those pooka who have had these urges reinforced in their mortal experience. As a general rule, pooka tend to remain just as open-minded about the sexes and their roles as any other changeling. The exceptions are out there, though, stirring up trouble and begging the ire of female knights and proud males.



## Deviance

Dark desires lurk in the hearts of some pooka, especially certain Unseelie pooka. These creatures sometimes delve into the more decadent pleasures, including bondage, sado-masochism, and a variety of other practices which most of society would consider offensive. These pooka provide the clearest support for the argument that not all pooka are sunny fuzz-balls who laugh and prank all the time. The urge to bite and claw, the desire to take without asking, or darker still, the taste for blood drives these pooka into shadowy sexual situations. This does not necessarily preclude consent, however, since many pooka want to be dominated, enjoy the pain, and get off on submission. Other changelings don't judge these sexual practices, so long as everyone involved is in agreement. They may look the other way, never fully understand the motivations or even be turned off by the thought, but they don't judge. The phrase, "To each his own," originated with the Fae.

## The Pooka Homosexual

Despite what one would think, even the Animal Kingdom has its occurrences of homosexuality. Some animals don't even have a sex, but are androgynous, both male and female in one body. However, this does not necessarily come into play when determining whether homosexual pooka exist. They do exist, most definitely. The debate about what *makes* a person homosexual could go on for centuries. Pooka don't care why, they're just themselves. Because changelings in general have few taboos related to sex and romantic love, they accept and even embrace homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality without prejudice. As far as changelings are concerned, all three are equally viable options.

Furthermore, changelings abhor any kind of restriction on love. After all, people are people and love is love. They see no reason why a man can't love another man or a woman can't love another woman just as much as he or she would love a member of the opposite sex. To limit how much or in what way a person can love perpetuates Banality. What does it matter what form giving pleasure takes? If it feels good and no one involved objects, then why not do it?

## Plumage

Pooka take their clothing very seriously. In the Animal Kingdom, plumage and markings hold great significance. Members of this kith choose their clothing to reflect or hide their natures. The decision may be a conscious one, or it may simply develop as an unconscious means of camouflage. Usually the voile dreamed into existence at the fae's Chrysalis shows the markings of her animal affinity. Chimerical clothing created later also tends to express this connection.

Many of these faeries pick clothing which makes them look dangerous. Pooka realize that the image they present often serves as their first line of defense. Bullies hesitate before picking on a feral-eyed changeling dressed all in black, whereas they don't give a second thought to harassing one robed in multi-colored silk, fringe and tassels. And the right clothes can go far in attracting a potential mate too!

## Pooka Reproduction

We all know how pooka make babies, the more interesting question is how does pooka pregnancy work? The answer, actually, is quite simple. Pooka souls live in borrowed bodies, human bodies. Therefore, their reproduction becomes a perfectly human function. Pooka do not lay eggs. They do not give birth to litters of puppies, although multiple births are common in certain types of pooka. Just like any other of the kith, these changelings give birth to human children who may or may not become faeries.

Pooka may continue to change into animal form throughout their pregnancy. While in the animal form, the baby or babies slip into the Dreaming where they are still a part of their mother, but not so noticeably. In their animal bodies, pooka remain unhindered physically by the pregnancy, even though they may be eight months along in their mortal seeming. They can run and jump

normally. For that matter, the pooka's animal guise doesn't *look* pregnant. However, while the mother roams as her animal affinity, her fetus remains equally vulnerable to anything that harms her just as it would be in her human body. Pregnant pooka rarely endanger themselves no matter what form they are in for this reason.

Because pooka have mortal babies like all other changelings, they automatically revert to their mortal form once the birth contractions begin — despite the usual prohibition against doing so in front of witnesses. This could prove rather inconvenient or even fatal depending on where the pooka is at the time. For this reason, as pooka near their eighth or ninth month, they become exceedingly careful and less likely to spend time in their animal guise. The birth must occur in their mortal/faerie form. It would be inconceivable to imagine a sparrow giving birth to a human child.





# CHAPTER FOUR: IT WASN'T ME

**Satyr:** *Who farted?*

**Troll:** *(aghast) Not me!*

**Sidhe:** *(horrified) Not me!*

**Pooka:** *(giggling) Not me.*

## The Litter

Birth. Youth. Adulthood. Old age. Death. Every living creature in the natural world goes through life in the same stages. New life springs from within the cycle, new growth sprouting from those who are strong and established, like a many-branched tree. Life renews itself over and over. Although the pooka have always been linked with nature, they were never truly part of the cycle until Banality forced them to meld their faerie souls with mortal bodies.

Despite what one would think, this change doesn't traumatize the changelings. Reborn without the nagging memories of what it means to be immortal, changelings learn about life anew from the perspective of a mortal child. Pooka slip into this new life cycle with the grace of a chameleon.

## Kits, Pups and Chicks

Extremely affectionate, young pooka stick close to their families. At this age the pack mentality strongly resembles survival instinct rather than conscious choice. Of course, a pooka's family may not always be his birth parents and siblings. Sometimes the pooka will find only terror and abuse in his home, so he finds another family to which to cling. This also varies based on the pooka's animal affinity. Some rare animals abandon their young at a very early age and those guppies must either sink or swim on their own.

Usually, at about the time of his Chrysalis, a pooka reaches the point where he's beginning to stretch his wings. His body and mind develop to the point where he wants to explore. He yearns for the freedom he sees among his elders. Like the bear cub who tries to growl, mean and nasty like his mama, but who can manage no more than a mewling cry, a pooka strives to mold himself in the image of those he admires. Oh, and he asks *lots* of questions, like "Where does thunder come from?" and "How come redcaps are so ugly?"

The Seelie pooka childling shines warmth and affection on his friends and family. The more shy or reserved Seelie childling may bury himself in books or quietly watch others play from the sidelines. Most tend to be well-behaved and, if not polite, at least their blurted rudeness has the charm of childish innocence.

### Mentors

Pooka take their responsibilities to their childlings very seriously. An assumed duty to train and protect these young faeries binds all pooka. Even the most sour, nasty pooka will take a recently Chrysalised childling under her wing and train him. Not every mentor treats her students well, however, and some give lessons that hurt as much as they teach. Nevertheless, the lessons are taught.

Pooka understand the necessity for childlings to have a mentor with the same animal affinity. Only a rat pooka can explain the territorial rules by which rats divvy up the sewers. Only a cat pooka can describe the dangers of the city's alleys and ledges, where to go, where not to go, what to do and what to avoid. Many of the more primal instincts pooka gain from their affinities are unique to them. Only under the most extreme circumstances will a pooka childling find herself mentored by someone of another affinity.

If the city where the pooka Chrysalised has no other faerie of the same affinity, the call goes out among pooka for one to come. Sometimes this produces a mentor for the childling. Sometimes it doesn't. It's not uncommon for a childling to travel to his mentor and live there with her to learn. This uprooting upsets some childlings at first. Imagine waking up one morning to a different face in the mirror, then shortly thereafter, traveling alone to live with a person you've never met, away from your family and friends. While some embrace the adventure, others balk at the change. It's even more difficult, sometimes, being a pooka mentor who has to make all the arrangements, including convincing the faerie's mortal family to send their son or daughter to a "boarding school."


Unseelie pooka childlings evidence a malicious streak that often drives them to prey on the weak and to direct their creativity to more harmful pursuits. Though the Unseelie childling may be no less affectionate and warm with those he loves, he judges others harshly and often finds them lacking. Trouble lurks around every corner for these pooka. They do not have the advantage of age and wisdom to temper their actions.

All pooka have an acute awareness of their childlings and take extra care to protect them, Seelie and Unseelie alike. Many dangers threaten these faeries. They have spent their first years as mortals and now, suddenly, they can change into an animal. However, the dangers that face them as animals far exceed those that threaten them as mortal children. Stories abound of pooka childlings who wandered off in their animal mien only to meet death at the jaws of a predator, in a rush of water in the sewers, or in a territorial fight with another of its species. Pooka must also learn to fear dogcatchers and angry neighbors with guns or poison. As mortal children, they have society to protect them to a certain extent. In their animal mien, they no longer do. The rules change dramatically and all pooka must learn these new rules from scratch.

### The Wildling Years

By the time a pooka reaches her wilder years, she has learned the skills necessary to survive in all three of her kingdoms: the faerie, the mortal and the animal. During this phase of their lives, pooka are at their most dangerous. Strength courses through their bodies and their primal instincts reach a pitch that hums in their blood. Some pooka jokingly equate the wildling years with "the mating years" because the urge to prowl and find a mate or mates predominates. The mating instinct manifests in wilder pooka as strongly as it does in their animal affinities, as does the innate impulse to lead or follow, and assert their dominance or submission, whichever the case may be.

Seelie wilders work within the structure of the faerie kingdom to advance their own causes. They hold dear the concept of honor and would earn the respect of their fellows quickly if it weren't for their communication challenges. Many affinities bless the pooka with courage and daring, leadership skills and a certain wisdom that, when combined with a reverence for honor and beauty,



makes them valuable assets to any court. In their wildling years, they've lost much of the childish urge to prank and play that they had as childlings. Many pooka display a seriousness that rivals that of trolls, and their courtly grace can sometimes put a sidhe to shame. Wilder pooka, faeries in their prime, are very alive and unique. Fascinating creatures, they fit no stereotypes, other than the ones which make them resemble their affinity.

Wilder pooka of the Unseelie variety wear an aura of dark danger. They don't prank; they menace. Creatures of midnight prowlings and sunlit stalkings, they tend to give themselves over to their primitive urgings more readily than their Seelie cousins. Just as everyone knows to be cautious around any wild animal, changelings fear these pooka—and with good reason. Unpredictable and dangerous, these faeries attack when cornered and sometimes just for the sport of it. Whether it be with sharp tongue or claws, Unseelie wilders leave scars.

## Elders

By the time a pooka has lived long enough to see her grump years, she has learned much and experienced more. She has begun to settle in her ways and to stake out her territory. Until challenged, the pooka grump over- sees it like a nosy landlord or an interfering grandmother. Innately, a grump pooka believes that merely by having survived so long, she has earned a right to the respect of her fellow changelings and she claims that right without asking. Like the eldest crocodile in the pack, she oversees her domain with a keen eye and territorial pride.

Whether crotchety and cranky, or wise and kind, the pooka grump has reached a point where keeping to social etiquette, whether faerie or mortal, no longer matters as much. All her life, she has suffered from Banality or been rejected by other changelings who misunderstand her Pooka-ese. She feels she has paid her dues to earn her periodic disregard for etiquette. Opinionated to a fault, she has outgrown the need to play political games. Her wisdom allows her to see through the bullshit and she makes it known. She knows that her time is limited; the fear of political repercussion no longer restricts her. Although not openly rude to a noble she disrespects, her opinion clearly shines in her eyes and in the reserved, limited courtesy she shows that noble in public. Even the sidhe put up with this. "Oh," they say, "she's just an old, grumpy pooka. Ignore her."

This territorialism, elderly behavior, and embrace of routine manifests in different ways in individual pooka. A Seelie pooka may take the role of wise mentor or grandparent advising or chastising when necessary. She guides and protects those in her domain to the best of her ability, taking this self-assumed responsibility seriously, training childlings and watching for signs of trouble. The Seelie pooka grump works to maintain peace and harmony, often tattling on those who would threaten this with their political maneuverings and mischief.

Unseelie pooka in their grump years do the same, though with a more sinister approach. Their territorialism comes out less as protection and more like ownership. They assert their dominance with varying degrees of aggression. Some do this surreptitiously via plotting and puppeteering from behind the scenes. Others openly claim their regency over an area, becoming like gang leaders who rule their dominions with iron fists until someone younger knocks them from the throne.

## Where Pooka Go to Die

For changelings, death comes in two stages: the Undoing of the faerie soul and the physical death of the body it inhabits. The first may occur without the second, but once the physical body dies, that's all she wrote, and the changeling is lost to the world until he reincarnates. As a faerie ages, Banality burdens him more and more. His own body begins to break down and the natural aging process brings him one step closer to the Undoing and death with each passing day.

There comes a time in every pooka's life when he has outlived his usefulness to the pack. Banality weighs so heavily upon his shoulders that it taints the advice he gives and colors the wisdom of his decisions. His memory fades and he loses sight of his goals.

Seelie pooka consider this a sad time and the loss of their elder a great tragedy. Other, younger pooka, keep a close eye on these grumps, checking on them and even sometimes moving in with them to help care for the elder. The most unacceptable thing in any Seelie pooka's mind is for a changeling to die alone. They work together to stay the Mists for as long as possible, and when, in the end, the grump has lost his grip on the Dreaming, they do whatever they can to ease his passing. Just as mentors guided him through his Chrysalis and Saining, youngsters now guide him through the end of his life, continu-





ing to visit and see to his comfort even after the Mists have overtaken him, until the time comes when the soul is released for rebirth.

Unseelie pooka view the slipping grump as a liability to the pack. By this time, a younger, stronger leader has undoubtedly dethroned the pooka. He no longer serves a purpose, not even as an advisor. These dark faeries cease wasting resources, including Glamour, upon the old pooka and may even go so far as to banish the changeling from their midst. Though Seelie pooka view this as cruel and heartless, the Unseelie see it as a natural process and a simple matter of survival. The grump had his day. It's time for a new leader, and resources should go to the young who can actually put them to good use rather than wasting them on someone who has lived past his prime.

Pooka view natural physical death as rebirth. When occurring in the old and Banality-ridden, pooka call it a blessing. They celebrate the cycle and, though they mourn the loss, they know that their friend's soul has found a better place. The soul has earned its rest and the chance to see again through the eyes of a child.


Violent death such as homicide, on the other hand, proves much more traumatic for the pooka. They feel that the faerie was torn from them before his time and often seek revenge on the one who caused the death, even if it was an accident. For many, the untimely death of a friend pushes that big red button that triggers fury. It is one of the best known causes for a Seelie pooka to spontaneously change legacies and become Unseelie. Though few actually go on a killing spree, they do, in cases of foul play, seek revenge that often ends in another death. When the death was an accident, they make damn sure that the person responsible for the accident feels the pain, the loss and the guilt for what happened.

## Marking Territory

*Hey! Don't piss on my toes and I might consider not pissing on yours.*

— Catalina, wolf pooka of Toronto

Pooka, with their talent for exaggeration, pomp and circumstance, sometimes fit quite well in the noble courts. Some have very regal manners, such as certain butterfly and bird pooka. Their colorful garb and noble demeanors allow them to blend with the sidhe and the titled commoners. A pooka can have as much grace as a sidhe and can be as honorable as a troll. By the same token, another might be as careless as a redcap or as



irreverent as a satyr. The tradition of pooka as court jester seems to be changing with the times, as different species emerge and changelings learn that not all pooka are pranksters and childish clowns. Nonetheless, many Kithain remember that the role of court jester was once considered an honored position. Traditionally, jesters act as the conscience of the ruler, berating him for foibles and commenting on those things of which no one else dares to speak. Those courts where this is still true value their pooka jesters highly. Sadly, they are few and far between.

## The Seelie Court

Seelie pooka fall into two categories: leaders and followers. Those who lead do so with honor, courage and an attempt at wisdom. Those who follow display loyalty to the point of dying for the cause. Seelie packs stick together come hell or high water. They champion conservation and preservation of nature and its creatures. These pooka use more conventional methods to achieve their goals, working within the confines of mortal laws to succeed, though they are not above causing harm to those who destroy without conscience.

Just like any other Seelie changeling, pooka value honor, especially in their leaders, but in everyone else as well. Though other kith sometimes do, pooka don't see a conflict between their honor and the lies which fall from their lips. What a person says and how she acts are two different things and pooka believe that people should be judged by their deeds, not by their words. They have high expectations when it comes to honor and any who fall below acceptable limits often dip much deeper in the pooka's estimation than they would if it were another kith judging them.

## Pooka and Love

When a pooka considers the concept of love, his first thought is always for his pack. Although many believe in true love and mate for life, the great majority skip from partner to partner. They believe that love is boundless, that to love one doesn't mean you can't love others. Love, for pooka, is sometimes seasonal. Because of this tendency for their mating seasons to be so cyclical, relationships with certain of the other kith often end in broken hearts. Trolls, in particular, find it difficult to accept that their lovers have become so distant so quickly, and of course, their pooka mates have a hard time

explaining the situation to the troll. Although they do not necessarily fall out of love, their attention diverts to other pursuits. The regularity of this doesn't mean that these changelings don't actually love the person or that they cease to love their most recent mate just because the leaves have begun to change.


## Beauty

Every pooka has his own definition of beauty. For some, a blade of grass or a newborn leaf may inspire awe. The way the sunshine sparkles on the surface of a rippling brook may capture the pooka's heart. These animalistic faeries tend to find their beauty in nature rather than in the constructions and creations of mortals. However when the rare artist manages to mimic nature in an unnatural form, a pooka might appreciate the imitation. Each pooka has his own preferences. A city pooka might discover beauty in a bit of graffiti on the train station wall. A wilderness pooka, such as a camel pooka, might disregard the graffiti, but marvel at the way colorful tents decorate swirling sand dunes.

This is not to say that pooka find no beauty in another changeling's or mortal's physical body. Quite the opposite! Pooka can become enraptured with one they find beautiful just as easily as the eshu who writes poems to his loved one or the satyr who composes a timeless melody to capture the feel of her lover's caress. All pooka dedicate themselves to the protection and preservation of whatever they find beautiful.

## Debt

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a gift for a gift—Seelie pooka abide by this part of the Seelie Code without even having to think about it. Revenge as well as reciprocation comes naturally to them, almost too naturally. Pooka hold grudges and never forget a favor. This makes them both worthy allies and dangerous opponents. Many have a predator's patience and await the perfect moment to strike back at their enemies. By the same token, they often return a gesture with one even more lavishly extravagant than the one they received. Oaths, when offered, touch them deeply, for the taking of an oath implies both acceptance of and respect for the one to whom it is sworn and pooka are all too often dismissed as unworthy. Most packs share the Oath of Clapsed Hands and take this allegiance very seriously.



## The Unseelie Court

Many pooka run in packs and this is no less true for Unseelie. Still, Unseelie pooka have a less static organization than their Seelie siblings. Their packs metamorphose and reorganize on a more regular basis. One might think that Unseelie pooka would forego loyalty, but they are just as bound by the pack mentality as any other pooka. Though the pack may change internally, its make-up rarely differs. As in nature, the young challenge the older leaders and if the youth succeeds, he becomes the leader until someone else knocks him from his hill. Often a leader will rise and fall several times before he gives up the pursuit entirely.

### Glamour

When an Unseelie pooka is hungry, he eats. When he's thirsty, he drinks. When he's horny, he mates. The same applies to Glamour. These faeries find no benefit in filling the root cellar with Dross. Mortal dreamers are the herd and the Unseelie pooka the predators lurking at the edge of the forest. With a basic contempt for domestication, they view their Seelie brethren's attempts to plant and harvest Glamour as unnatural. Though they muse from time to time, they do so for reasons other than the acquisition of Glamour. Instead, they muse in order to share their own vision of the natural world.

Unseelie pooka don't feel sad for the world's devastation; they are enraged. Over the millennia they have existed, this anger has developed into an inferno in their souls. They want mortals to be afraid — very afraid — of the repercussions of their actions. They inspire dreams of the more violent and so-called disgusting aspects of the animal kingdom. Only in certain instances, they have learned, do these dreams work to further their cause, however. They have discovered that mortals destroy what they fear. Since the Resurgence, Unseelie pooka have adopted a new tactic.

Considering humankind's tendency to stomp out the things it fears, Unseelie pooka have realized that they need to direct their dark inspirations toward the things they wanted stomped out. Thus, many of these faeries encourage dreams of nuclear radiation, of a shriveled world of concrete, of acid rain and of a post-apocalyptic lifestyle in which horror is a daily event. Unfortunately, this has produced chimerical clouds of glowing, acidic mist and horrible, flesh-eating mutants in the Dreaming, but these things are an unavoidable side effect of the battle against Banality, according to the Unseelie.

### Honor

Honor among Unseelie pooka relates directly to the pack. As with the other kith of this court, these faeries have a somewhat unique, indefinable sense of honor. Backstabbing within the pack is acceptable, but as soon as someone else tries to harm the group or one of its members, the whole rises up together against that threat. It's the old, "I can criticize my brother, but no outsider *dares* say anything against him." Pooka don't call this honor though. They have no desire to propagate any myth of "honor;" In their minds, it's simply a matter of survival. You don't make it in the big, bad world if you don't have your homies at your back, and you don't have your homies at your back if you dis' them when it really counts.

Unseelie pooka embrace their animalistic instincts. They believe that to deny their own nature works in conflict with the Dreaming. They disdain those pooka who mold themselves to the velvet parlors and courtly manners of the Seelie court, convinced that these faeries are actually helping to destroy the dreams that created and continue to sustain pooka.

### The Lone Pooka

While the majority of pooka tend to run in packs, there are those who make their way alone. Sometimes they merely respond to an animal affinity that walks and hunts alone. Sometimes, they choose to exile themselves from other pooka due to profound melancholy or the desire to travel with others who are *not* their kind and who therefore judge them by different standards. A few choose non-pooka as their packmates due to feelings of love, respect or loyalty for them.

What does the pooka care if his sidhe and eshu companions think him an ineffectual clown? At worst, he's free to act the role while pursuing other goals and at best, at least he can make *someone* laugh even if he cannot cheer himself. Even in isolation from other pooka, it's truly rare to meet one of these changelings who fares totally alone. Most have some sort of pack, even if it's simply a group of chance-met companions or the more anonymous group of courtiers of the local court. Lone pooka, those who travel with no others and who remain alone by choice, are often dangerous — and dangerously unbalanced.

## The Shadow Court

The Shadow Court attracts many Unseelie pooka and they have dug an important place for themselves among the ranks of this secretive group. Everything about the Shadow Court melds well with pooka philosophy, history, and goals. Furthermore, because pooka have the innate ability to keep a secret, they are trusted with the more subversive missions of the court. Not only can pooka keep a secret, but they have earned a reputation among the other faeries as “unimportant.” Thus, they are ignored and allowed to watch and overhear things other changelings would never be allowed to witness. Pooka make the perfect Shadow Court spies.

Encouraged by the deviant structure of the Shadow Court, many pooka seek it out to fulfill their need for a pack without having to compromise their desire to live entirely by instinct. This court validates their primitive and predatory urges, despite its semi-feudal organization. For many pooka, the Shadow Court represents the perfect mating of Arcadian courtly structure with the qualities of Unseelie packs.

### Scary Pooka. Spooky Pooka

Try to say that three times fast! Although some Seelie pooka could frighten the blue off a troll, if they put their minds to it, they probably wouldn't bother. Unseelie pooka do it without even trying. There's something incredibly feral and unsettling about Unseelie pooka. Perhaps it's that dangerous gleam in their eyes. Perhaps it's the particular way they lick their lips. Maybe it's that tautness in their muscles. Whatever the case, Unseelie pooka look predatory. Even a rabbit pooka of the Unseelie court has an attitude that makes people wonder. Never underestimate the bite of a rabbit.

## Secret Societies

Yes, even pooka claim secret societies, though most are far from “secret” in the usual sense of the word. Because of the pooka propensity for gathering in packs, most other fae simply ignore groups of pooka and assume it's “just another pooka pack up to pulling pranks.” Naturally, this plays right into the hands of those pooka who really *are* up to something. A few of the more esoteric or interesting pooka societies are outlined here.

### The Powerful Purveyors of Pestilential Pranks

This notable society is made up of those pooka who believe that all wrongs or slights — however small — should be repaid by shaming, embarrassing or discommoding the guilty party. Many members specialize in Chicanery and Legerdemain as means of causing mischief for those they target to punish. Others rely on the known pooka reputation for lying to spread stories about their victims. They might tell of an incident that really happened and that shows the perpetrator in a good light, perhaps, but substituting their target's name for the person who actually committed the action, and doing so in such a way that most fae will believe the opposite of what they say. Thus a kindly sidhe who gave a commoner his cloak during a storm might be made out (using the target's name instead of his own) as a miserly bastard who stole the cloak off a dying commoner's back to ensure his own comfort. Any pooka who feels slighted or wronged may apply to this group for redress of the “crime,” and any pooka (Seelie or Unseelie) who wishes to join may do so upon swearing an oath of secrecy. It is rumored that the inner circle of the “Pranksters” routinely punish excesses committed against the environment or animals as well and that those “pranks” can be deadly, depending on the severity of the action that provoked them.

### The Pooka Watchers' Pooka Watchers

Many pooka know of the society of other Kithain who have banded together to watch the pooka and discern their secrets and intentions in the world. Some find it funny, while others wonder about the sanity of those who have nothing better to do than watch what-



ever pooka do. These two camps have come together into a tongue-in-cheek “society” dedicated to watching what the pooka watchers do and foiling their attempts to classify pooka factions and behavior by acting as strangely as possible. When the word goes out that a pooka watcher is in the vicinity, members of the Watchers’ Watchers go into action. They parade about in weird clothing, tell long pointless stories to one another, make lightning raids against invisible opponents, growl and bark at one another as though arguing and hold apparently serious “meetings.” They make certain the meetings can be easily observed and discuss their place in fae society and how they might better their position in it — usually by making outlandish suggestions. Occasionally, they act as though they are planning to take over the government of all fae and planning for war (though they often advocate the war of cream pies). Occasionally, they all gather and proceed to follow the Pooka Watchers about, mimicking their every move and recording whatever they do in small black notebooks. Though it is usually all in fun, some pooka believe that the Watchers’ Watchers actually serve to deflect attention from any real plots and plans any pooka might have and to keep the other Kithain guessing as to what pooka are really like.

## The Uncrowned

Pooka rarely join noble houses since they consider the sidhe to be no more noble — at least by birthright — than any other kith. They themselves were once seen as gods, they reason, and that is even more impressive than any sort of temporal power. While some pooka may serve in noble courts as jesters or more recently, in other capacities, most prefer the company of their fellows. This doesn’t mean that all pooka simply accept the idea that they are commoners. Far from it! The Society of the Uncrowned hosts a number of pooka who feel that they have every right to hold as many positions of leadership and freeholds as any other kith — and they currently strive to take what they believe should be theirs. Mostly formed from Unseelie pooka, the Uncrowned infiltrate noble courts throughout faerie society with the stated aim of discrediting, unseating and replacing the nobles that hold authority. Most other fae don’t believe pooka capable of feats or arms or much else besides lying and pulling pranks. This plays into the hands of these ruthless

fae who use their skill in fighting, their animal shapes, sex, blackmail, charisma, bribery, promises of future power and anything else they think might help to oust the rulers and set themselves up in their places — even hiring assassins. In some smaller freeholds, the Uncrowned have already gained a few victories, taking over the leadership of motleys and ruling by acclaim. Because they usually undermine the former authorities, winning those who are ruled to their side, the Uncrowned are not repudiated by the Dreaming and can take possession of the freehold and Balefire without any immediate repercussions. Whether there will come a reckoning later, none can say. For now, the society remains small, secretive and almost unknown aside from the furtive whispers of those whom they’ve ousted, yet allowed to live.

## The Salvage Crew

This society maintains that all true pooka belong among their ranks. Their stated goal is to take representative members of endangered species into the Dreaming and create freeholds there where these animals might live and (hopefully) thrive and reproduce. Any endangered animals are fair game, though the Crew concentrates first on those animals with the fewest numbers left in an attempt to keep them from extinction. They fervently hope this may also keep those pooka who have an affinity with the dying species from also disappearing into the ranks of the lost. Scholarly, serious and dedicated, members of the Crew investigate zoos, jungles, water parks, circuses and habitats where endangered animals might be found. When they locate a likely breeding pair, they assess how difficult it will be to take those animals. Wild members of the species are preferred, for they already know how to live on their own; if necessary, however, anything from circus performers to pets will be stolen if there is a good chance the Crew can get away with them. Most Kithain would hardly recognize members of the Crew as pooka. They rarely bother with most other fae, barely lie (except to deny any involvement in the society to anyone other than pooka) and hardly have time for pranking or other such “foolish and useless” activities. Many fae who encounter the Crew note that their strangeness may be due to Bedlam as most of them spend long months in the Dreaming creating freeholds or overseeing the care of the animals there.

## The Political Animals

These odd pooka gain their amusement by annoying the various groups who follow particular political impulses. In general, they find all politics silly. Rather than overtly disrupting meetings of the various factions, however, they join those groups and faithfully attend every meeting they can find. Working within whatever rules govern the running of the meetings, the Animals then ask inane questions, put forth ridiculous suggestions and insist on filibustering over minor points of procedure. Their aim is to show the other fae how stupid politics are and to prove to members of each impulse that one faction is no different from another. The Political Animals gather once a month to compare notes and work out new strategies for causing havoc. Their greatest success to date has been to arrange for Seelie Traditionalists to hold their meeting in the same place and at the same time as Unseelie Repudiators. The resulting fireworks proved quite entertaining, even to amusement-jaded pooka.

## The Renunciate Faction

This new society has sprung up among the pooka in the wake of the disappearance of High King David. Pooka vividly recall the Accordance War — either personally or through evocative stories passed down by their mentors or acquaintances. They know the horror and brutality that ruled during that dark period of fae history, and they have no wish to see it repeated. The pooka who make up the Renunciate Faction feel a hopeless sort of broken despair as they watch the peace brought about by David trampled in the mud and buried under partisan politics and old grudges. They foresee another war looming on the horizon and they want no part of it. Those who feel this way have banded together and spoken of what they can do, but no consensus has yet been reached. Some feel that all pooka must stand forth and call for all the other kith to come to their senses. “Not likely, when redcaps are involved,” say their detractors. Others advocate returning to the Dream-burrows or finding some other place within the Dreaming where they can hide from the ravages of war. “Hide? Again? And what happens when the more vicious pooka kill their less aggressive kin once more? Will we reincarnate back into the middle of the war, but as children unable to defend ourselves at all?” ask graybeards who remember

the burrows slightly. A few say that the pooka ought to abandon the other fae and move into the forests and other uncivilized places where their animal affinities live, leaving the urban Kithain to fight it out among themselves. “And what happens when man — or the other Kithain — destroy those havens? Where will we go then?” ask those who have seen the devastation of many natural areas over the years. Fewest in number, but most vociferous and aggressive are those pooka who demand that the group make themselves sacrifices to shock the rest of the fae into sanity. Like the Buddhist monks who protested the Vietnam War by self-immolation, these fanatical pooka advocate burning themselves alive or performing some equally horrible suicide right in front of the would-be combatants. “And when we are gone, what is to stop them from escalating this war so much that everything — even the Dreaming — is consumed by it?” cry those who hate to see the loss of their brethren in a losing battle. For now, they are still talking, but it will not be long before their actions speak louder than any words they utter — whether lying or truthful.

## Who Cares?

Pooka judge their fellow faeries in terms of courage, leadership, loyalty and nearness to animals. Their intrinsic tendency to test other changelings often directs itself more readily toward the kith that annoy or bother them. As with everything else, pooka opinions vary largely between affinities. What one pooka may appreciate, many others will scorn. Making broad generalizations about pooka opinions is about as valid as saying that all tigers ride tricycles. It just ain't so.

## Boggans

Most Seelie pooka feel drawn to boggans for a variety of reasons. Few can help but appreciate a boggan's altruism. Because pooka themselves tend to go out of their way to aid kind strangers, they share a common bond with boggans. The animalistic kith recognize the boggans' acceptance of them as well. Rarely, and only when justified, will a boggan treat a pooka unkindly merely because of his kith. Furthermore, throughout history, boggans have built a reputation for their love of animals. This, perhaps more than anything else, has endeared them to pooka.



Few Unseelie pooka have much use for boggans, though opinions differ. So long as the boggan doesn't piss off a pooka, he will likely remain blissfully ignored by the other changeling. Many view boggans as weak. Despite this, even Unseelie pooka respect boggan loyalty and often rely on them to do jobs for them. They take advantage of boggan kindness, but also respect the talented kith's sense of self-worth. Self-pride, to most Unseelie pooka, is not a fault, but a strength, especially when justified.

### Eshu


Eshu and pooka, both Seelie and Unseelie, have more in common than one would suspect. On the surface, the two kith share a somewhat competitive relationship. They try to outdo each other with tricks and scams, but it's all in fun. Underneath, these two kith share a bond that goes back many millennia. When pooka first began to travel around the world enlightening mortals to the sanctity of animals, many of them took eshu companions. Those pooka with migratory affinities meld quite well with eshu.

Nothing entertains pooka more than a good story. They themselves are consummate storytellers, their own tales usually embellished beyond belief, which sometimes annoys eshu, but the two can spend hours trying to outdo each other with fantastic tales of far-away places and larger-than-life heroes. Eshu listen intently to pooka stories, trying to divine the truth inside the fiction. Their curiosity and love of challenge draws them to pooka. And pooka, both Seelie and Unseelie, adore the attention.

### Nockers

Nockers and pooka usually don't get along at all. As a general rule, pooka annoy nockers who view the pooka propensity for mistruth as an imperfection. Pooka don't appreciate the insults and ridicule nockers lay on them either. As sensitive as they are to attack, pooka find this aggressive attitude highly offensive. It tends to trigger their animal instincts toward fight or flight and many of their most malicious retributions are aimed at nockers.

To make matters worse, nockers value the mechanical, unliving things that pooka often detest. They dedicate themselves to creating objects that, in pooka opinion, mirror the worst man-made constructs. Pooka see all those machines and devices which have slowly been



eating away at nature reflected in nocker creations. Despite the efforts of some nockers to create ecologically sound inventions, most pooka look upon all nockers with suspicion, giving them little chance to show what they could do, given the opportunity. Seelie pooka tend to avoid nockers when possible, while the Unseelie go in for sabotage.

## Satyrs

Most Seelie pooka want to adore satyrs. They feel a certain kinship with these beings that are half animal just as they are. Many go out of their way to befriend satyrs. Unfortunately, satyrs have less patience with pooka than vice versa. Satyrs, except those who recognize the underlying truths within pooka speech, find Pooka-ese annoying, and pooka sense this. This instills a sadness and resentment in pooka toward satyrs. Pooka feel that satyrs should be their best friends, and when they sense rejection from the goats, it triggers the sorrow and anger lurking in their hearts. This escalates quickly when pooka retaliate with pranks intended to show the satyrs that they are just as fun loving and wonderful as the goats. The result is an odd love-hate relationship, almost tragic because it is based in misunderstanding and poor communication. If these two kith could ever get past their differences and learn to tolerate one another, they would make a mighty alliance.

Even Unseelie pooka feel an attraction to satyrs, however the tension between the two grows even faster when the pooka involved is Unseelie. These pooka respect and look up to the satyrs' pursuit of their passions. They strive to emulate these liberated changelings with a reverence nearly akin to hero-worship, then come down hard on the goats when they fail to live up to such lofty expectations. Unseelie pooka frequently expect unusual sexual favors from satyrs, equating their passion with perversity, and sometimes taking what they want by force if their demands aren't met willingly.

## Redcaps

Seelie pooka abhor redcaps. The vulgar faeries show no respect for anything, especially for creatures of the natural world. Though pooka may give the rare Seelie redcap a chance, their prejudices against this kith run deep and they find it extremely difficult to trust any

redcap, Seelie or Unseelie. Of course, this has nothing to do with the fact that redcaps make a sport of picking on and even torturing pooka, often with fatal results. Only in the rarest of instances will a pooka go anywhere near a redcap unless accompanied by someone else. Pooka and redcaps don't mix like oil and water, they mix like gasoline and flame; and it's usually the pooka that doesn't walk away. This puts redcaps at the top of the list for any Samhain pranks.

Among Unseelie pooka, opinions regarding redcaps often mirror those of Seelie pooka, though many of these faeries have learned to deal with these irascible fae. Although they get no more respect from the redcaps than their Seelie brethren, Unseelie pooka can growl and snap with the best of them. They don't take any crap from redcaps and have learned that retribution for a wrong must come immediately and with greater force than the wrong inflicted. Redcaps have learned that it doesn't pay to mess with an Unseelie pooka — especially not when the pooka's got a pack backing him up and carrying a big flame thrower.

## Sidhe

Though many Seelie pooka covet the favor of the nobility, few sidhe actually earn their respect. Sidhe dedication to "civilized" behavior and courtly manners often supersedes any other goal — including the fair treatment of their animals and their commoner followers. Pooka opinion on the sidhe varies more than on any other kith. Judged on their leadership qualities, their fairness and their wisdom, sidhe must live up to high standards in order to earn pooka respect. In their traditional role as leaders, their every action and edict falls under direct scrutiny. This same applies to Unseelie pooka, though they tend to judge both Seelie and Unseelie sidhe much more harshly. The slightest mistake could tarnish a sidhe's reputation with these pooka for a long time.

All pooka have found it difficult to forgive and forget the Night of Iron Knives. It so closely emulated the massacre of whole species of animals by humans that they simply cannot let it go. Ever-paranoid when in the company of the noble fae, most pooka find it extremely difficult to ever trust a sidhe — especially those who fall back upon their rights and privileges as the "obvious" rulers of all fae



## Sluagh

Can you imagine a sluagh in a forest? Neither can pooka despite the sluagh's origins within the dark and tangled forests of Russia. Although pooka have no particular dislike for faeries of this kith, they feel they have absolutely nothing in common with them. Even rat pooka don't care for these creatures. Pooka are about living, growing things. Sluagh smell of decay. Even Unseelie pooka find no particular place for sluagh in the cycle from birth to death (though they acknowledge that the "creepy-crawlies" can occasionally prove useful). Most pooka associate sluagh with cities and view them as an offshoot of urban dreams.

The only affinity of pooka that particularly gets along with sluagh is the spider. These rare and strange pooka attract sluagh and vice versa. This should come as no particular surprise, considering the sluagh's affection for these arachnids, but no one quite understands why the attraction is mutual. Perhaps it's the sluagh's special kindness to these changelings. Perhaps it's related to some ancient event that forever linked these two. Whatever the case, they inevitably find one another. Where there's a spider pooka, there's undoubtedly a sluagh close behind.

## Trolls

Only the most enlightened troll finds friendship with the pooka. This hurts Seelie pooka deeply for two reasons: They admire and respect trolls and they know in their hearts that the qualities for which trolls despise them are the same qualities that make pooka noble and honorable. Trolls rarely see the big picture of pooka linguistics. They do not understand the necessity for causing people to question the status quo and instilling doubt in their minds. Trolls cling too tightly, too stubbornly to their beliefs and preconceptions. When pooka attempt to break apart these troll doctrines and make them re-examine these beliefs, the trolls see it as a personal attack.

Unseelie pooka don't bother to seek friendship with Seelie trolls, but take great enjoyment in blowing up the dogma of honor to which these changelings cling. Nothing appeals more to an Unseelie pooka than to see a troll's

eyes slowly darken as he begins to question his beliefs or begin the slow descent into his Unseelie legacy. Unsurprisingly, the pooka believes he's doing the troll a favor. Of course, the changelings of the Seelie court do *not* appreciate the Unseelie pooka's role in the loss of their stalwart protector.


## Gallain

Pooka feel an inherent kinship with most Gallain. Just as the Gallain are outsiders, viewed as alien and different from so-called *pure* faeries, pooka have always felt misunderstood by the other major Arcadian kith as well. Historically, pooka travels have brought them in contact with the Gallain time and again. Their affinity with animals has given them a foot in the door with many of these strange creatures and allowed them to form lasting alliances that have served them well over the ages.

## Nunnehi

Unlike the other Arcadian kith, the dreams that formed and strengthened pooka came, in part, from the same source that created the Nunnehi. In many ways, the two are siblings, with the same mother and father. Admittedly, this does not make them automatic best friends, but it does mean that they occasionally afford each other certain rights and privileges that otherwise would not be given. For example, the Nunnehi rarely bother pooka traveling through their territory, unless the pooka has somehow managed to disturb the natural order there.

Some Nunnehi remember a time when pooka stood beside them in an alliance against the white man. Even those that no longer remember this in their tales and myths have traditions of honoring the wise fool or the contraries (those who say and do the opposite of what they mean in order to comment on injustice or foolish practices). For this reason, they treat pooka with caution and a certain hands-off respect. Of course, a pooka must act responsibly and respect the Nunnehi as well or the native faeries come to the conclusion that the pooka is nothing more than a pretender and lose respect for that particular changeling.



Pooka have witnessed first hand the mighty power of the Nunnehi. This instills a wariness in pooka. In short, the two avoid troubling one another whenever possible, while acknowledging that they have a great deal in common.

## Selkies

Pooka look up to selkies, respect them and honor them. Completely befuddled by and in awe of these beautiful ocean changelings, pooka find a mystery here they will likely never understand. Many have wondered if selkies aren't just another type of pooka, and with good reason, but too many differences exist. For one, seal pooka differ greatly from selkies. In addition, the most obvious incongruity is the fact that the geas that binds pooka to their mistruths does not likewise bind the selkies. For ages, pooka have wondered about this.

Pooka and selkies both champion nature's bounty and regularly work together against common enemies. Oceanic pooka, in particular, enjoy a special friendship with these glorious beings. They swim with them and fight alongside them. Rarely will any pooka ever deny the request of a selkie. Even Unseelie pooka find it difficult to reject them, though they may posture and grumble about it. They understand all too well the sadness shining in selkie eyes and the suffering painted on their souls.

## Inanimae

Just as the dreams of prehistoric man put minds and hearts into animals, so they also assigned life to the world's landscape. The Inanimae were born from the same dream-womb that conceived the pooka. At one time, when nature was in balance and all creatures, plants and elements lived in near-perfect harmony, pooka and Inanimae were equals. As the world changed and humanity turned its energies toward harvest, cultivation and acquisition, pooka and Inanimae became targets together. This has forged a connection between the two that is strong and deep, however subconscious. Pooka view Inanimae as innocents who need protection and they see themselves as the ones who must perform that guardianship.

Some Unseelie pooka look down on Inanimae, as-signing weakness and incompetence to them. They disdain Inanimae for being so nearly tamed by the human assembly line. However, though they may scorn these alien beings and view them as simpering doormats, they also understand the need to preserve them.

## Prodigals

Any time changelings venture into the realm of other supernatural beings, they risk complicating the danger they face and attracting new enemies to themselves. They remain largely ignorant of other prodigals, and when they do learn of them, they tend to try to fit them into their own purview of the world. Because they believe all non-human entities to be constructs of the Dreaming, they tend to assign faerie attributes to the prodigals. They define them in terms of cantrips and dreams, nocnitsa and fomori, courts and chimera.

## Vampires

History has shown these vile creatures to be dangerous and untrustworthy. Most faeries discover the existence of vampires quite by accident. Because vampires keep to themselves and hide their mysteries, pooka rarely have occasion to chat with one. The warnings that have spread among changelings who know about vampires are all stories of betrayal, murder and scientific experimentation. Rat pooka, for example, may learn to avoid certain areas of the sewers or risk becoming a meal for a blood-sucker. These beasts kill without mercy, their lust for blood making them a feared predator to the pooka. Tales abound of vampires that become addicted to faerie blood and use the fae victim as a drug, eventually leaving the changeling as nothing more than an empty husk.

Pooka believe that vampires were created from the nightmares of mortals, thus likening them to nocnitsa. Many of these monsters wreak of Banality. Some few, whose shattered minds remind pooka of the deepest depths of the Dreaming, hold a dark appeal for the fae, which makes pooka even more cautious concerning these nightwalkers.



## Werewolves

Pooka and werewolves have one major thing in common: their anger at the destruction of the world's animals and the rape of the natural environment. Of course the shared ability to shape-change doesn't hurt either. Pooka believe themselves to be related to werewolves, much in the same way they are related to selkies. They see the wolf-changers as faeries who have forgotten or relinquished their connection to the Dreaming in order to focus on the battle to save nature. They think that perhaps rage has overcome these creatures subjugating their wonder, their Glamour, in favor of a more primal drive.

Seelie pooka cringe at typical werewolf methods of dealing with their enemies. They don't care for the violence or the rabid disregard for innocent bystanders who just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. However, they understand the werewolves' rage at a very deep level. Unseelie pooka, on the other hand, get off on the strong-arm tactics of the werewolves. They enjoy watching terror light the victim's eyes right before his head is chewed off.

Most woodland pooka are aware of werewolves, though city-dwellers rarely meet one. Even those that know of the werewolves usually prefer not to approach them or reveal themselves. Instead, they prefer to watch, from the sidelines, aiding their fellow shapechangers anonymously when they can.

## Mages

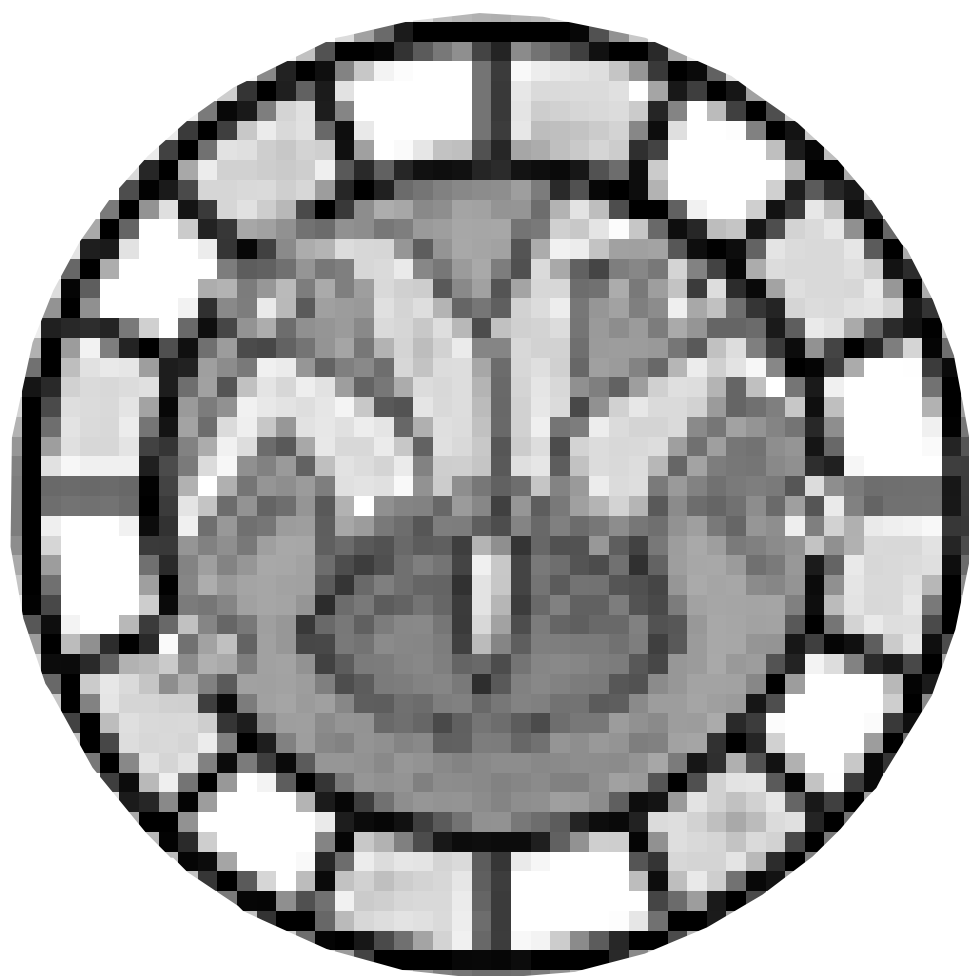
Pooka call mages "wyrders" because their cantrips seem drawn from the Wyrd. Pooka equate mages with children who have learned how to fire a gun without completely understanding the repercussions of it. Though this fascinates them, especially when they see how Banality responds to mage cantrips with such debilitating backlash, they know mages are extremely dangerous. A wyrder's curiosity has no bounds, especially when she discovers a faerie. Often the wyrder will go to extreme lengths to probe the nature of the changeling. This has resulted in many faerie deaths.

## Wraiths

Pooka have an odd outlook toward wraiths. Throughout their history, these changelings have associated with peoples who believed strongly in the ghosts of their ancestors and in spirits who walked the earth on unfinished quests. Pooka believe that the existence of wraiths originated in dreams and nightmares. Though they know that wraiths are not chimera, they explain these entities as lingering shadows of the people they once were, given a sort of life by the nightmares of hauntings and the dreams of loved ones for the return of their beloved. Still, pooka concentrate on life, not death, and thus find little in common with or use for wraiths.

## Humans

Pooka have a strange love-hate relationship with most humans. On the one hand, they are the ones whose dreams and creativity sustain the pooka, allowing them to continue to exist. On the other hand, humans are the destroyers of the natural world, the killers of animal kind and the uncaring masses who unwittingly generate Banality through their blind adherence to whatever is most familiar and comfortable. Pooka once tried to educate humans, but most have failed to learn anything. Those who do accept the teachings of respect for nature are the most likely to become the prey of the more aggressive and murderous of their own kind. In short, the pooka don't know what to think of or do about humans. Many pooka fall to Bedlam attempting to ignore these pesky mortals and how they feel about them by hiding away in freeholds or in the Dreaming itself. Still, there are always pooka who still believe that humans can be taught a better way. They're just few and far between.



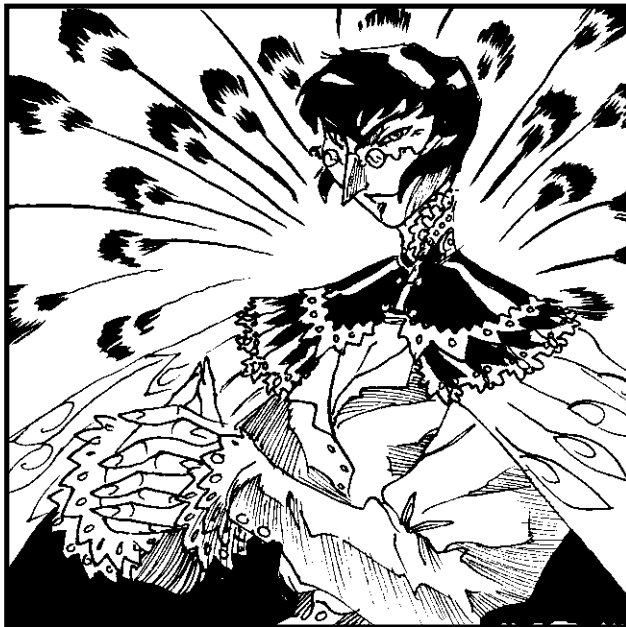




# CHAPTER FIVE: ANIMAL MAGNETISM

*You'll know when it smacks you in the face. Until then,  
the information is given out on a need-to-know basis only.  
Don't worry. It won't hurt too much.*

—Anonymous Pooka



## Lord Thierry Alain Chevalier

Lord Thierry should have lived— and probably did live— in the time of Louis XIV. A Seelie peacock pooka, he wears velvet, lace and bombastic pride with the aplomb of royalty. Needless to say, he fits in well with the sidhe of his court. Few of them can match his penchant for drama or his courtly grace, however, and that's saying a lot. Everything Lord Thierry undertakes, he does with overstated elegance. His Liberace-esque attire and Elton-Johnish sense of fun draw large crowds to his public gatherings. They come to see the show.

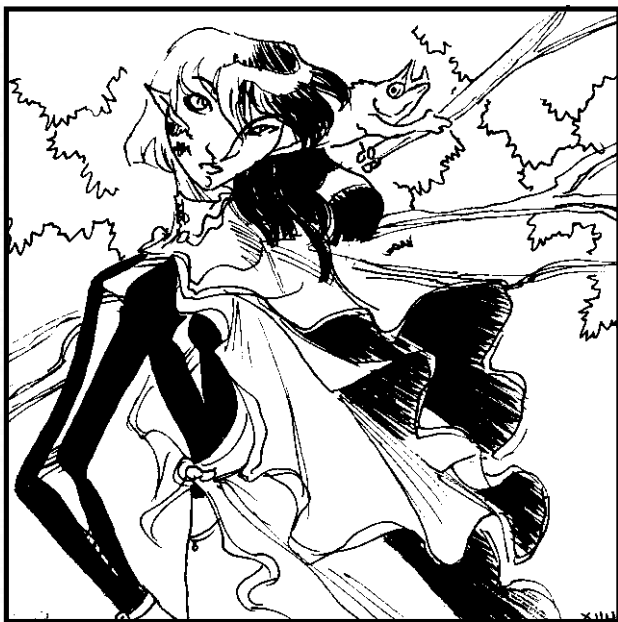
Lord Thierry earned his title not for courage or self-sacrifice in the name of the Dreaming, but rather for his bold lifestyle and the number of mortals inspired by his imaginative, somewhat campy, self-portrayal. He views the world as his audience and he hams it up every moment of the day. To say that he puts on an act, however, would be doing a disservice to the pooka. He is who he is, and whether he's bemoaning a lost love with

fat tears, welcoming visitors to his freehold with ten dozen roses sent to their room, or grabbing up one of the local redcaps for a raunchy dance, he's just being Thierry. Few can resist his charms, even those that grumble and make fun of him behind his back would leap to his aid if he needed it. If nothing else, he makes them all laugh.

Lord Thierry oversees the freehold at Land's End, in Santa Monica. It sits on the beach between the houses of two other celebrities. To mortals, Land's End looks like just another beach house, but to faerie sight, it is as extravagant as Thierry himself. Like some fairy-tale castle, its spires reach up into the California sunshine, pristine-white and sparkling with stained glass windows.

Entertaining is Thierry's specialty. He keeps one whole section of the freehold set aside for cocktail and dinner parties. Occasionally, he invites only changelings, then at other events, he'll open the doors to his large group of dreamers. This nearly proved disastrous one night when a young mortal actor caught Thierry in a compromising position with the actor's girlfriend. The changelings present managed to keep any blood from being spilled, but the freehold had to shut down for several months while Thierry "redecorated." Needless to say, that young man was never invited back even though his girlfriend still visits regularly.

Thierry's Pooka-ese leans toward a teasing wink-wink style, with a great deal of distraction and diversion thrown in. Flitting around like the perfect host, he avoids what he doesn't want to discuss with such grace that everyone forgives him.



## Slick

Wanted in three kingdoms for theft, Slick has been on the run for the past two years. An Unseelie chameleon pooka, she (or he, no one is sure) uses her ability to don disguises to avoid justice. She has a number of aliases that have been uncovered, including Jack Innabocks, Flower, Dalmara of the North, Bondo, and Paulo Ichthari.

Slick grew up in the streets of Chicago, though most people think she was raised in Arkansas. A rebel from the moment she could walk, she started her criminal career at the age of five, by charging the neighbor kids a quarter for a piece of her brother's Halloween candy. It escalated from there. Her Chrysalis came during her sophomore year in high school. She found a mentor, learned what she could from him and then ran away as soon as she turned 16.

Slick has the amazing ability to fit in wherever she goes. She can change her accent at the drop of a hat, mold her mannerisms and speech to those she is with, and even disguise herself with some preparation. Her androgynous form allows her to pretend to be either male or female, a fact only recently discovered by those looking for her. The voile that formed upon her Chrysalis has a changing nature that shifts to match her mood and demeanor. If Slick dreams herself in the form of a redcap or an eshu, she begins to resemble one. The transformation is never complete and the changes are only cosmetic. Her body-size and shape limits what she can do. Obviously, mimicking a satyr or a troll would prove nearly impossible, even for her. However, with the right attitude and intricately woven background stories, Slick has pulled off outrageous ruses in the past.

Her deceptions give Slick a deviant pleasure, as does her stealing. The moment of betrayal when her trusting host leaves the friendly visitor alone with the silver makes it all worthwhile. She never hesitates either. That silver is hers and she's out the door before the host can even return with tea. Slick has hit many places, though she's only been connected with a couple. So far, she has managed to avoid detection, harm and hurting others, though as her pursuers put two and two together, the risk increases. Slick just grins and rises to the challenge.

Slick tends to change her dialect of Pooka-ese dependent upon the situation. For the most part, when she is disguised, her entire self becomes a lie. She develops extensive histories for each of her aliases and shares them to give credence to her false identity. Extremely clever, she uses a wide variety of methods, each one fitting her current alias, to avoid direct questions.



### Ocyrus Pristic

An interesting old grump, Ocyrus is a pooka with an affinity for the sea bass. He has earned his fame by championing the coastal waters and salt marshes along the coast of the Carolinas. Many drug runners, coming up from South America and Mexico use this area to deliver cocaine and other illicit drugs to the mainland. With little regard for the local wildlife, these criminals slip in under the cover of night in boats that would barely meet Coast Guard inspection standards. Leaks of gasoline and oil from these vessels taint the coastal waters. Their night deliveries disturb the vegetation and the wildlife that leads a primarily nocturnal existence.

Ocyrus has a home on the shore near the border between North and South Carolina. He spends a good deal of time in his animal mien, patrolling the Atlantic coastline. He spies on ships and, via clever cantrips and more direct means, he arranges for them to be captured by the authorities. Though he is Seelie, he has absolutely no qualms about injuring or even killing these men who so maliciously endanger the creatures of the marshes. Ocyrus doesn't even particularly care that they're running drugs. It just really torques him off that they abuse his habitat for their own profit and gain.

Rumor has it that Ocyrus was actually female as a childling. Many of his fellow changelings remember this time. His name, back then, was Ocyra. Although no one would ever dare tease Ocyrus about it, they all joke behind his back about his sex change. He hears the murmurings, but ignores them. For him, the transition

was gradual and perfectly normal. Like the fish of his affinity, the switch from female to male occurred over an extended period of time. Unfortunately for Ocyrus, his mortal body did not change. This has left him as a man in a woman's body. His mortal mien has taken on all the outward appearances of being a man, but no matter how much he would like it to be otherwise, his mortal genitalia remain female. The humans in the area where he lives know him as the "lesbian in the marshes."

Ocyrus' Pooka-ese comes out as a grumbled mumble that few people can understand. Even when he's alone, he's usually rumbling to himself about something or other. He never raises his voice and he rarely enunciates, unless he has something very important to relay. Though what he says is usually the truth, it is so difficult to understand his mush-mouth ramblings that people either give up or they take what they think they comprehend and fill in the blanks, usually mistakenly.



### Mistress Mary Widowe

Mary's legend has spread far and wide, as all the changelings whisper of her dark affections and warn each other to steer clear. Mary is an Unseelie, black-widow pooka. Her Chrysalis caused quite a stir when she suddenly shifted, in front of three faerie witnesses, into a small, black spider. The pooka watchers went into a tizzy. As far as they knew, Mary was the first pooka ever to emerge with an affinity for black widows.

This sexy, sensual pooka had a late Chrysalis that coincided with the onset of puberty, approximately six

years ago. In the time since, she has gone from lover to lover, courting them openly and without shame. She can be quite seductive with her soft-spoken words, given in that husky voice of hers. The sway of her hips, the blink of her black eyes, and her hourglass figure all combine to make her nearly irresistible.

The problem is that Mary has a small fetish: she likes to play bondage games. Despite her petite size, she displays an amazing physical strength and, though her features are sweet and beautiful, she can bite and scratch with surprising viciousness. In court and other non-sexual situations, she charms with warm smiles and easy laughter. Her etiquette certainly does not lack grace. But once she gets her lover alone, in the privacy of her sanctum, she frees her primal instincts and draws blood.

Many changelings who share her predilection for sado-masochism have traveled from around the world to meet the Mistress. They come, knowing her reputation, seeking fulfillment of their fantasies. Unfortunately, they usually get more than they bargained for. Mary has never killed any of her lovers — yet. However, she leaves them utterly broken psychologically. Her methods tear down their egos and strip them of their shielding armor. They all recover over time. But for a short while, they get a good, wicked taste of what it means to be vulnerable. Even the most hard-core of her lovers rarely returns after the first time. Fortunately for Mary, there are enough seekers out there that she doesn't have to seduce the innocent into her parlor. Dán forbid that Mary ever runs out of willing victims.



## René Devereaux

Just outside of New Orleans, there lives a Seelie alligator pooka named René. A good Cajun, he was raised in the swamps in a run-down wooden shanty, where he still resides with his mother and younger sister. Several years ago, the pooka was snagged by a hunter's hook while roaming in his animal form. The large metal device, cold iron, ripped and broke his arm, and though René managed to escape, he has suffered with a mangled limb ever since. Later investigation revealed that a group of Dauntain had sold the hooks cheap in an attempt to flush René out. He took care of the Dauntain once he had healed.

René has earned a reputation for himself by championing the creatures of the Mississippi Delta. He has built an organization, called Good Times Sanctuary, which he runs out of his home. To fund the effort, he takes tourists out into the marshes on his boat and shows them the many creatures that live there. He gives extensive and educated descriptions of their habits and of the man-made horrors which threaten them. In addition, city officials know to call him if an alligator happens to wander into a populated area. René retrieves it without harm to the animal and returns it to its natural habitat.

Out back, René has a pen where he brings alligators injured by boat motors or hunters. He nurses them back to health, then releases them again. More than once, he has found a nest of abandoned eggs and brought them home to hatch them himself. René has more alligators in the swamps that think he's their mama than any of the natural animals have.

As a result of René's efforts, the alligator population in the Mississippi Delta has nearly doubled in the past five years. Although the number of creatures is still pitifully low, keeping them on the Endangered List, René has made a difference. His letter-writing campaign to the Louisiana state government resulted in stricter protection laws for the animals and his deputation as a game official gave him the right to carry a weapon and arrest poachers.

Despite the humanitarian nature of his activities, René has little pity for those who repeatedly kill or maim the animals living in the swamps, whether through negligence, maliciousness or greed. He warns them once, harshly, and may even arrest them. However, the lucrative alligator-skin trade brings the more hard-core poachers back despite the warning. If René catches a repeat offender, he shows no mercy. These poor fools feel the

vengeance of the creatures they were hunting, ending up as alligator chow.



### Moses "Coyote" Delgado

No one but Coyote knows his real name. This coyote pooka owns a twenty-acre expanse of land in Arizona. He calls his haven "The Solar Center for Spiritual Healing," and he recruits impressionable mortals and changelings into the sect he has developed. Like most survivalist groups, the Solars, as they call themselves, lead an isolated existence with Coyote at the helm.

A grump, Coyote was born in the late 60s and drenched in the beliefs of flower children at a very early age. His parents raised him in bohemian style, living in a trailer in the desert. After his Chrysalis, Coyote became a favored child in the local hippie community. By then, the novelty and fashion of being a hippie had worn off for most people, but pockets of it still existed throughout the United States. Eventually, however, Coyote's own parents settled down and got real jobs, becoming more serious as they aged. Second- and third-generation hippies took up the cause and it became a new fad in the early 90s. Coyote decided to take advantage of that.

The Unseelie Coyote saw an opportunity in people's need to feel special. Gradually, he developed his concept for the Solar Center and approximately five years ago, scammed enough money to purchase the land and begin building. He hired a public relations director and began to recruit. Currently, more than forty adults and fifty

children live with Coyote at the Center. They all worship him and would never say a bad word against him. They lead a semi-communist, vegetarian existence. Everyone pitches in with the gardening and other chores. Only Coyote himself is above menial labor.

When a potential new member comes to the Center, they hear about love and togetherness and the coming darkness that will swallow everyone but the most pure who follow the sacred path. Coyote has honed his tactics to perfection. He guilt-trips and tempts; he frightens. Most of those who come seeking already have a weak spot that he finds and taps. Most come in search of something better. Coyote offers it to them. Of course, once they join, they legally sign over all their worldly wealth to him.

Coyote has built an extensive and beautiful facility with the money he has taken from his followers. He points to this as his justification for taking their assets, claiming that all the money is used for the benefit of everyone. Of course, Coyote also leads a life of luxury as a result. His followers, however, have been so completely brainwashed that they love him as they would a god. Coyote has succeeded in changing their entire belief system to place himself at the center of their world.

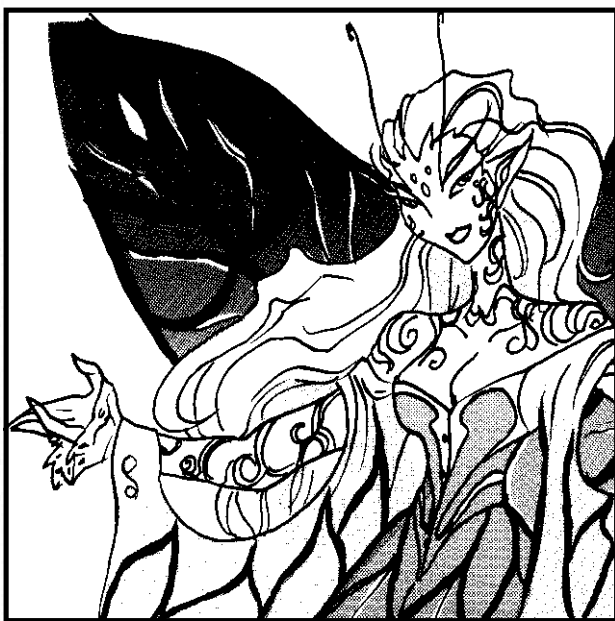
Nearly 75% of his followers are female, and Coyote claims conjugal rights with each and every one, even the married ones who join with their husbands and children. The other men may also enjoy the women, but they never stand in Coyote's way when he sets his sights on any particular lover. Of the fifty children living at the Center, Coyote fathered more than half of them. He preaches against birth control, a stand that has more than doubled the number of followers he has.

Everything Coyote does has a purpose. He isolates his people from the mundane world, forbidding televisions, radios or telephones. This discourages them from yearning for their old lives and helps keep Banality to a minimum. Their lifestyle allows them to wear minimal clothing, and their rituals include nude festivals and mass orgies. Coyote encourages art, focusing on it in the home-schooling program he established for the children of the Center. In their classes, the children express themselves through unchoreographed dancing, arts and music. The literature Coyote allows them must all have a fantastic quality. He encourages their dreams.

Although his treatment of the children sounds mostly Seelie in nature, Coyote doesn't do it for their benefit. He's building an empire. His own selfishness and pride make the big joke he's playing on his followers taste so

sweet to him. The Solar Center is not officially a freehold, but Glamour runs at an extremely high level there. Plants flourish on his desert land, the cacti flowering at twice the normal rate and the sagebrush never going dormant. Animals seek out the area and, because Coyote dictates that no one may kill an animal, they continue to grow in number. The medical clinic at Solar Center keeps busy treating scorpion and snake bites. Recently, Coyote has had to address this problem or risk losing his followers to the natural inhabitants.

Coyote couches his lies and deceptions in flowery, spiritual double-talk. He never answers a question directly, usually asking another question in response instead and laying the responsibility for finding the answer back on the person querying. He mixes this with blatant lies and truths exaggerated into falsehoods. When he teaches, he uses parables so incomprehensible that they make him sound very wise and leave his followers with a sense of inferiority. Many of the conversations at the Center involve long discussions of what one of Coyote's parables might have meant.



## Jezebel

Everyone has been talking about the recent happenings at High King David's court relating to a special fae. Her name is Jezebel and she is a butterfly pooka. When she first arrived, she was a childling, fat and unattractive. She had no wings. The sidhe of the court ignored her, even looked down on her and were cruel. Her tears

dropped like crystals, littering the palace with salty gems that crunched underfoot whenever someone stepped on one.

One night, in a fit of despair, Jezebel locked herself in her room. She didn't come out for several days and the commoners who had befriended her began to worry. A troll finally broke down her door. He and his companions stared in shock at the sight that greeted them. Jezebel lay on her stomach on the bed, a pair of newly formed wings flapping to dry. In the corner, a giant cocoon had a ragged hole ripped in it where Jezebel had emerged. She was weakened, but her friends nursed her back to full strength. Soon they decided she needed to present herself to the King. What a moment it was, when Jezebel, now a wilder, walked into the court and heard the amazed gasps of all the sidhe.

Jezebel had metamorphosed into a glorious creature. Her wings rose from her back, slowly opening and closing. The upper pair was like silvered stained glass, the sections divided by elegant streaks of black. The lower pair ignited with color, shading from scarlet near her body to flickering orange and mingled yellow at the tips. They too resembled stained glass, with black delineation. Her dress mirrored the coloring of the wings where it draped her tall, gracefully slim figure. Many of the female sidhe turned green with envy as the males hurried to lay their hearts at her feet. They were all very surprised to learn that this magnificent changeling was the frumpy childling they had treated so badly. It is said that Jezebel forgave the sidhe of King David's court for their cruelty to her, though she refused their more personal affections in favor of the commoners that she loved and trusted. She has broken many sidhe hearts.

In her own special way, Jezebel utilizes Pooka-ese to remain diplomatic and non-committal. She refuses to say anything bad about anyone and will go out of her way to say something, anything, nice about even the most obnoxious redcap. Though these things are never blatant lies, they are definitely an exaggeration of the truth. If questioned about herself, she insists that no one would be interested in hearing about her and begins to ask questions that stroke the ego of the person doing the asking. Her Pooka-ese actually works to lend her a courtly grace that has allowed her to rise to prominence in the high court as one of High King David's most favored courtiers. Unfortunately, David's sister Morwen is not so enraptured with her. In a court ruled by Morwen, things may change drastically for Jezebel in the coming months as she tries to remain in favor.



## Coca Jones

An Unseelie pooka, Coca's animal affinity is the polar bear. In his dual-engine Cessna, he runs drugs from Mexico to Alaska. He's one of Alaska's leading dealers, making the run at least twice a month. Coca grew up in Anchorage, had his Chrysalis there, and through his mentor, got involved with the wrong crowd. At 16, Coca was dealing on the streets and in the schools. He saved up for flying lessons and to buy himself a plane so he could go into business for himself.

Over the years, this grumpy polar bear's name has grown in infamy. His periodic, homicidal rages during his

trips to Mexico have built a reputation for him among the Unseelie. In the heat of the tropical Southwest, Coca gets irritable. Perhaps this explains how he's never been caught by mortal authorities or successfully cheated on a deal. People fear him and whoever does cross him ends up missing — permanently. The legend of Coca claims that he eats his victims so that the evidence will not lead back to him. Indeed, accounts of vicious bear attacks in western Mexico spot the books of local law enforcement. Coca's paw prints are on file in nearly every police station on the Pacific coast.

Coca has just entered his grump years and rumors abound that his retirement looms on the horizon. Currently, Coca lives in a small hunting village on the Aleutians. His wife is an Alaskan native, a kinain, who keeps his house for him and has borne him two children. They live in relative comfort, though most of Coca's earnings sit in an offshore bank account. One day soon, he intends to build a special abode in the northern wilds of Alaska. Not surprisingly, his wife has balked at the idea, though she knows better than to object too strongly. No one crosses Coca.

Coca uses non-committal grunts and gestures as his primary dialect of Pooka-ese. Rather uncommunicative, he doesn't say much at all and, when he has to speak, it's usually to ask a question. Most of his statements imply a certain apathy toward everything. His favorite responses to direct interrogation include: "Why the hell should I care?" and "How the fuck should I know?" When it comes right down to it, Coca takes the Fifth.

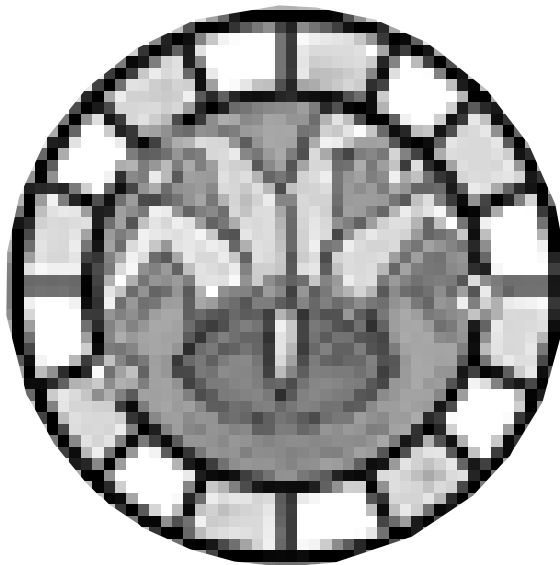




# CHAPTER SIX: THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

*"I have nothing but scorn for you," he said. "You wouldn't have an honorable prince; you placed no value on the rose and the nightingale, yet you were willing to kiss the swineherd for a foolish toy. You've got just what you deserve."*

— Hans Christian Anderson, *The Swineherd*



# The Pet

**Quote:** *Hihhi! You want to play with me, don't you? Huh-huh? C'mon, pet me. Love me. I don't have a home or anyone to take care of me, so I'll just stay here with you, okay? Mom, can he keep me? I won't eat too much.*

**Background:** When you drew your lot in life, you got the short end of the stick. Mom and Dad didn't want to have kids, so they yelled a lot. You tried to be good, but Mom was busy working, cleaning and cooking, and Dad was drunk a lot. They tossed you back and forth, saying, "Go ask your father," or "Go pester your mother." Over the years, you watched as they slowly turned more and more gray.

When your family moved to this suburb, everyone here already had friends and didn't need new ones. You tried everything, but no one had any time for you. So, you slipped into loneliness and depression.

A group of bad kids targeted you, dogging you on the way home. You hid from them whenever possible. One day they caught up with you. They circled around you, poking and prodding, slapping and kicking. They laughed at you for crying. You crawled back home and hid in the closet under the stairs. You dreamed of a better place.

When you finally tried to leave the closet, you couldn't reach the doorknob. You had four legs and a tail. You yapped and howled until Mom came. She scowled down at you, then picked you up. You tried lapping her face and wagging your tail to let her know it was you. You barked and barked, "Mom! Mom! It's me!" But she was too angry. She cursed you for being in the house and tossed you out.

Alone in the world, you got snapped at by bigger dogs and ran from a mean, old cat. That first night, you thought you were going to freeze to death, huddled under the porch of a neighbor's house. You whimpered and cried. Then, a little boy's face peered into your hiding place. He smiled and reached in to pick you up. He was so gentle. He petted you and said sweet things.

You like your new life. The little boy takes good care of you. He lets you go with him wherever he goes and plays with you all the time. More importantly, he loves you. Since your Chrysalis, you've met other people like you who teach you things. They don't make you go to school and they don't remind you how worried your family must be about you. One man, a dog pooka too, comes to get you once a week and takes you around to show you about the dangers of the world. He's kind and friendly, though he doesn't really like to play anymore, only sometimes. He gets grumpy when you tug at his ears and tail.

**Concept:** You have discovered happiness in the guise of your affinity. A kind and loving family has taken you into their home and are raising you as their own. You couldn't be more content. There's nothing you wouldn't do for your new family. Your loyalty knows no bounds. Being a human was a let-down, but as a beloved pet, you have found everything your life lacked before. This is the life.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You attempt to tail your new best friend wherever he goes and he usually lets you. You're so happy it hurts. Of course, your whole life now is a lie. Even your name isn't your own, though you like the new one better. Pats and kind words mean so much to you, perhaps because your original family deprived you of them so consistently. Life is good.





# The Prince

**Quote:** *There are so many things I could tell you about the beauty of the forest, but the one thing that comes to mind first is how accommodating it is, especially to the hunters in their blue flannel and orange coats. I love it when one of them aims down his sights at me. The crack of a gun makes me shiver with excitement. Ooh—the way it echoes off the hills is simply delicious. And can you imagine? These noble men leave half-empty beers behind so that the animals can imbibe a bit and have a party themselves once the hunters are gone. How thoughtful.*

**Background:** Born to an upper middle-class family, you grew up in suburbia. You had a typical childhood. Your parents protected you from the world's horrors with their money and influence. Your popularity resulted from the fact that you could meld with so many different social groups: the jocks, the potheads, the geeks and the freaks. They all looked up to you and your mild, easy personality made you a natural leader.

After your sophomore year in high school, you took a summer job at a camp for young kids. You loved it. Hiking through the woods, swimming in the lake, sleeping under the stars—it all appealed to you on a very deep level. You tried to impart some of this feeling to the whiny brats, but very few appreciated your attempts. That summer, you also fell in love with a beautiful brunette, another counselor at the camp. The proverbial older woman, 16 to your 14, she taught you about camping and the wilderness, and about life.

The following summer, you went back. The memory of fresh air and sunshine haunted you all year and you longed to see that beautiful brunette again. She was there, waiting for you. You spent your days entertaining the kids, but at night you crept out and wandered the trails with your brunette.

One night, the two of you had stopped to rest by a small stream. You must have fallen asleep, because when you awoke, your friend was gone and in her place, you found a golden ring.

You figured she was too shy to give you the ring in person. You slipped it on your finger and called to her. The forest came to awesome, englamoured life

A slim, graceful doe stepped from the edge of the trees. The doe took you to a glen and there, you found an amazing sight: a gathering of pooka, the first you'd ever seen. They took you in and explained that you were special. Before long, you realized that the doe was your

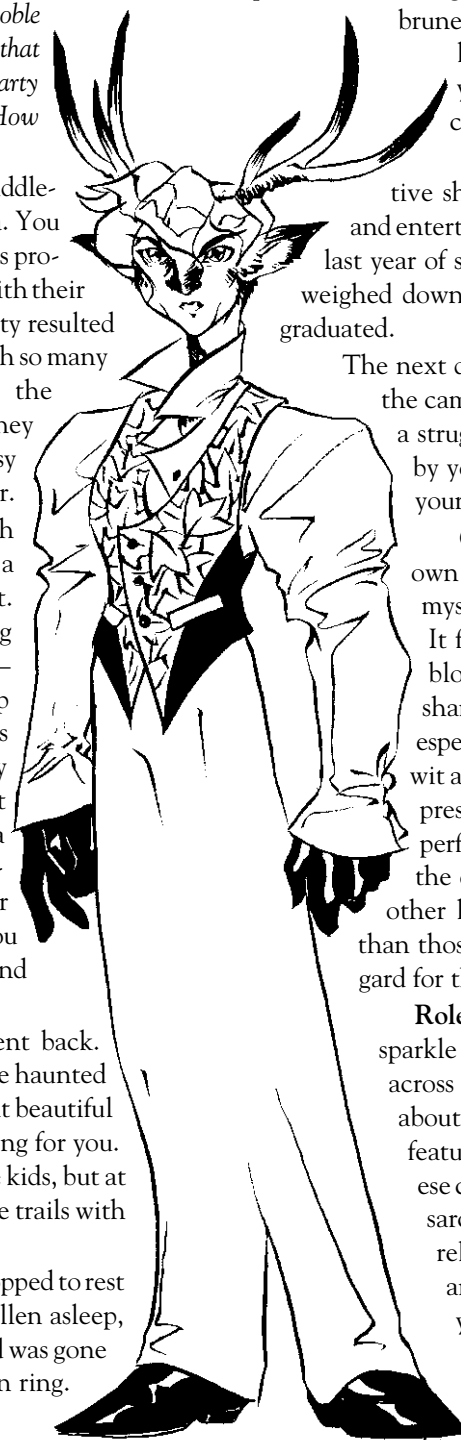
brunette. That night, your gentle Chrysalis opened up a whole new world to you. You got your first look, in a crystal-clear pool, at your pooka mien.

From then on, your whole perspective shifted. The things that had amused and entertained you before no longer did. That last year of school dragged and you felt yourself weighed down by the Banality of it. Finally, you graduated.

The next day, you moved to work full-time at the camp. The past couple years have been a struggle, but with your brown-eyed doe by your side, you have made a place for yourself.

**Concept:** You cannot believe your own fortune. The forest holds so many mysteries and magical qualities for you. It fascinates you. Nature sings in your blood. You want nothing more than to share a little bit of that with others, especially with children. Your eloquence, wit and style aid you in this. Your natural presence and leadership make you the perfect choice to guide others through the discovery of the wilderness. On the other hand, few things irritate you more than those people who show a blatant disregard for the sanctity of the forest.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You cannot hide the sparkle in your eye nor the grin that spreads across your face when you start talking about the animals, plants and landscape features of the forest. Though your Pookaese comes out in questions, light-hearted sarcasm and parables, you manage to relay to those listening a sense of joy and wonder in the wilderness. With your sense of humor and fun, you make the camp enjoyable for everyone, children and employees.



## TN

Seeming: **Wilder**  
Animal Affinity: **White-Tailed Deer**  
Motley:

Experience:

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# The Philanthropist

**Quote:** *Oh, darling, I couldn't possibly chair another committee if my life depended upon it. What did you say it was for? Save the Otters of where? Oh. Well, in that case, let me check my schedule and see if I can't fit you in.*

**Background:** Your family was rich beyond belief. You floated through private school, always at the top of your class in both grades and popularity. Your parents doted on you. Luckily, you discovered early on that you didn't have to work too hard for either. It all just came to you on a silver platter. Your youth was a sunny conglomeration of riding horses, pretty clothes, and travel around the world. When you vacationed in India or Kenya, you had a private tutor who accompanied your family. She was wonderful, young and vibrant, full of stories and interesting information.

One summer, your parents decided to spend several months in Switzerland. You and your tutor went along. The Alps held a particular fascination for you. The old castles and the charming accent of the people delighted you. Your parents rented a chalet by a mountain tarn and you spent every day playing there. On a beautiful warm afternoon, you donned your little pink bikini and wandered off to swim. You'd been told not to go alone, but you knew you could swim like a fish, so you weren't worried. Unfortunately, as you were having fun, a storm rolled in. The rain began to pelt down and you discovered that you had swum out too far. A wind came up, buffeting you. You couldn't reach the shore. Your muscles ached, your voice grew raw from calling for help. Eventually, you slipped below the surface of the water.

In terror, you realized you were about to drown. Then suddenly, the water around you came alive with shimmering gold. You opened your mouth and the cold lake water poured into you. It took several minutes for you to realize that you were swimming under the water without needing to breathe.

Your tutor was waiting for you on the shore when you finally crawled out. She looked strange. Her ears had points and her long blue dress was made of layered feathers. She hugged you tightly. She had kenned your Chrysalis. For two hours she worried, trapped on the shore while you learned to swim in your new form. Later, she showed you your new self in the mirror. What a shock! You were a faerie. You learned even more from your tutor, your mentor, than you ever had before the Chrysalis.

That was many years ago. Your mentor has since suffered the Undoing. Your parents passed away and left

you with everything. Though you're incredibly wealthy, you're not one of the idle rich. You volunteer. You've turned your energies to philanthropy.

**Concept:** Of course, you love the glitz and glamour of high society, but your real joy comes from chairing a number of committees and hosting fund-raisers and charity events. Your philanthropy includes needy children, education and the homeless as well as work to save endangered animals and their habitats. You've organized concerts and fashion shows, card parties and dinners. Your contacts among the wealthy allow you to garner large sums of money for your causes. Your charm and grace make you a viable force to be reckoned with when negotiating their donations.

**Roleplaying Hints:** How could you ever turn down a request for help from a worthy cause? One right after the other, and sometimes on top of each other, you take on charitable projects. You gain immense satisfaction from knowing that you've helped and often throw in your own money to round off those zeros. You apply your Pooka-ese with questions that turn the attention from yourself to others. You tease and flirt evasively. With your beauty and allure, you could schmooze the Rolex off an Arabian prince. Your life's work consumes you. The world is your family and all its underdogs are your children.



# KITHBOOK: pooka™

Name:  
Concept: **Philanthropist**  
Chronicle:

Court: **Seelie**  
Legacies: **Saint/Peacock**  
House:

Seeming: **Grump**  
Animal Affinity: **Goldfish**  
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 (French/Japanese)	●●○○○
Kenning	●●○○○	Performance	●●○○○	Lore	○○○○○
Persuasion	●●●○○	Security	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Politics	●●○○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

## Advantages

Backgrounds		Arts		Realms	
Contacts	●●●○○	Chicanery	●●●○○	Actor	●●●○○
Resources	●●●○○	Legerdemain	●●○○○	Fae	●●○○○
Retinue	●●○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○

Other Traits		Glamour		Health	
	● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○		Real Chimerical		
	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	Bruised	□	□	
		Hurt	-1	□	□
		Injured	-1	□	□
		Wounded	-2	□	□
		Mauled	-2	□	□
		Crippled	-5	□	□
		Incapacitated	□	□	
=Ravaging/Musing Threshold=		Willpower		=Birthrights/Frailties=	
		● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○		Shapechanging	
		□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □		Confidant/	
				Flaw: Lies	
		Banality			
		● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○			
		□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □			

Experience:

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# The Pesky Varmint

**Quote:** Hey! Where'd you get that? Lemme see! Lemme see! Awww, c'mon. I won't do nothin' to it. I just wanna look! What's it do? How's it work? You got any more like it? What's that button for? Is that light supposed t'be flashing like that? What happens when you push this? Hey... what's that noise? What? I didn't touch anything. Why you getting all pissed off? I didn't touch anything.

**Background:** Born in the inner city, you spent your childhood on the streets. You lived in a dingy little apartment with a set of dingy parents with dingy jobs. The first word out of your mouth was "why?" Once you could crawl, you became a terror. You got into everything, climbed on anything within reach and figured out the childproof cabinet locks within hours.

When you started school, it gave your parents some relief and proved temporarily interesting, but soon your unending barrage of questions irritated your teachers as well. By the end of first grade, you had explored every

nook and cranny of the building and knew exactly what was in every teacher's and student's desk. School became boring. By the end



of third grade, you had figured out how to skip school without getting caught — most of the time.

You spent your days wandering the big city, finding a multitude of ways to get into trouble and exploring the mysteries behind closed doors. You climbed fire escapes and hid in trees, watching everything with unabashed curiosity. You ran with a gang of older kids who used you to deliver drugs. They sent you to dark, filthy rooms where junkies lay half-dressed and into corrupt businesses.

At night, you sneaked out and wandered some more. Home cloyed; Sometimes you'd spend the night in the park, up in a tree, or underneath a bush. At least there, you could breathe.

You'd never tried any of the drugs, but one afternoon, you were in a sleazy apartment, asking the resident about his lava lamp: how it worked, what made the lava do that and, and, and.... The guy got irritated and said, "Here, kid. Chew on this. It'll make the lava lamp do all kinds of magical stuff." He shoved a hit of acid in your mouth. The resulting high made everything beautiful. The walls breathed and the lights rainbowed with color. You wandered into the street and nearly got hit by a car.

Someone pulled you back to the curb just in time. Looking up, you saw a very tall, very blue man.

You never came down from that high. The rainbows are still there and the blue man is still blue. He introduced you to other people called changelings. Oh, the questions you had then!

**Concept:** Your insatiable curiosity gets you into trouble on a regular basis. The sidhe don't like you poking through their trunks, nor does the satyr appreciate you popping up under his bed when he least expects it. You're the childling that makes everyone groan when you enter the room. You have no qualms about lying to cover your own ass either. You've been called a sneak, a thief, and a ragamuffin. Of course, you don't steal. You just want a look and a feel, but people don't realize that. Really.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You have so many questions. Your fingers want to touch everything and your nose wants to stick into every hiding place. You itch to know what something feels like, what it does, what noises it makes, and why it works. This irritates people and makes them reject you or react with cruelty. You persist because you can't help it. Of course, you've learned when you've pushed it too far. However, you go right up to that line every time. If the person retaliates in some way, revert to tears. Works every time.

## TM

Motley:

Wits 

## Science\_\_\_\_\_00000

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**-Biphenyls / Epilys-**

**Shapechanging  
Confidant/  
Flaw: Lies**

# The Predator

**Quote:** *C'mere, baby. Lemme tell ya what ya need t'know to survive in this world. First and foremost, always remember that everyone else is out t'get ya. If they don't want what you got, then they want what you are. Trusting don't pay, 'cuz no matter who it is, they'll ream ya. It's only a matter of time. So what ya gotta do is ya gotta screw them first so they know who's in charge. Fear, baby. That's the key. You make 'em afraid and they leave ya alone.*

**Background:** Memories of your early childhood have slipped away, buried under the pile of shit that life dumped on you in the interim. Your personal Golden Age ended when your parents died and the Great Foster Home Shuffle began: social workers with tight lips, bright-eyed families that grew distant when they realized that parenthood didn't even remotely resemble their utopian ideal, and later, the warped foster parents who took older kids for their own deviant reasons. Every one of them disappointed you one way or another. If they weren't dense and unsympathetic, they were cruel and abusive.

You learned to head off trouble before it happened. You set the record straight upfront with your new families, acting up the moment you arrived. Attitude went a long way toward getting you quickly released from the most disgusting situations. Still, some foster parents justified their cruelty by your negative behavior and took you because, with your history of lying, no one would ever believe if you tattled on their sick treatment of you. And they were right. No one ever believed you.

You fought back. The first time you used a fork on a "father" with roaming hands, you got a solid punch in the gut, but at least he left your bedroom. And the next day, he shipped you back to Child Services. Gradually, the lies, the violence, the fires and the thefts built you a reputation that sheltered you from the people who would take advantage of your youth. By the time you were nine, no family would take you. Child Services used your history against you and got you placed in a Juvenile Detention Center, where you lived for the next nine years. The J. D. C. wasn't so bad, relatively speaking. It was easy to blend with the crowd. Suddenly, however, the enemy was no longer the adults, but the other kids.

The J.D.C. was a jungle. In order to survive, you had to play the power games and become one of the leaders, one of the feared. Easy enough, considering your propensity for violence and your intimidating attitude. You took a couple of hard hits, a few broken bones and black eyes, but in the end, you came out on top. And in order to stay there, you became the predator. "Hurt it before it hurts you," was and is your motto.

When you turned 18, they let you out. They gave you some money and found you a job, but suddenly the jungle had grown. The big, wide world stretched out before you and, once again,

you were the little guy stalked by predators. On a moonless night, a group of thugs cornered you. They forced you into the trunk of your own car and drove off. You curled up as small as you could get and when they came to let you out, you defended yourself. You remember biting. You remember hissing, and you remember fleeing into dark bushes. You remember waiting for them to pass and biting again. Suddenly, you knew without a shadow of a doubt that you were in charge and they were your prey. You had found your true place in the world, the position for which you had worked all your life, with the advent of your Chrysalis.

**Concept:** The only way to fight the enemy is to out-intimidate him. With the right attitude and the right image, people leave you alone, but in order to maintain those things, you have to play the role. Somewhere deep inside you, that quiet, kind little girl still exists, but you've wrapped her in armor so impenetrable that she can barely breathe and no one, *no one*, will touch her without going through the predator first. You could be the leader of a gang or pack, but you prefer to remain alone, because you would never trust even your own followers. Eventually, you know, they would stab you in the back, so you rely on no one and let no one get close.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Your bark is worse than your bite, most of the time. However, you realize that in order for your bark to maintain its impact, you have to back it up with the occasional bite. You never show weakness, because, in your opinion, that only invites people to take advantage of you. Proactive in all that you do, you attack others with preemptive strikes, confident that they would eventually attack you anyway. You love to shock people and go out of your way to display your insensitivity. Nothing phases you, at least on the surface. You scorn weakness in others. In short, you have become the enemy. Your Pooka-ese manifests in lies and outright rebellion. You simply *refuse* to answer questions and berate the questioner for asking, usually with some very choice expletives thrown in for good measure.



## TN

Seeming: **Wilder**  
Animal Affinity: **Snake**  
Motley:

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# The Punisher

**Quote:** *You say a couple boys were torturing a cat? What did they look like? You know where they live? Okay. I'll take care of it and make sure they never, ever bother another living creature again. Mwahahaha.*

**Background:** You spent your childhood in mild-mannered fantasy. You learned to read young and from that day forward, a whole world opened up to you. You were always different from the other children. They didn't understand you and you didn't like them, so you kept to yourself. This worried your parents, because they thought you should be playing with your friends rather than sitting in a tree reading classic adventure novels or on the living room floor watching "Star Wars" for the fiftieth time. Still they were good parents and they saw the value in reading and imagination. They encouraged your interests.

Entrenched in fantasy, you began to mold yourself around the stories you read. Your language began to sound like a comic book and you attempted in your childlike way to dress in mimicry of the heroes in the books you read. You had an old red blanket that you pinned around your shoulders and wore everywhere you went. It was your cape and it had powers that no one else, but you, knew about. At first, the grown-ups thought you were adorable, but as you grew older, they began to wonder and censure your choice of clothing, so that eventually you had to adopt a subtler disguise.

As you grew, you developed a sense of indignation at the world's evils. An incongruent maturity directed your behavior, as if you bore the burden of the world upon your shoulders. Indeed, like many superheroes, that's exactly how you felt.

You distinctly remember the day when fantasy turned to reality for you. Ironically, it was Halloween. You were nine years old and you had on your latest costume: Zorro. Masked like that, you felt strong and important. You strutted around the school party, spouting phrases like, "Evil-doers beware."

As you were leaving the party to walk the few blocks home, you came across a group of boys tormenting an injured bird. They chortled and poked the creature with sticks, enjoying how they could make it chirp in fear and pain. An indig-

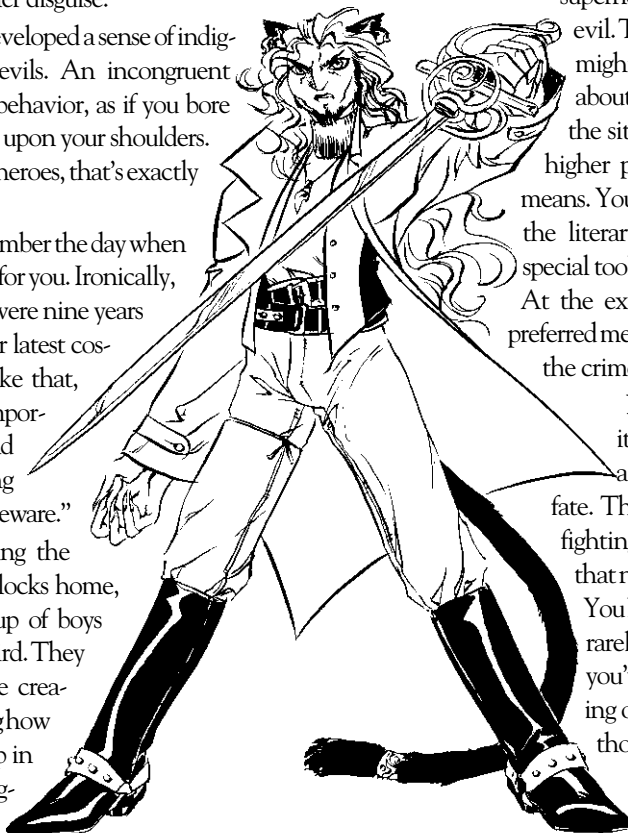
nant rage filled you. Shouting a challenge, you lunged toward them with your wooden rapier, poking and hitting them. One of them grabbed your weapon and turned it on you, knocking you into some nearby bushes. You momentarily lost sight of them. Still, you had to defend the weak and innocent! Leaping back into the fray, you went after the boys with teeth and claws. Screaming, they all ran away. But it was too late for the bird. You felt weird. Blood ran down your face from a small cut just above your eye. You could smell it, smell everything, and the night suddenly didn't seem quite so dark. It was as if someone had turned up the focus on your world. You were fortunate no one else saw you.

You went home and buried the bird. When you readied for bed, however, you caught sight of yourself in the mirror. All of a sudden, all your dreams came true and you knew, in that moment, that you *were* a superhero. That night, you prowled the neighborhood in your animal mien, a shadow in the night protecting all the sleeping innocents from danger.

Later, other faeries found you. They taught you many things, though you put your own definitions to what they explained. You knew all along that there had to be mutants, super-beings, in the world, and now you were one of them.

**Concept:** You are a lone hero, traveling through the world on a mission to fight crime, as you define it, wherever you find it. You firmly believe that you are "The Panther," the proverbial superhero whose job it is to punish and eradicate evil. Throughout your life, you've learned that might makes right and you have no qualms about injuring, maiming and even killing, if the situation calls for it. After all, you have a higher purpose and the outcome justifies the means. You surround yourself with the trappings of the literary hero: secret identity, secret haven, special tools, and, of course, international intrigue. At the extreme, sabotage and murder are your preferred methods, though you fit the punishment to the crime.

**Roleplaying Hints:** A sense of superiority has crept into your self-image, as well as a roguish attitude of resignation to your fate. The angst of having a secret identity and fighting crime has made you callous. You feel that no one can understand or appreciate you. You know what's best for everyone. You have rarely been successful at deterring crime, so you've begun punishing it. You are the arresting officer, the judge and the executioner to those you pursue.





# CHAPTER 7: QUIRKS AND BAUBLES

*Then Herr Korbes came home, went to the hearth, and was about to light the fire, when the cat threw a quantity of ashes in his face. He ran into the kitchen in a great hurry to wash it off, and the duck splashed some water in his face... Herr Korbes must have been a very wicked man!*

—The Brothers Grimm, Herr Korbes

## Merits and Flaws

The diversity of pooka makes it difficult to classify them. They each have qualities they inherit from their affinities. Many of a pooka's specialties directly relate to the type of animal they resemble, and the number of these varies so greatly that each pooka is indeed unique. Listed below are a few general strengths and weaknesses, however even these differ in how they manifest in each individual faerie.

### Good Listener (1 point Merit)

All pooka have the ability to get others to open up to them, however you are a master confidant. A word here, a gesture there, you crack people open like clams and harvest their secrets like pearls. You say all the right things at all the right times. Your ability to listen makes others tell you their feelings, concerns and hidden dreams. They don't know why they're telling you, but they usually feel better afterwards. You walk away with another gem of information to add to your collection. Is it any wonder that sluagh secretly envy pooka? (All rolls related to your Birthright are made at -1 difficulty.)

### **Loud Voice (1 point Merit)**

Some animals have voices that carry farther than a normal human's. You have the ability to project your voice as far as a wolf can howl or to shout as loudly as an elephant can trumpet. This comes in handy, but unfortunately, it also draws attention to you. Not only does your target hear you, so does everyone within a certain radius. The physical landscape can hinder this ability; buildings muffle; hills echo. In open territory, however, your voice carries for up to five miles, if you've conditioned it to do so. (Roll Stamina + Performance, difficulty 6, minus any modifiers for landscape. The number of successes determines how many miles your voice carries. On a botch, you strain your voice and suffer laryngitis for a number of days equal to your dice pool.)

### **Calming Presence (2 point Merit)**

One advantage of your animal half is the ability to calm any animal with a quiet word or even a look. You may soothe children as well. Something in your scent, or your aura, conveys safety and security to the animal or child. A guard dog will rarely attack you, and when in your arms, babies calm and gaze up at you in fascination and wonder. If you are a domestic pooka type (cat, dog, rabbit), you may use this in your animal form as well, by purring, licking or lying quietly in someone's lap. (The difficulty of all Charisma rolls, except Intimidation, is reduced by 2 when dealing with children or animals.)

### **Animal Speech (3 point Merit)**

Like Dr. Doolittle, you can talk to the animals. Unfortunately, this only extends to animals of your own affinity and any directly related. For each step away from you in the Animal Kingdom, communication becomes more difficult. For example, a tiger pooka can speak fluently with other tigers in the tiger language, however he feels like an American in Paris with only a fourth grade understanding of the language when speaking to a bobcat. When attempting to converse with a housecat, the tiger pooka is reduced to a vague understanding of body language. Whenever a pooka attempts communication with a species other than his specific affinity, the player should roll Perception + Alertness versus a difficulty determined by her Storyteller, based on how far removed the species is from the pooka's affinity.

### **Call to Friends (3 point Merit)**

Creatures of your affinity will come when you call and back you up in a fight. Every species of animal has a special call that they use to summon others of their own kind to aid them. You have an innate knowledge of what this call is and you can use it whenever you need. For some affinities, it's a howl. For others, it's a cluck. However it sounds, it calls any of these animals within a one-mile radius to your aid. Even if you cannot make your voice carry that distance, the animals spread the word for you. All you need to do is reach one of the creatures of your affinity and, unless restrained somehow, that animal calls others. Like that, the "word" spreads quickly and your friends come running.

The limitations of communication still apply. If the animals can't hear you, they won't know to come. If they can't figure out that you're tied to a chair and need them to gnaw through the knot, then they're just going to stare at you dumbly. They don't teleport, so travel time is a factor. However, if they see that an ogre is attacking you, they'll jump right in and help you. This Merit works especially well when used in conjunction with the Animal Speech Merit above. The number of animals available to you varies depending on your affinity and where you're living. The Storyteller should assign a number of animals per success. For example, in New York, there may be only one alligator in the sewers within that mile, but there may be a hundred cats. Once this has been established, the player should roll Charisma + Performance to determine how successful her plea for help is.

### **Intimidation (3 point Merit)**

Something in the way you move or the way your eyes shift over your environment worries people. You have a natural aura of danger that tickles the short-hairs on people's necks. You walk into a room and the crowd goes still. When passing you on the sidewalk, other pedestrians give you a wide berth, sometimes even crossing the street to avoid you. One look is all it takes. Only the bravest, most brash opponent will openly challenge you. This works in your favor, but it's a lonely way to go through life. Of course, this also draws the attention of those hard asses looking for someone to knock down a few pegs. (You receive a -2 to your difficulty on all rolls related to Intimidation.)



### Wholecloth (3 point Merit)

When pooka shapeshift into their animal form, they leave all non-chimerical items behind. This means that the pooka's clothing, mundane items worn or carried and treasures cannot shift with the pooka, but must either be left wherever the pooka changed form or gathered up by a companion and brought along. It can be inconvenient and inefficient for the pooka to leave his "cast-offs" behind. Imagine, for example, the pooka who assumes animal form to escape those chasing him only to discover the same people waiting for him when he gets home because his picture ID and address were in the wallet he left behind! This Merit allows you to avoid this annoying and potentially embarrassing occurrence. With a moment's concentration you can subsume non-chimerical objects and items into your new shape. Thus, you can always have your clothing and other personal items at hand. The Merit does *not* allow you to pick up and carry any other living thing along with you in this manner. Thus it cannot be used to help both the pooka and a companion escape.

### Physical Abnormality (3-4 point Merit)

Some aspect of your animal mien transfers into your faerie mien. This may mean that you have prehensile feet or tail, the ability to climb vertical surfaces, a sticky tongue, eyes that rotate 180 degrees, extra legs, a scorpion stinger, venomous bite, tough skin, skunk spray, or any of a huge variety of unique attributes that affinities can have. The Storyteller determines the cost of the particular physical abnormality you choose. Obviously, the more offensive the attribute, the more it costs. In a case where the pooka has a physical abnormality that allows him a special attack, he uses his own dice pool, rather than his animal dice pool. If the attack involves venom, then he injects no more venom than he would in his animal mien. Thus, a snakebite from the pooka in his faerie mien does no more cumulative damage than it would if he were in his animal mien. Such venomous attacks deliver (at best) one die of damage unless the character also takes the Venomous Attack Merit.

### Venomous Attack (5 point Merit)

Your bite, sting or claw delivers venom of some sort into a victim when you choose to use it. This may cause considerable damage and perhaps death to those so attacked. You may only use such attacks when in your animal mien unless you also have the Physical Abnormality Merit. Whenever you use your venom, you gain 4 venom dice that you roll four times at half hour intervals over the next two hours of game time, subtracting one die each subsequent time you roll. Each time damage is indicated, it is added to damage already accrued. See the chart below. The difficulty to inflict damage is a 6, as is the soak roll needed to offset it. Victims of your venom may reduce damage through Stamina soak rolls just as with normal damage unless they are allergic to your specific type of poison (an allergy to bee stings, for example). Generally, the only type of pooka who may take this Merit are those with potentially fatal venom such as rattlesnakes, black widow or brown recluse spiders, scorpions and the like. Storyteller approval is required to take this Merit.

Example of Venom Dice:

Time of roll	Number of Dice
Immediate	Roll 4 dice
1/2 Hour	3 dice
1 Hour	2 dice
1 1/2 Hours	1 die
2 hours	No more damage accrued

### Animalistic Features (1-3 point Flaw)

The animalistic features so apparent in your faerie mien leak over into your mortal form as well. Over the years, you have developed characteristics that cause your mortal body to look somewhat odd. They might even give you away as a changeling to someone who knows the signs. In some cases, this may manifest as excessive hairiness, fang-like teeth, clammy skin or even internal organs arranged in an odd manner. The higher the point value of the Flaw, the more noticeable and hindering the feature is to the fae.

### **Pack Mentality (1 point Flaw)**

Your attachment to your pack far exceeds healthy limits. You not only *want* to be a part of a pack you *need* to be. You go to extreme lengths to protect your pack, even to the point of sacrificing yourself, and if you find yourself without a pack, you join up with the first that accepts you. You stress hard when left alone. You don't, however, have to be a follower in the pack, you could just as easily be the leader who needs more than anything to have a group to oversee. If you've lost your old pack, spend a Willpower point to put off joining the first pack you find — even if they seem inimical to your own ethics. You must do this for a number of days equal to the number of failures (i.e. the number of 1s rolled) on an Intelligence roll.

### **Natural Urge (2 point Flaw)**

Animals do lots of things that would be very odd if humans or changelings did them as well. They have *urges*. You have these urges as well. This could be a disturbing taste for raw meat, a desire to chase cars, an unconscious habit of licking yourself, an impulse to search your friends' hair for parasites, or a predilection for attacking weaklings. Whatever natural urge you have, you do it without thinking. It's a part of you and only by spending a Willpower point can you avoid the urge for an hour when in a situation where you would normally feel the urge.

### **Environmental Need (3 point Flaw)**

Some animals need special environments and wither when they leave them. Your affinity has this problem and, worse, it leaks over into your changeling mien. Fish need water. If you are a fish pooka with this Flaw, then you need water also. However, this doesn't mean that you have to constantly immerse yourself in water. You'd drown. Rather, what it does mean is that you must spend a large portion of your time in or near water. You feel its draw like a magnet. Perhaps you need to constantly drink fluids. Perhaps you shower ten times a day. Other environmental needs might include sunning, remaining in darkness, or having a "shell" of some sort at all times. If deprived of your environmental need for more than 24 hours, you weaken and begin to take wound levels at a rate of one per day until you reach Incapacitated — at

which point you slip into a coma of sorts until you get a taste of your element again. Note, however, that in the case of sunshine, a week of rainy days won't hurt you. Merely being outside will give you what rays you need, even though it's not a bright day.

### **Animal Amnesia (4 point Flaw)**

Most pooka can shift back and forth between forms without the slightest problem. You, however, have a challenge. Whenever you shift back from your animal mien, you forget everything that happened while you were in that form. It's as if you blacked out. Not a single memory makes it back through the change. While in your animal mien, you have complete awareness. However, once you change back to your changeling or mortal form, you forget it all. This is extremely disconcerting, worse than waking up after a particularly nasty drunk and not remembering that you took all your clothes off in the middle of the street.

### **Mortal Inhibition (4 point Flaw)**

Something about your mortal mien makes it necessary for you to pass almost all your time in your animal mien. Maybe you're on the F. B. I. 's Top Ten Most-Wanted list, or maybe you are a child who should be in school. Perhaps you have a horrible birth defect that makes people stare at you in horror whenever you go out in public, or perhaps you have changeling features that put both you and the Escheat at risk. Whatever the case, you find it much easier to stay in your animal form the majority of the time. This produces many problems for you, the least of which is communication, but it's not nearly so bad as what happens when you take on your changeling or mortal form.

### **Hibernation (5 point Flaw)**

Many animals hibernate. Some do so seasonally. Others hibernate when the temperature drops below a certain point. You have inherited this urge from your affinity. Whether you do it seasonally, sleeping all winter long, or whether you fall into hibernation only when the temperature drops, this can be quite debilitating. If your hibernation is triggered by season, then you miss out on a full quarter of the year. Although you don't sleep 24 hours per day, you do sleep at least 20. Your body wakes you up just enough to eat and relieve yourself, but then

you go right back to sleep. If it's triggered by temperature, then you risk sudden sleepiness and a slowing of your physiology whenever cold. Temperatures below 40 degrees Fahrenheit will trigger your hibernation.

You can mitigate this to some extent. Whenever you are supposed to be in hibernation, you may spend a Willpower point to remain awake for 24 hours. While this keeps you from dropping into a doze every few minutes, it doesn't leave you very alert. All rolls while in a state of suspended-hibernation are made at a +2 difficulty (up to a maximum difficulty of 10). Further, you cannot initiate aggressive actions or combat, though you may respond to such. Once combat occurs, you react normally (but with the +2 difficulty penalty).

## Treasures

Pooka don't have a whole lot of use for *things*. They rely on their wits and abilities. Things, they think, only weigh you down, especially considering the fact that a pooka's treasures do not change with him when he shifts into his animal form. Nevertheless, a few special pooka-related treasures have developed over the millennia. These items have special significance to pooka and they tend to guard them jealously.

### Magical Crumbs (Level 1 Treasure)

A common treasure among pooka, Magical Crumbs reportedly come from the Black Forest in Germany. Gathered up off the ground along a special path, they have the ability to lead a pooka back home if he should stray. Most pooka own two of them: one to leave at the point of departure and one carried with the pooka to serve as the scent. So long as the pooka remembers to leave one at home and doesn't lose the one he's carrying, he can eventually sniff his way back. Obviously, they could also be shared between friends so the pooka could find the other person in case they were separated. The Magical Crumbs resemble inch-square croutons. Hard and tough, they don't break easily, but they are far from indestructible. The smell of baking bread touches the sense of the pooka, leading him back the way he came.

### Cat Boots (Level 2 Treasure)

Many lifetimes ago, or so the story goes, a shoemaker in London saved the life of a cat after it had run afoul of a large dog. The shoemaker nursed the cat back to health and in exchange, the cat, who was a pooka, helped the shoemaker. For a year and a day, every set of boots that the shoemaker created had the special quality that they made other people ignore the wearer's presence. Changelings came from around the world to purchase the boots and the shoemaker prospered, retired rich and happy, and eventually the pooka went on his way. The boots, called Cat Boots, resemble thigh-high pirate boots. They fit loosely to the legs and turn down at the upper edge. Hard-soled and sturdy, the boots never wear out. A changeling wearing the boots doesn't become invisible, as with Veiled Eyes; others merely write him out of their consciousness. If, however, a person is looking directly at the changeling when he puts on the boots, that person will continue to see him until she looks away. When she looks back, the changeling will have *apparently* left the room. The boots do not affect mortals, only other changelings. Naturally, few *sidhe* care to be "ignored" in this fashion, but the commoner kith find them quite useful.

### Dog Tags (Level 3 Treasure)

Back in the 1970s, a new fad developed among dog pooka. No one knows who came up with the idea, but before long, many of these changelings had jumped on the dog tag bandwagon. Using the silver identification tags placed on their collars by their families, they created treasures with which they could keep track of those they loved. Though many of the pooka who made the treasures have long since passed beyond the Mists, their tags have survived. Each tag has the name and address of the original creator upon it, perhaps explaining why they have endured for so long. These treasures serve as scrying devices through which a changeling can view anything within the immediate vicinity. They work exactly like the Tattletale cantrip (Soothsay 3) and any changeling can use them if they meet the requirements of the cantrip.

### **Balthazar's Bracelets (Level 4 Treasure)**

If nothing else, these matching bracelets have a delicate beauty that makes them a special addition to the stash of any pooka who likes pretty, shiny things. However, they also have a very unique benefit when worn. When placed on the wrists, they tighten of their own accord to fit smoothly over the changeling's forearms, swirling up from wrist to elbow. If the faerie knocks once on the bracelets, they meld to the skin and become ebony tattoos that will shape-shift with the pooka when he changes to his animal mien. In that form, the tattoos simply resemble markings on the animal's skin. Another knock and the bracelets return to their original form. The bracelets mimic the Oakenshield cantrip (Primal 3). They afford the wearer four extra health levels to protect against grievous harm. They do not hinder dexterity.

### **Cleopatra's Wings (Level 5 Treasure)**

This handsome, one-of-a-kind choker has a butterfly pendant hanging from a wide gold band that fits around the neck. Made of amber, the butterfly's wings blush scarlet near the golden body and lighten to a warm orange near the tips. The changeling that wears the necklace gains the ability to fly in a manner similar to that of the Wind Runner cantrip (Wayfare 4). A pair of shimmery, intangible wings appear at the faerie's back. The wings themselves have no substance and cannot be damaged. They disappear as soon as the changeling removes the choker. Unlike the Wind Runner cantrip, the flight of Cleopatra's Wings has only one limit on duration: As long as the changeling does not remove the choker, he can fly — until the next sunrise or sunset (whichever comes first) after he dons the choker. Once used, the wings must lie dormant for 12 hours before they can be used again.

If another person successfully grapples the wearer of the choker, the wearer must first break the grapple before taking flight. The choker does not give the wearer any added strength and he must be unhindered in order to fly. Furthermore, Cleopatra's Wings do not fly on their own and thus will not leave the wearer unless physically removed by the changeling or by someone else.

### **Osiris' Flail (Legendary Treasure)**

Osiris, the first pharaoh of ancient Egypt, kept two symbols of power. One of these, his flail, is depicted on the sarcophagi of many of the pharaohs that followed in his footsteps. It is usually shown crossed with a crook over the chest of the dead king. The flail is a short-handled rod from which hangs a group of three leather strips decorated with wooden beads and bone. Legend states that the flail was a treasure given to Osiris by Horus, a falcon pooka. Reportedly, it recorded all of history in the chimerical carvings upon its bone and wood beads. To tap its extensive wisdom, a person simply asked a question, then touched the flail to her brow. The answer came immediately.

The last recorded appearance of the treasure was in 1970, when curators finally opened a sarcophagus left untouched for decades in the storerooms of the Smithsonian Institute. The Institute showed the flail on a flyer advertising objects due for display in the museum. The picture of the flail caught the attention of many pooka. It exactly resembled the flail that had disappeared so long ago. Furthermore, its release from the sarcophagus was like lifting a shroud off a beacon. Changelings for miles kenned its glow. This triggered the belief that it was indeed Osiris' Flail. Many tried to get in to see it. Pooka traveled from around the world to Washington, DC. Unfortunately, the treasure never made it into the display. It disappeared and no one has reported seeing it since.

Many changelings, and other interested parties, seek this item for the power it would bestow upon its owner. Imagine having all the world's knowledge at your fingertips. Though some changeling scholars claim that anyone who used the item would likely find insanity before they would find enlightenment, there are many others who believe the flail could impart wisdom, wealth and happiness beyond compare — if the right questions were asked of it. And who better to ask questions than pooka? Others claim that the only knowledge held within the flail is historical and stopped being relevant with the fall of the Egyptian Pharaohs. No one has ever determined whether the knowledge it imparts is truth or Pooka-ese.

### Shapechanging Confidant Flaw: Lies



kithbook:  
**pooka**<sup>TM</sup>

Expanded Background

Contacts

Holdings

Dreamers

Mentor

Vassals

Retinue

Possessions

Gear (Carried)

Chimerical Items

Treasures

Chimerical Companions

Freeholds

Location

Description

# KITHBOOK: pooka™

## History

Prelude

Date Ennobled: \_\_\_\_\_

Secret Societies: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appearance

Chronological Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Mortal: \_\_\_\_\_

Apparent Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Hair: \_\_\_\_\_

Eyes: \_\_\_\_\_

Fae: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Height: \_\_\_\_\_

Animal: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

## Visuals

Oath Bonds Chart

Character Sketch